



# THE UTOPIA CONSPIRACY

BOOK 1 IN THE UTOPIA SERIES

LEE DAVIES

## Prologue

Relaxed and floating weightlessly below the crystal waters, the young couple were mesmerised by the aquatic life swimming around them and patiently sampling the splendours that the North Pacific Ocean had to offer. Small fish had cautiously swam up close to see what the strange air-bubbling creatures were before darting away. A turtle drifted by, offering a quick glance in their direction only to disappear into the distance. This was the first time that they had ventured into Scuba diving in tropical waters, usually settling for the colder, darker waters of the UK. At last, they were enjoying the dream trip that they had been looking forward to for so long. They had spent three weeks travelling the Hawaiian islands and this was to be their last stop before heading home to the United Kingdom. The adventure an agreed success, they reluctantly packed up their scuba gear and suitcases and loaded them into the back of the taxi. As they took a final glance across the moonlit ocean, they noticed that it had a gentle swell, almost waving back to them. They knew that there was a very slim chance of returning and therefore took in every last second before getting into the taxi. Later that evening, they arrived at Hana Airport which was situated on the Eastern side of the island of Maui. Although they referred to it as an airport, it was more of a small airstrip that provided only shuttle flights between the Hawaiian islands with no customs or duty-free shop. Only a solemn vending machine within the waiting area was the sole source of food and snacks to passengers. As the taxi pulled into the gravel parking area, the young couple could see the small private charter plane parked on the

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runway. Their return flight had been pre-booked to take them back to the main airport in Honolulu for their connecting flight back to the UK. They were greeted by their pilot who came to the taxi to help with the luggage; 'Hey guys, I'm KeyKey and I will be your pilot this evening.' He looked and sounded like a true Hawaiian, dressed in board shorts and a white short-sleeved shirt showing off his arms. They boarded the small PA-31 Navajo aircraft and headed for the runway. The take-off was noticeably bumpy but they soon flew up through the dark clouds before piercing out the other side and into the perfect blue skies above. 'It's a good time to be heading home, there's a big storm coming bra,' said the pilot. Whilst attending his son's third birthday party, KeyKey received a call asking him to cover for a colleague who had been struck down with a virus. Keykey's wife had asked him not to take the job but he was the type of person who always wanted to keep everyone happy, especially his wife. 'It's only a quick taxi back from Maui to Honolulu and I promise I will be back before you know it' he reassured his pregnant wife before bending down and kissing her bump. Reluctantly she let him leave knowing that she would not be able to persuade him otherwise.

He was now pleased to be back in the air and also on schedule, assured that he would be home in time to watch NCIS with his wife before bed.

After just ten minutes into the flight, the couple noticed the pilot tapping repeatedly on the plane's instrument panel. They could also see that the navigation systems had started fluctuating in all directions before suddenly becoming stable once again. KeyKey banked the plane around to the left and realised that the navigation display had not moved an inch. Once again, he banked the plane but this time to the right

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although still, the dials remained central. The pilot realised that something was wrong and, deciding not to take any chances, he turned the plane around. Confidently he relieved the young couple that this sort of thing had happened many times before and that they simply needed to switch aircraft and that they would be back in the air in no time at all. However, inwardly he was thinking about how annoyed his wife was going to be when he returned home late.

He continued to reassure his passengers and boasted that he was able to navigate those skies with eyes closed and could even get them to Honolulu without referencing the dials. However, he was legally bound to return the aircraft or he could have lost his licence for breaking the pilots' protocol. He decided to drop below the cloud line so that he could get his bearings from the islands below. He slowly pressed the stick forward and began a gradual descent. As they continued to drop lower, KeyKey once again reassured the young couple that as soon as they were below the clouds, they would see the wonderful sights of the Hawaiian islands directly ahead of them. He reduced the plane to one thousand feet and as they slowly broke through the cloud, visibility was suddenly restored. However, the lights of Maui were nowhere to be seen. KeyKey frantically looked out of both sides but all that could be seen in every direction was the vast ocean. The couple started to feel nervous as they too looked out of the windows on each side.

‘Shouldn’t we be able to see Maui?’

the young man asked.

A panic came across KeyKey as he now felt less confident in his nautical skills. He tried to justify the situation to his passengers, explaining that they must have flown further in the wrong direction than he first thought, He added that if he were to remain on a straight course they would be back to the islands in no time. He checked the fuel gauge which was now dropping and he knew that he had less than thirty minutes to locate the islands and land the plane. Typically,

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the aircraft was only ever fueled to allow enough for the flight duration plus a small contingency to cover emergencies. He was now thankful for that little extra.

He turned the transponder to emergency code 7700 and attempted to notify Honolulu Air Route Traffic Control Centre.

‘Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, this is flight PAPA DELTA ROMEO 371 from Maui heading to Honolulu, we have lost all navigation systems and fuel is down to 80 nautical miles. Our last known heading was on 9<sup>0</sup> 50'E.’

He waited for a response but all that could be heard was a constant crackling over the airwaves. He repeated the call but still, there was nothing. He scanned the horizon hoping for a glimmer of just one light from land or sea but only water could be seen in every direction. He noticed that the two passengers were starting to panic. KeyKey realised that it was his duty to remain calm for his passengers’ sake and so remembered his training. Fortunately, it was a legal requirement for pilots to role-play these types of situations each year to maintain their licenses. In his head, he heard the voice of his instructor,

‘In the event of an emergency with the aircraft, stay calm, reassure your passengers, radio through to air traffic control, and look for a suitable alternate landing strip. If this is on the water then try and make sure you have provisions ready and lifejackets donned.’

This was so much easier when you were just pretending and sitting on wooden chairs in the middle of the staff canteen he thought to himself. However, he immediately put his training into action and explained the situation calmly to his passengers who were now feeling and looking extremely anxious.

‘I might have to set the plane down on the water. I am confident that I can pull this off but I will need your assistance,’ he said calmly.

He then instructed the young couple to locate and put on

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their scuba equipment which was stowed at the back of the plane and to pack flares and anything else that could be useful into the waterproof sack.

‘Attach the buoy from the cupboard below to keep it afloat’ he instructed.

They unclipped their seat belts and hastily moved to the rear of the plane to locate their scuba equipment, now thankful that they had paid the additional costs to transport their own scuba tanks instead of renting them at every dive location. They had easily changed into their dive suits so many times over the years although they had never experienced the difficulty of doing so in such a tight space. They now found themselves in fear for their lives, hurriedly trying to squeeze into their suits in the back of a small aircraft, that was tilting from side to side and whose engines were running on fumes. Quickly, they packed flares, bottles of water and a medical kit into a sack. Suddenly, a warning light appeared on the fuel indicator informing the pilot that it was now only a matter of minutes before he would have to make an emergency crash landing somewhere in the middle of the North Pacific ocean. He made one last attempt at the mayday call shouting,

‘We are going down’ before quickly putting on his life jacket.

He shouted to the young couple to position themselves on the floor between the seats and to brace for impact. They looked across at each other with fear in their eyes and tightly held hands across the aisle.

‘I love you’ he mouthed to his beautiful fiancée as he came to terms with the reality that this could be their final moment together. The tears streamed down her face and she repaid the gesture. Suddenly the left engine started to splutter and stall. The pilot struggled to hold onto the stick as the plane started to shake and, what seemed like only seconds later, the right engine stalled with the blades slowing before finally stopping completely. The howling engine noise was

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now replaced with the sound of the air wrapping itself around the plane as it started to glide. KeyKey continued his mayday call. Now the tone of his voice had changed from panic to a calmer tone of hopefulness. They were now at only two hundred metres above sea level and were gliding swiftly towards the vast ocean. KeyKey shouted again,

‘Brace yourselves for impact!’

As he did, disturbing alarms came forth manically from the instrument panel. Pulling back on the stick with all his might, he watched the dial reduce to one hundred meters. He now knew that there was literally a matter of seconds between life and death as he closed his eyes and pictured his wife and son.

‘I’m so sorry’ he whispered under his breath.

Then, the noise. Unbearable, deafening and heart-wrenching noise, unlike any sound they had heard before. For moments, it completely dominated their senses. The impact of the craft connecting with the water’s surface was like being in a head-on collision in a car and it instantly crippled the plane's structural integrity, throwing items all around the interior. The small aircraft bounced across the surface of the water like a large skimming stone; the wheels immediately ripped away from the bottom as the water revealed its hidden power. After what seemed like an eternity but in reality, was just seconds, the plane finally came to a stop and began to rock back and forth in the dark ocean swell. The contrast could not have been more stark as peace once more ensued. On realising that the aircraft had finally stopped, the couple got up from between the seats and started to check that they were both ok. They shouted through to the pilot as the water started to penetrate the doors, seeping in from every direction and beginning to flood the inside of the small cabin. They called to him again but still, there was no response. KeyKey had been rendered unconscious by the impact and lay slumped in his seat, blood dripping down his face from a deep cut across his forehead.

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The young man leaned back into the plane and released the pilot's seat belt before telling his fiancée that they needed to drag him from his seat to take him to the surface. They put their regulators in their mouths and forced open the emergency door. Holding onto an arm each, they grabbed the pilot and cleared themselves from the door and swam away from the now submerging plane. As they reached the surface once more, they laid KeyKey on his back, provided him with air from their breathing apparatus and checked to see if he had a pulse and was breathing.

‘He’s still alive.’

Laying back and holding onto each other’s buoyancy jacket they cradled the unconscious pilot between them. As they looked around, all they could see was the vast ocean in every direction. Ironically, it was peaceful and quiet with the swell of the water now gently rocking them. Suddenly a few metres away, the supply sack erupted to the surface almost like the buoy was gasping for breath, and briefly left the water. Staying connected to each other, they swam towards the buoy until they were able to grab hold of the attached bag. The young man opened it and located a flare which he set off high above their heads illuminating the skies above like a single firework. He tried to reassure his fiancé that help would soon be on its way, although inwardly he had doubts. As night slumped into complete darkness, they drifted aimlessly in whatever direction that the current decided. The cold began to set in as did the realisation that, having survived the crash, this could be their final hours if they were not found. Exhausted and fearing the worst, they decided to tie the pilot to them and, in doing so, try to conserve as much energy as possible. With the scuba tanks now empty, they were fully reliant on the air left in the buoyancy jackets and searched for hope in their hearts which would help to keep them alive. However, with the storm worsening and the sea swell becoming rougher, the chance of survival was becoming more and more unlikely.



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The following morning, the bright sunshine poured down on the three bodies now lying on their backs on a golden sandy beach, the waves gently lapping up and over their legs before retreating again. The young man started to rouse and through blurry eyes, he saw a bright light which made him question whether he was still alive or not. The sun above him appeared as if he was staring through frosted glass. He blinked, trying to adjust his vision and as his consciousness gradually started to return, so did the feeling in his body. He once again opened his eyes and this time noticed what seemed like a figure walking toward him. Still unsure as to which world he now found himself in, he again blinked desperately in the hope of seeing clearly. This time he could make out that there was definitely someone walking towards him. As his hearing restored, he could hear sounds of birds celebrating the morning and he continued to strengthen his focus. Unquestionably, someone was getting close to him. He started to panic. He had no strength to move and felt like his hands and legs were being weighted down with rocks. Then, his heartbeat intensified to a point where he could almost hear it but he was still unable to move. The opaque lenses caused by the water and bright light were beginning to clear and eventually he could make out the figure now standing above him. As his eyes finally healed, he wondered if even temporarily he had become delusional for before him was an all too familiar figure. A man, possibly in his fifties, wearing just a shirt and shorts who anyone on earth over fifteen years of age would recognise, except that it could not possibly have been him.

# 1: Soul Mates

July 2015, Surrey, England

Sam looked across and smiled at Lauren as her hair flowed in the wind and the boat sped across Hawaiian waters. Lauren was beautiful, her long brown hair and tanned complexion complimenting her perfect physique. She was covered only by a colourful hibiscus flowered bikini reminiscent of one of the cover girls from one of Sam's surf magazines.

In the years before they would often reflect on their meeting and it amused them that, at times, that their memories of that day differed somewhat. Sam had met Lauren just six years earlier at Guildford High School in Surrey, England. He had arrived for the first day of the new term expecting it to be the beginning of another routine year. The class teacher, Mr Brownly, was preparing to take the register when the headmistress, Mrs Wenslow tapped on the door's glass panel. As she entered the classroom, the students immediately silenced once they had detected that Mrs Wenslow was closely followed by a very shy looking Lauren. All the boys were immediately impressed with the new girl and began to look her up and down, turning to one other, making comments and giggling under cupped hands. Sam noticed that one of his classmates, Jake Green was particularly enamoured but stayed silent simply admiring the new girl. Lauren quickly scanned the class and, as their eyes connected, Sam gave her a friendly smile. Overtly nervous, Lauren was clutching the strap of her bag so tight that her knuckles began to lose colour. Mrs Wenslow explained to the class that Lauren was new to the Gilford area and would be

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joining the class of year 14c. The headmistress then asked for a volunteer to shadow Lauren for the first few weeks until she was happy that Lauren was familiar with the school and its rules and regulations. Without thinking, Sam's arm shot up into the air to an outburst of laughter and sniggering from his peers.

'Ok Sam, that is very kind of you' said Mrs Wenslow, slightly surprised as she had expected one of the girls to be first to offer.

She then turned to Lauren and told her that Sam was not only a good student but would help her get used to the new school. Lauren was then asked to sit next to Sam at the front of the class.

Although then no one would have known it, this would be the beginning of a great friendship that would last throughout their school years.

Lauren Simmons had moved to Gilford with her father from the coastal area of Cornwall. Her father John had decided to move following a family tragedy. Lauren's mother, Anne, had died leaving her daughter completely distraught and her father sinking deeper into a dark pit of despair. Her father's depression had lasted for twelve months and, at times, seemed to be something from which he would never recover. With the aid of a bereavement counsellor, he slowly clawed back something of his former self and eventually got his life under control, choosing to make changes to his and his daughter's lives and ultimately helping them to deal with their loss. His first step was to take a new job in a successful financial firm and as such relocate to the outskirts of London. However, Lauren was anxious to be moving away from the seaside and into the capital city, feeling that there had been too much change in their lives during that short period.

Over the next few years, Lauren and Sam supported each other, particularly in disciplines that they excelled in. It seemed as though Lauren was always smiling despite

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struggling to provide support to her father who was yet again sinking deeper into depression. The first noticeable signs were his lack of enthusiasm for anything and everything. He was neglecting himself, his responsibilities, their home and eventually had stopped offering lifts to Lauren. His social life became none-existent and he would only leave the house to go to work. Lauren was left with the cooking, cleaning and shopping as well as her school responsibilities and she became increasingly anxious about losing her father as well. Stoic and dependable, she never argued with him or complained in the hope that he would pull through at some point in the near future and that the grief would start to ease for both of them.

Despite spending many evenings and weekends together where they would revise and chat, a romantic relationship never developed between Sam and Lauren. Sam had been attracted to Lauren from the first time he had set eyes on her and, she felt the same but both of them were concerned about losing what was an almost perfect friendship and therefore neither of them had ever made a move. One day in the autumn, Sam decided that he was going to throw caution to the wind and ask Lauren out on a date. He plucked up courage and impulsively readied his push-bike for the five minute cycle ride to her house. As he rounded the corner into her street he stopped to compose himself. Looking across toward her house, he spotted someone outside Lauren's house. As he got closer he realised it was Jake Green from school standing chatting to Lauren. He cautiously watched from the shadows as they laughed, joked and smiled at one other. What had been an excited and heady chase to her house had become a painful, sickening experience. As he watched, the disappointment was so profound that he physically hurt and became more and more upset, eventually bursting into tears. Worried that they may have heard him, he jumped back onto his bike and cycled home through tear-filled eyes. What followed were the worst days of Sam's life

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or at least that is what he would have told you at the time. In the passing of only two days, he felt that he had been suffering for an eternity and told himself, as all teenagers do, that he couldn't bear the pain for one more day. At that point, he wasn't to know it, but the relationship between Lauren and Jake had only lasted the same two full days before they realised that they were not matched well at all, much to Sam's delight.

Sam was a handsome young man with a lean build, brown hair and a cheeky smile. He was regularly approached by girls at school who would ask for a date but he had never once accepted. He was intelligent, a quick learner and also benefitted from having a semi-photographic memory which unquestionably came in handy at exam times. Once he had graduated from school he went on to work for his father in an office and, due to pure effort and diligence, quickly moved up the ranks to a team manager.

Lauren had decided to continue in education and successfully gained a place on her chosen course of photography and art at the University of Surrey. When Lauren told Sam that she had been accepted onto the course he was genuinely happy for her but also upset that she would be moving away. For the first time in a while, he relived some of those fears and doubts that had visited him that night when he had seen Lauren with Jake. He knew that although it was only a short drive to where she would be studying, they would see less of each other and he feared that their friendship could fade.

He kicked himself for never making the first move. Sentimental, personable and - some would say, emotional, he feared rejection. He thought again about that night when he was burning to ask her out only to find someone else there ahead of him. Sam convinced himself that being open with Lauren could well ruin the amazing friendship they had but also knew that this could well be his last chance. Soon after, Sam found himself chatting with a work colleague about

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missed opportunities and chose to disclose his close friendship with Lauren and his predicament.

‘So do you still fancy her then or what?’ his colleague asked. ‘Because if you do then you need to make a move mate pretty sharpish before it definitely is too late and some other geezer snaps her up!’

That night after some deliberation and a great deal of anxiety, Sam decided to send a card to Lauren at her university which read.

*Dear Lauren,  
We have been by each other's side for many, many years,  
We have shared lots of laughs and we have shed a few tears,  
You have become my best friend and the person I turn to,  
It has taken way too long for me to ask you....  
Do you fancy going out on a date with me?*

*Xx Love Sam xX*

Lauren's first reaction to the letter was a smile. How long have I been waiting for this? She asked herself. ‘Oh Sam, why has it taken you so long’ she muttered.

Lauren was overjoyed that he felt the same as she did and immediately sent a letter back agreeing to a first date. She explained that she had developed feelings for Sam over the years and had been too shy to tell him. They would, on many occasions, laugh at how reticent they had both been and how such a beautiful opportunity could have been wasted.

On the night of their first date, Sam wanted to do everything right as it was something he had wanted for so many years and that night was the first step toward something much greater. He bought new clothes, had his hair cut and splashed on his Armani aftershave then paused to consider if he had put on too much. He had booked a table for two at a fancy restaurant in town and even arrived to pick her up with flowers in hand. At first, it seemed incredibly

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surreal as he had been to see her so many times before but usually just in his jeans and a T-shirt, but it felt right. He had butterflies somersaulting in his tummy, and it just felt like they were made for each other.

The first date was a complete success: they laughed about all the times they almost asked each other out and agreed that they would like to go on a second date. After only a couple of months of dating, this newfound relationship was purely an enhancement to the friendship they had built during their childhood. Now was the time for the romance and intimacy they had both longed for. And, it was also the time for Lauren to move into Sam's flat.

On Laurens' twenty-first birthday Sam decided to surprise her with a romantic weekend in Paris. They held hands as they walked around the streets perusing the shops and patisseries, embracing the city of love and romance. As the sun began to set, they crossed the road onto Pierre Loti Avenue. Ahead of them was a long straight park leading to the familiar but breath-taking sight of the Eiffel tower in the distance. They strolled slowly towards this remarkable architectural colossus chatting about life and discussing their plans for moving into their first house together. Sam was feeling nervous: he tried to calm himself so that Lauren did not notice any change in his tone or that his palms were beginning to sweat, his mind elsewhere.

Three weeks before, he had visited Laurens' father John and had found the courage to ask for his only daughter's hand in marriage. By now Sam knew John quite well and it would be fair to say that they got along well. However, Sam knew that on his complex road to recovery, John had become much closer to his daughter leaving Sam very nervous about asking this most important question. Sam had rehearsed the speech over and over in front of the mirror and now he had to do it for real. He had managed to save some of his pay over the past six months telling Lauren that he was saving

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towards a new car. The ring he bought was beautiful. A rose gold engagement ring with a ½ carat diamond that sparkled magnificently, he was proud of his choice. And, he chose to use a professional strategy to convince his potential father in law. Sam managed to deliver his speech flawlessly as if presenting to work colleagues. The advice of “always imagine your audience naked” was definitely not applicable in this situation. John was unsurprisingly extremely protective over his only child. He was particularly concerned about how young they both were however he felt reassured following Sam’s speech in which he referenced a long term engagement and promised to provide Lauren with the love and security that she deserved. John was aware of the pressure he had put his daughter under when he was suffering from depression and he also knew how happy Sam made her. John outstretched his hand and shook Sam’s in acceptance.

As they came closer to the Eiffel tower Sam stopped and looked around making sure that he had chosen the ideal spot. For a few seconds, Lauren continued to walk until she realised that she was now talking to herself on the ever-engaging topic of cushions and curtains. She stopped and walked back to Sam looking at him with concern. She told herself that he didn’t look well. Sam turned to face her and she noticed that his skin had turned a lighter shade of pale.

‘Are you ok?’ she asked him, concerned that he may pass out.

‘Yes, I’m fine... um... I have something to tell, Oh Damn it!! Sorry, I mean I have something to ask you’ the nerves evident in his voice.

‘What?’ Lauren looked at him scared, confused and thinking the worst.

Sam took hold of Lauren’s hand before bending down on one knee. He suddenly felt the cold seeping through his trousers and realised he had chosen to kneel in the only puddle in sight. He cleared his mind and chose not to think of his cold leg and then produced a small jewellery box from



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his inside jacket pocket.

'You are my world and my best friend, I know that it took me far too long to tell you how I felt, but I am so glad I did. I love spending time with you, and you make me complete. I want this to last forever and would like to ask if you would make me the happiest man alive and marry me?'

Despite the growing anxiety, he delivered his speech perfectly and then awaited the response, nervously wondering if he had moved too soon. Would she say no? If she did say no, then what next?. With his hands shaking, he opened the lid of the box to reveal the sparkling engagement ring inside that glistened in a reflection of the nearby street light

Lauren looked at him with wide eyes, taking in every word that he had said. She paused for a moment as her brain processed the proposal Sam had just made. Tears started to well up in her eyes as she nodded in acceptance,

'Yes!, Yes!, I would love to marry you!'

Sam stood up, they embraced and then they kissed one another, both with tears of joy running down their faces. A few passers-by applauded and congratulated them whilst others offered no more than a quick glance as this was an all too familiar sight.

On the day of the move to their first home, Sam and Lauren were busy debating which boxes were to be placed in what room according to his plan. By now they were both accepting of Sam's OCD and realised that, at times like these, it could be useful. He had a printed room plan to follow with labelled and numbered boxes to ensure that it ran smoothly. Once the final box was laid on the floor, Sam and Lauren relaxed with a cup of tea before they began the lengthy task of unpacking and positioning the furniture to create their new home.

Suddenly, whilst carrying an incorrectly placed box from the lounge to the kitchen, Lauren collapsed dropping the box

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to the floor. Sam heard the bang and then called out to Lauren but no response was heard. He quickly ran down the stairs jumping the last three steps to find Lauren unconscious on the kitchen floor. He lifted her head and laid it on his lap, stroking her face and trying to wake her. He could see that she was still breathing. He removed his jumper and placed it under her head whilst getting his mobile from his pocket. He called the emergency services.

‘Hello, which service please?’ the female’s voice said calmly.

‘I need an ambulance now!’ stuttered a panicked Sam

‘Ok Sir, can I please take your name and address?’

‘Err yes, It’s Sam and my fiancée Lauren has collapsed, she is unconscious.’

‘Ok, Sam please stay calm, can you please confirm your address, and we will get an ambulance straight to you’

Sam provided the address and waited for the ambulance to arrive. It seemed like only a minute had passed before there was a knock at the door. The ambulance crew seemed very calm and walked through the house to where Lauren was laying on the kitchen floor.

‘What’s happened to her?’ Sam asked nervously, the shock now causing his whole body to shake.

‘I’m not sure at the moment but don’t worry we will check her over and I’m sure everything will be fine’ replied the paramedic with a confident smile.

Within a few minutes, Lauren had regained consciousness, not knowing what had happened and was surprised to see the paramedics in their new house. The paramedics suggested that they would take Lauren to the Kingston-upon-Thames hospital for checks to try and establish why she had collapsed. Reluctantly she agreed.

The next day Sam and Lauren were sitting quietly and patiently in the small waiting room holding each other’s hands. Lauren had been asked to provide a blood sample and undergo various tests and scans. They knew that the news

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they were about to be told would change their lives either for better or worse. The small private waiting room looked like the one that Lauren had been in seven years ago waiting to hear about her mother. Sam had a million and one questions running through his head, none of which he could say out loud as he feared that they would upset Lauren. If the news is bad, then what do I say? How should I react? He thought. The answers to his questions were not forthcoming. All he could think was: I must stay positive. She is going to be fine. He reassured himself, trying to swallow away the worry building up inside him.

Lauren was trying to remain calm but had become quite negative, almost preparing for the worst. She looked straight into Sam's eyes and could see the internal torture that he was putting himself through and she knew that his anxiety and panic attacks during such situations left him with little or no control. He was regularly fighting demons and this was pushing the limits for him. However, she had been in this situation before, but last time she was the one asking the questions of her inner self.

The bubbles released from the water dispenser in the corner of the room startling them both and breaking them free of the silence that they had been sitting in for the past fifteen minutes.

'It's all going to be fine' Sam said with an unconvincing smile. Lauren smiled back and squeezed his hand tightly.

The handle of the door slowly started to turn almost as if the person on the other side was holding out for as long as possible before entering. Dr Herbert appeared from behind the door, his blank facial expression not giving anything away. He pulled a plastic chair across from the other side of the room and sat down facing Lauren.

'Hi Lauren' he said in a monotone voice.

'We have conducted all of the tests and I have some news for you.'

## 2: Howard Hughes

1952, Sierra Nevada Mountains, California.

At 47, Howard Hughes was a good-looking man with dark swept-back hair that parted slightly to the right. He was of a medium build and always dressed in the finest of tailored suits with his shoes polished to a mirror finish. His passion for perfection was evident in everything he did to the point of being obsessive-compulsive. He was clean-shaven, boasting the smell of wealth as he wore only the most expensive of colognes.

Added to that, he was a very intelligent man, one who would sit alone for many hours whilst his brain worked overtime. He was an archetypal entrepreneur, constantly taking on new challenges and developing new ideas. The future fascinated him, and he wanted to wow the world with his inventions. This fascination for technology had begun when Hughes was only eleven years old, and he had created Houston's first transmitter radio.

Howard's suave manner was not lost on the ladies and his advances regularly resulted in him bedding an actress from one of his movies or another celebrity that he may simply have met at a party. He was a firm but straightforward man and would happily speak his mind; if he liked you, he would say so, if he didn't like you, then you would know about it. Hughes had become adept at getting his own way, even with those in a position of higher stature and wealth. Eventually, his efforts and ambition were paying dividends and he gained the recognition of senior investors and the American Government.

One day, as Hughes found himself approaching the first

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of the three security stations, his routine remained unchanged. He stopped the shiny black Cadillac twenty metres short of the barrier that protected the entrance which disappeared into the side of the mountain. Previously this entrance had served as the only way into a maze of mineshafts hidden deep within the mountain and had been abandoned and then closed ten years earlier following the decline of the gold rush.

He stopped to admire the massive, tree-covered mountain in front of him looking from side to side. Nobody knows what actually exists inside, he thought to himself as he developed a sly grin. He continued to the first security barrier where he was greeted by an armed guard in full army attire.

‘Good evening, Sir!’

shouted the guard in a tone that ably exhibited his military training.

‘Good evening, Sergeant, I’m going to be burning the midnight oil again this evening. Have there been any problems today?’

‘No, Sir! It’s been as quiet as usual. Sir!’

The Sergeant pressed down on the counterweight balance and raised the barrier. Hughes continued towards the tunnel entrance where he then observed a security patrol with dogs walking the perimeter line. A further two guards were positioned in front of the entrance holding their M1 Garand semi-automatic rifles in front of them. He was certainly pleased to see that the security he had been promised was of such a high calibre. Dusk was starting to set in and Hughes flicked the switch for the car headlights which immediately illuminated the first section of the tunnel. The two guards parted to let the Cadillac slowly pass by, saluting as he approached. This was a gesture that was usually reserved for high-ranking military officers only. Hughes revelled in that feeling of being in power as he saluted back to the guards. He continued through the opening and into the tunnel. As he drove further, he looked into his rear-view mirror to see

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the entrance disappear as if it were swallowed by the darkness itself. Despite his confidence, this part of the journey always left him anxious as the first half-mile of the tunnel was completely black.

He recalled how on only his second time driving down the tunnel he had stopped his car and switched off the lights. He then held his hand inches from his face but found himself in complete darkness. Quickly he had fumbled for the keys in the ignition and restarted the car activating the headlights which once again flooded the tunnel ahead with light. His heart rate calmed and he promised himself that he would never try that trick again.

The final section of the tunnel was not as daunting as small lights had been fitted every twenty or so yards. This enabled him to navigate the route as the tunnel suddenly split in various directions, many of which were now dead ends. He finally found himself at an opening where the tunnel increased in size and a large solid concrete wall blocked his way. In the centre of the concrete wall were two large solid steel doors. A small square shutter opened, and Hughes could see the whites of someone's eyes reflecting in his headlights and staring directly at him. The shutter quickly closed and was then followed by the unnerving sound of a series of bolts unlocking. The huge doors opened to reveal a large square room on the other side with parking spaces marked on the floor and name plaques on the wall. The space for 'Mr H. Hughes' was in pole position and closest to the only other door which was on the opposite side wall. Hughes stopped his car, collected his briefcase from the passenger seat and opened the door. He stood for a moment at the top of the metal staircase that led down from the doorway. Before him stood an enormous cavern, or as Hughes referred to it the "Cave." It was one hundred feet high and covered over one million square feet of floor space, the equivalent of ten full-size football pitches. Thick steel girders rose like metal oak trees rooted in the floor and joined a steel web that

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supported the top of the cave. The floor was entirely on one level and divided into sections, each one allocated to various research departments and all connected by interlinking roads.



He was proud of his creation. He was proud that he had developed an entire hidden town whose inhabitants were the highest qualified in their fields. A town that was devoted to the most top-secret science and technology research anywhere in the world.

The guard on first post security had alerted Gina that Hughes was on his way down to the cave. She had quickly

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phoned each of the department heads requesting an immediate progress update so that she could brief Hughes when he arrived.

Gina Hammond was elegant and sophisticated; she was five foot six inches with long mousey brown hair that fell just below her shoulders. Unlike most of the staff in the cave that wore white coats, Gina was dressed in trousers and a matching suit jacket which was buttoned just below her breasts and covered a white blouse. She had a tanned complexion, inherited from her Italian Mother. Her thin-rimmed glasses enhanced both her intellect and sex appeal but did little to mask her authoritative and ruthless character.

Hughes had first set eyes on Gina at a science convention at the Hotel Royal in her hometown of Louisiana. He had seen her speaking with two of the scientists and had watched as she took a notepad from her handbag and started to take notes assiduously during their conversation. Once they had finished their dramatic explanation, delving into a particularly complex physics dilemma, she paused, and read back through her notes, the scientists waiting in anticipation for a response. Finally, she looked up at the scientists and smiled before firing back a series of objectionable questions. Unsure about what was happening, the scientists seemed shocked by the response and then looked at each other for an answer before shrugging their shoulders. Gina thanked them for their time, shook hands and then turned and walked away towards her next prey with a self-congratulatory smile on her face.

Hughes found this very appealing. She was attractive, smart and he believed that her mannerisms reflected his own. As she finished her belittling of three more scientists who were now arguing over their answers to her question, Hughes casually walked toward her. Yet again, she turned and walked away, this time not wanting to intrude on their argument by wishing them goodbye. She made eye contact with Hughes, he smiled and gave a gentle accepting nod.



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'Might I know the name of this Tornado of bewilderment, Miss... ?' asked Hughes, waiting for her to complete the introduction.

'I'm sorry sir, Tornado of bewilderment? I have no idea what you are implying' replied Gina in a seductive tone.

Hughes scanned the room and noticed the varied heated discussions breaking out.

'I think you may have caused them to question their own beliefs and theories. Unless they are simply arguing over who is going to ask you for dinner first, maybe?'

Gina seemed to appreciate Hughes's sarcasm.

'Then maybe you should ask me to dinner first before they get the chance' she replied.

Over dinner, Gina told Hughes about her ambitions and her interest in science, the future of technology and her fascination with weaponry. She told of how she had been appointed as Professor at the South-western Louisiana Institute in Lafayette two years earlier and how she had now reached a point in her career where she had become bored with the day-to-day life at the University and longed for a new direction and a new challenge. She had chosen to socialise at similar science and technology conventions with the aim being to seek new employment in the private sector.

'Well, I think that is quite enough about me, now it is your turn to tell me all of your darkest, deepest secrets Mr Hughes' said Gina temptingly.

'Ok' began Hughes

'As you are aware my name is Howard Hughes, I am the owner of a tool company that is known worldwide, I am the majority shareholder in TWA aerospace, I am a qualified pilot and heavily involved with technology and medical advancement. I also believe that I may be the one to offer you your dream job...'

Taken back by the sudden unexpected offer, Gina maintained her poker face whilst challenging his dream offer.

'And what if I am not interested in working for you Mr

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Hughes?’

‘Somehow I think you will be very interested in what I have to offer.’

Gina had found her match. She remained alluring and with every seductive sigh was trying to get the better of Hughes, but he was suave and armed with a charm that had shown proven success on many occasions.

Gina liked the sound of his proposition even though she knew nothing about the position. She could feel herself becoming attracted to Hughes on more than just a business level. She became less able to hide it and he certainly noticed as she quickly looked him up and down.

‘Maybe we should continue this conversation somewhere a little more private’ he suggested with a raised eyebrow.

‘I think that would be a very wise idea.’

Hughes called the waiter over and requested a bottle of their finest champagne to go. He then withdrew the key to his penthouse suite.

‘Shall we?’

‘Champagne as well? I take it that you are very confident that we will be celebrating Mr Hughes’ the sexual tension between them now increased with each breath.

As they entered the penthouse suite, Hughes gestured to Gina to make herself at home whilst he removed his suit jacket and headed for the bedroom. Gina was amazed at the size of the room and the high-quality furnishings. She removed her jacket and placed it over the back of one of the dining room chairs before perching herself on one end of the leather settee.

Hughes returned, bringing an ice bucket with the champagne and two crystal flute glasses which he then placed on the coffee table in front of them.

‘So, I had better explain my proposition I suppose’ said Hughes sitting to face Gina.

‘I suppose so as that is the reason I am here, isn’t it?’

She flicked her hair behind her shoulders.

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‘Of course, it is’ he replied with a quick smile.

‘Ok. I have been asked to establish a top-secret Research and Development Facility to work on a variety of cures for a range of diseases as well as a department specifically researching some state-of-the-art technology. I will be employing the highest calibre of scientists and technicians from across the world, and I would like you to run the facility for me.’

He paused to let the offer sink in. For a few moments, there was an unexpected silence as Gina sat speechlessly, looking quite shocked. This was a much more attractive offer than she was expecting.

Hughes continued,

‘Unfortunately, I cannot tell you who the benefactor is at this time, what exactly we will be working on or where the facility is located. All I can tell you now is that you will be paid far more than you currently are. You will report directly to me and all I ask from you is honesty and always to be trustworthy. So, what do you think?’

She leaned forward and collected her thoughts and composure. She removed her trusted notepad and pen from her bag and started to scribble some notes. She looked up again and took a deep breath.

‘So, to clarify Mr Hughes, you would like me to run your top-secret R&D facility. I will not be told who will be funding the facility or at this stage what I will be working on. You are also not able to tell me where it is located or how much exactly I will be paid except for that it will be more than my salary now?’

She looked back at her notes shaking her head before returning her gaze towards Hughes.

‘Well, to be honest, it sounds like quite an unexpected offer seeing as we have only just met and quite a risk’ she said ‘but it also sounds like the perfect job and just what I have been looking for. I would be more than happy to accept. I suppose the question is when do I start? Or are you unable

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to tell me that as well?’

‘Excellent, how do you fancy starting tomorrow?’

‘Tomorrow?!’ she replied in a shocked tone.

‘Is that a problem? Do you have a husband or family to inform?’ He enquired.

‘No. No, I do not have a husband’ she paused ‘or family, I will however need to inform the University.’

At that moment, Hughes detected a flash of sadness wash over her face and her façade dropped momentarily.

They toasted the deal and then changed the subject to discussions about their childhood and various random events leading up to the current day. The conversation seemed to move effortlessly from topic to topic as gradually they moved closer and closer and would occasionally touch each other’s knee whilst offering a fake laugh. As the champagne slipped down, they forgot about the business proposition that had been made previously and the sexual attraction had returned. Before long Hughes was leading Gina towards the bedroom.

Gina awoke the next morning with her head feeling fuzzy from the champagne-fueled night before. She rubbed her eyes to try to make sense of her surroundings. Did last night really happen? She asked herself. She looked around the hotel bedroom now appearing very different as the morning sun glared in through the window. She turned over in the bed expecting to see Howard Hughes lying beside her and was surprised to find that she was alone beneath the silk sheets.

‘Not even a note’ she huffed.

Now she felt like a fool. She was supposed to be intelligent but she had been played and used for sex. She had believed all his bullshit about an amazing, exciting and life-changing job offer.

‘What a fool I have been!’ she cursed to herself.

Then, the bedroom door opened and Hughes walked in adjusting his cuff links and looking as smart and attractive as she had remembered from the night before. She caught a

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scent of his fragrance which instantly caused her to disregard all her previous thoughts. Now she was very confused.

‘Good morning, Gina, I hope you slept well?’

‘Err, yes I did thank you’ She sat up pulling the bed sheet around her.

‘Excellent. Well, I have taken the liberty of ordering breakfast. So, if you would like to shower and dress and then afterwards we will collect your belongings and I will take you to your new office.’

Although not fully awake, Gina was impressed by his assertiveness and also anxiously excited about the day ahead.

Twelve years passed and Gina was in full control of the day to day running of the cave facility. She had personally developed her skills and knowledge over the years and had often provided a key input that had resulted in several developments and breakthroughs.

Today’s progress update included:

### ***Computer Science dept:***

- *New Memory increase now up to 200Mb (Still in testing phase)*

### ***Weaponry dept:***

- *Still having issues with the detonation trigger on the cruise missile.*
- *CP47 Surveillance drone completed final testing successfully.*

### ***Aerospace dept:***

- *Positive results from the wind tunnel for the new carbon fibre material used on the wing design.*

### ***Medical Research dept:***

- *Have made a breakthrough on a new drug (Dr Meyerhof has asked to speak with Mr Hughes ASAP!)*

Gina quickly finished writing up her progress report and walked to meet Hughes on his way down the staircase.

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‘Good evening, Gina How are you?’

‘Very good thank you, Mr Hughes, I have your progress report ready for you.’

She would always maintain her professionalism and address him formally during working hours. They had repeated the antics of the night of her job offer many times but Hughes had never offered any signs of commitment and Gina had never questioned or requested it.

Gina continued to read through the progress update and list off any of the current problems in each department, Hughes would occasionally chip in with various suggestions along the way.

‘And finally, Medical Research...’

‘Let me guess’ interrupted Hughes ‘still no update?’

‘Actually, they have made a breakthrough with some kind of new drug but Dr Meyerhof has asked to speak with you directly about it. I did request details. However, Dr Meyerhof refused and also informed me that he would not divulge any other information and has asked to speak with you as soon as you got here.’

They had now reached Hughes office and he placed his briefcase on his desk.

‘Ok Gina, thank you for the progress report. Can you please arrange a meeting with Dr Meyerhof in thirty Minutes at the research lab?’

‘Certainly, Mr Hughes’ Gina turned and started to walk away.

‘Oh, and Gina, my usual coffee would be appreciated...’

Gina smiled and closed the office door.

Exactly thirty minutes later Howard entered the passcode for the door and walked through into the clinically white laboratory of the medical research department.

‘Hello, Walter’ said Hughes startling Dr Meyerhof who was standing perfectly still and peering into a microscope.

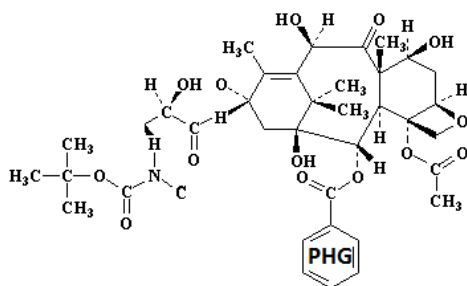
‘Hello, Mr Hughes! I have been waiting to see you, I have something I need to show you.’

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Dr Meyerhof had an excited look on his face. Hughes had never seen him like this before.

Hughes had employed Dr Walter Meyerhof in 1949. He had successfully graduated from the University of Pennsylvania three years earlier where he had engaged in war research and the development of radar crystal rectifiers. In 1946, he obtained his doctorate and was approached by Hughes in 1949 when Walter had been working as an assistant Professor of physics at the University of Illinois. Walter was a very clever man from a highly intelligent family. His brother was a Doctor, his sister a Physician, and his father was Dr Otto Meyerhof, who won a Nobel Prize in Medicine for discovering the relationship between oxygen consumption and the metabolism of lactic acid in muscle. The Meyerhofs were a Jewish family who had fled Germany during the First World War moving to England, France and now America.

He showed Hughes a piece of paper with a diagram of codes and joins which seemed to end with a hexagon with the letters PHG inside it.



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Walter looked at Hughes waiting for a response, almost expecting him to start jumping with joy and telling him how wonderful he was.

Instead, Hughes calmly turned to Walter,

‘Ok, so what does this mean exactly?’

‘It is PHG! At last, I have created PHG!’

‘That’s great Walter, but what on earth is PHG?’  
questioned Hughes

Walter paused, building up to the words.

‘P.H.G. stands for...’



### 3: The Secret Island of Utopia

Howard Robard Hughes, Jr. was born on 24th December 1905 in Houston Texas. His father was the founder of the 'Hughes Tool Company' and his mother came from a prosperous family that were considered to be "monarchs of Dallas society." In 1908 Howard's father patented a two-cone rotary drill bit that penetrated medium and hard rock with ten times the speed of any former bit and its discovery revolutionized oil well drilling. In January 1924 Howard's father died from an embolism of an artery leaving a controlling share of his tool company in his inheritance to an 18-year-old Howard. At the age of 21, Howard bought out the remaining shareholders to take full ownership of the company.

Hughes was a physics and technology fanatic and had a ruthless mind for business. Over the coming years, he increased the size of the Hughes tool company. In 1925 he married a Houston socialite called Elle Rice. The newly married couple moved to Hollywood to pursue his dreams of making a Hollywood film and in 1928, his self-backed film called "Two Arabian Nights" which Hughes produced won an academy award. Following this huge success, Hughes began to mingle with the stars of Hollywood building a name in the industry. His second film "Hells Angels" in 1931 was based on world war one pilots. During the production, Hughes bought eighty seven aircraft which had been used during the war, also hiring the best pilots available. This was the beginning of Hughes' fascination with aerospace. He quickly learnt the principles of aircraft design and established the Hughes Aircraft Company where he set out to design and

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build his own planes. Hughes continued to produce a further five films during 1931 and 1932 which featured some of Hollywood's most profound actors and actresses. During this time Hughes turned into the Hugh Hefner of the day holding lavish star-studded parties, attended by actresses, politicians and other high-profile guests. Hughes had become a womaniser and had a series of affairs with actresses from his films including Bette Davis, Ava Gardner, Olivia de Havilland, Katharine Hepburn, Ginger Rogers and Gene Tierney.

In 1934 the Hughes H1 aircraft was completed which Hughes personally completed the test flight for. The H1 was further advanced than any aircraft of its time and caught the eye of the American Government.

During a second flight, Hughes noticed a fault in the aircraft's navigation system and followed an alternate course out across the North Pacific Ocean. He lowered the aircraft to five thousand feet to see if he could get the navigation system working again. He was tapping the dials and banking the aircraft when he noticed a small island below him. He levelled out and suddenly the compass needle freed, spinning to show the true direction. Hughes turned the aircraft around to take a second pass across the small island dropping to just one thousand feet. When he arrived back at the airstrip he immediately went to his office and brought out a huge map of the world which he placed on the table in front of him. He plotted his intentional route on the map and then the easterly direction that he had detoured onto. There was no island. He looked again re-calculating his speed, distance and the point at which he had resumed the navigation system. Nothing. The only islands shown on the map were the Hawaiian islands situated further south. Confused, he frantically searched for alternative maps, none of which showed an island in the location that he had been in.

Not wanting to tell anyone in case they disbelieved him, he set out again a few days later for a further flight heading

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directly for the triangular location where he believed the island to reside. Once again, he lowered the aircraft down below cloud level and after twenty minutes of circling the area, he spotted the small island. He hadn't gone insane, it did exist. He quickly jotted down the longitude and latitudinal positions of its location and returned to the airstrip. Once again, he pulled out all his maps to check the location and all of them omitted the small island.

Hughes was excited by this discovery of a uncharted island so much so that he decided to develop a new aircraft that could land on water and would enable him to explore the island on foot.

The full production of a new passenger aircraft called the Lockheed 14 was halted so that the one-off water plane could be completed. (This design was later used by Hughes to produce the famous Hughes H4 Hercules seaplane nicknamed the Spruce Goose). Within three months, Hughes had the small seaplane ready for its first test flight, destination: a small unknown island in the North Pacific.

He set off on the 3rd of March 1935 from the private Hughes Airport in California. His anticipation and excitement were overwhelming him as he flew along the coast north to Malibu before changing to a westerly direction. He passed over the small islands of Santa Rosa and San Miguel before heading out into the North Pacific Ocean.

After a few hours, his heart started to pound as he knew that the island was right in front of him below the cloud cover. He started his descent through the clouds and although he had verified the existence of the island on his second test flight, still he felt apprehensive almost expecting for it to not be there. The clouds started to disperse. Howard opened his eyes wide so that he could capture the first glimpse of "his" island. The clear skies on all sides provided miles of visibility across the ocean but there was no sign of the island. Panic and shock struck through Hughes. It's

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impossible, he thought. It was there. He looked down through the left side window of the cockpit and felt an immediate sense of relief rush through him as directly below he could see the jagged coastline of rocks on the west side of the island. He descended further and banked the aircraft at five hundred feet circling the island as if in a holding pattern waiting for authorisation to land. He took in the size and shape noting the sandy palm tree scattered beaches on the northern and southern sides. Then the dormant volcano-shaped mountain in the centre of the island that looked to be surrounded by a thick forest with a large green circular opening in the middle leading down to the south side beach. On the east side of the volcano, the forest continued to the edge of the island appearing to fall into the sea. To the west, the forest ended and beyond, there was another green area. This was adjacent to a high rock face onto which waves crashed and then rapidly retreat again.

Hughes decided that the bay on the southern side would be the best place for him to land. He could see the colourful coral reef through the clear aqua blue water that reflected against the sunlight, the calm waters gently kissing the shoreline. This island is perfect, he thought to himself, it's pure, it is Utopia!

After making a bumpy landing in the southern bay, he directed the plane towards the golden sandy beach admiring the palm trees that stretched in both directions at the top of the volcano that was just visible over the trees. He stopped the engines and used the winch to drop the large anchor. He loaded a small raft up with supplies in the back of the aircraft and lowered the back cargo ramp into the crystal-clear waters. Hughes made some notes in his notebook relating to modifications required to the angle on the aircraft's floatation devices as well as to the positioning of the island. He then sketched the shape of the island and the features he had seen when circling above.

He sat in the raft and used the oar to push free from the

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ramp. The raft slipped into the water with ease and he leaned over to turn the handle on the side of the aircraft to close the cargo door. The sun shone down on him as he paddled to the shore taking in the sights on all sides, below he could see the magnificent colours of the fish darting around underneath as if welcoming him to his very own island.

Hughes spent three weeks exploring the island. He circumnavigated it twice, drawing a detailed map as he went along. He noticed that there were no animals on the island apart from tropical birds, a few insects but no humans. The centre of the volcano was grass-covered which indicated that it had become dormant thousands of years ago. He remembered speaking to a professor of geology a couple of years previously who had explained about the world being made up of different plates that moved and had created phenomena all over the globe including “underwater volcanoes that are pushed to the surface.” This island was amazing, it was paradise, and now it was his “Utopian Island” and he needed to protect it.

On his return to the airport, Hughes remained secretive about the island, not telling even his closest of friends where he had been. He knew that if anyone found out about it then it would be claimed and turned into some sort of tourist destination.

On 11th June 1936, Hughes was driving along Wilshire Boulevard, his mind distant and filled with thoughts of how he could make Utopia disappear when he struck and killed a pedestrian named Gabriel Meyer. Hughes was arrested and charged with manslaughter. Fortunately, Hughes had made some friends in very high places and even though pedestrians had the right-of-way in Los Angeles and that he had broken the law through reckless driving, Hughes was released without charge.

One day Hughes was having his early morning coffee whilst browsing through the Hollywood citizen newspaper when he read an article about a magician called Harry

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Blackstone. Blackstone was notable for his illusions which included the vanishing horse, various escapes in the vein of Houdini, the dancing or "spirit" handkerchief, and the vanishing birdcage. This was what Hughes had been looking for - someone who could deceive the human eye and make things disappear. Hughes immediately contacted Blackstone and arranged a meeting for later that week.

During the meeting, he informed Blackstone that he was a huge admirer of his and had been fascinated with illusion since he was a boy. He offered to help Blackstone by providing financial backing for his stage show but in return wanted to know how he conducted his illusions, especially the vanishing horse and birdcage illusions. Blackstone had been struggling to afford new props and advertising for his show and was pleased to accept the offer on the grounds that Hughes did not disclose his secrets of illusion to anyone else. Hughes agreed and was invited to the home of Harry Blackstone where he learnt all about the art of mirror illusion and deceiving the human brain and eye by the use of reflection.

‘So basically, anything could be made to vanish?’ enquired Hughes.

‘As long as you have the mirrors big enough, then yes’ Chuckled Blackstone.

Hughes returned home and constructed a model of the island. He then placed a series of mirrors at various angles around the model. He found that by adapting Blackstone’s methods, he could make the model disappear from above and from the sides. He was convinced that now he would be able to make Utopia disappear.

The next problem he had would be how to get a frame large enough to go around the periphery of the island, one mile offshore with mirrors strong enough to withstand the forces of the ocean. For this Hughes employed a Hawaiian construction firm called Grace Pacific to build the frame which would house reinforced mirrored glass. The two

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brothers who were the directors of the company were told that the frame was a secret Government project and would be used to go around an American air force base being set up in the Nevada desert. For this reason, they were having it constructed in Hawaii. The directors never questioned the project and were happy to accept the contract on a no-questions-asked basis, especially when the exaggerated price they had quoted was accepted. Over the six months, the employees at the construction company worked night and day to build the massive circular sections of the frame.

Once the frame sections were complete and ready for shipping, he had each section loaded onto cargo vessels and shipped to Utopia supported by a team of two hundred engineers supplied by Grace Pacific construction. The frame was lowered into the water and welded together forming a barrier around the island. Once completed, the six-metre-thick mirrored reinforced glass was secured in place.

Hughes remained on the island for the entirety of this final stage. He made sure that no one left the island or its surrounding waters until the last pane of glass was secured in place. The team returned to Hawaii and everyone including the boat captains was herded straight into what they believed to be a surprise celebratory party hosted by Hughes. The workers however were unaware that Hughes had employed the skills of a Dr Milton H. Erickson who was a Master's Degree graduate in psychology from the University of Wisconsin and specialised in Hypnosis and mind control. His job was simple: he was told that he was to remove the past thirty days' memory from a group of people and if he completed the job without question, he would be paid a significant fee.

Copious amounts of food, alcohol, cigarettes and cigars were supplied to the workers and the doors remained locked. Over the following seven hours, Dr Erickson worked the room putting everyone into a hypnotic state. Eventually, it seemed as if all two hundred plus workers had fallen asleep

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or had passed out. Hughes was impressed by Dr Erickson's abilities. He walked around the entirely silent room amazed at how hours earlier the noise of chatting, laughing and joking had predominated. Now it appeared as if they had all been gassed. He looked across the room and saw Dr Erickson whispering into the ear of a man who was standing up and leaning on the bar. He looked as if he had more than his fair share of the free alcohol and was resisting the conversation with Dr Erickson but before long, his eyes closed and his breathing became slow and deep. He then completed his mind-washing speech before removing a roll of masking tape from his pocket. He tore off a small piece and stuck it to the shoulder of the man, tagging him as finished. Once everyone had a tag, Hughes and Erickson made their way to a raised office that overlooked the floor below. Hughes produced a large air horn, the sound of which Erickson had previously set as the awakening trigger. He sounded the horn with one long blow and it echoed around the interior walls. They watched on as the workers gradually awoke, confused expressions on their faces, not knowing where they were or why they were there.

'So this will be a permanent removal of the memory then?' questioned Hughes, momentarily satisfied with the enormous task that they had just undertaken.

'It is more that we have switched off those memories from being recalled' explained Dr Erickson, 'It is impossible to completely remove the memories. However, you can rest assured that none of the workers should remember anything'

'Should?' Hughes's smile shifted, now concerned that Erickson's work may only have been transient.

By the end of 1937, Hughes had finally hidden the island and once more he was the only one who knew of its existence and so he returned to California and continued overseeing the construction of his Lockheed 14 Aircraft.



