

West Wind Watch

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(July 2014)

After five months in prison the widow Peggy Harthouse was released, aptly on the day after Independence Day. Ace Radway knew this because he was spying on her. From his sporty coupe he could see a comedy sharpen into focus despite the tragedy implicit in her situation. A “known friend” met her at the correctional facility and Ace—alongside his partner Gyx, who rode passenger, and other assembled members of West Wind Watch, also spying from their vehicles— followed Peggy home.

From there, much of the Watch dispersed, leaving only three Watchers on Peggy’s street: Ace and Gyx lounging in bucket seats of the coupe, and an overwrought retiree tense in an extended-cab truck, harboring malice against all Sex Offenders because he’d received multiple wedgies from upperclassmen as a youth in high school. Only their sterilization or death, the retiree often vowed, could sate his deep rage. The two vehicles would communicate via text (Gyx had connected a keyboard to his phone for ease of typing) until the night shift arrived.

The Watch knew the convicted pedophile served only five months of a year-long sentence. Harthouse after pleading “guilty” to Grooming of a Minor (under age 14) had looked mournful; the 25-year-old incident made the local news and she took the deal in lieu of going to trial for several worse felony charges. Yes, she did admit to briefly masturbating a sixyear-old boy at age 18. This behavior had happened only once, while bathing him, allegedly. Before release she was court-ordered to register as a Sexual Offender with the Capitol City police within 24 hours. Restrictions in her sentencing kept her from living within 500 feet of any school or daycare center and from using social media, as well as banning her from viewing or reading or owning pornography. Though she wasn’t forced to wear an ankle-monitor, she was instructed to cross to the other side of the street if children were on the sidewalk and, above all, avoid city parks and public libraries. Malls should be frequented with extreme caution. If she decided to take college courses she would need to inform the school of her S.O. status, and any vacations she took had to be cleared with her probation officer, who would “drop in” from time to time, alongside monthly conferences. Seeing a sex therapist was merely advised, much to the dislike of the Watch. Most likely because of her gender and congenial demeanor, Harthouse received the lightest sentence of anyone else in the state convicted of that crime.

Once inside the front door of her A-frame home, the S.O. poured herself a stein of wine from a 5-month-old box in the kitchen, in full view of the road. She seemed oblivious to the concept of any peepers or passersby. (Her 19-year-old daughter was attending college out of state, and her twin sons aged 24 were each married with

wives expecting their first babies; if they were all on speaking terms or estranged was a big question of the Watch.) Peggy roomed in the attic, as Ace already knew. Visible in its huge window wedged between the steeply pitched eaves, she flopped onto the bed and deliberated over several DVDs while sipping wine.

Ace patted Gyx's thigh. "Hand me the binoculars?"

Gyx obliged, as if by instinct. At 27, his dedication to Ace remained; they'd been together for 13 years and Ace, for his part, was enjoying the life they'd created. They wore each other's class rings as subtle proof of private marriage/living together since 2005 when Gyx turned 18 and began classes at Belling University. He'd cobbled together a master's degree and begun freelancing as a web guru while Ace, without even a bachelor's, had convinced Gyx to open a franchise restaurant (with his dad's money) named Nacho Mamas, so the men could run a business together in their chosen "dead-city" Capitol City. The original restaurant in Sticksville had been their meeting place while Gyx finished high school, during those early years of romance.

It was clear to Ace that having a younger mate kept both of them fluent in the trends and happenings of each other's generation. Volunteering for the WWW had been Gyx's idea—as duplicitous "moles" the pair worked discretely to ensure any released convicts were not harmed or destroyed by members of the Watch. It was the only plausible reaction to a society poised to ruin them, according to Gyx; if they too ignored the issue of pederasty in Greek culture they would be on par with hypocrites. Gyx was of course welcomed heartily by WWW members; his ability to hack into mobile phones and home computers doubled the reach of the Watch. It was easy for them to infiltrate the vigilante org, parroting back anti-ped conversations of the Watch members, guessing that the police department not only knew of their illegal surveillance but also allowed it to continue. Ace and Gyx took pix and notes on the Watch's missives and missions in hopes of getting a case together against them; progress was slow, evidence was circumstantial. Yet they pressed on, in their plight.

Through the binoculars Ace could see Peggy watching "Midnight in Paris" on her small TV. She got partially nude, changing into a nightgown, unaware (seemingly?) of her visibility from the street. Then she took off her underwear beneath the gown, a peepshow—In five months she'd put on a bit weight from commissary snacks, as Ace recalled her perfect figure appearing at the trial, yet her body remained perfect in proportion now, the extra flesh enhancing the length of her legs. For 42 the woman looked fantastic, unintentionally flaunting herself. Ace wondered if anyone had tipped her off about the Watch; he doubted she knew about the org, but if she did, she was sure playing it cool.

The retiree texted: **What she watchin?**

Gyx typed: **Woody Allen movie re: old-school artist nostalgia... no child in sight.**

“There are no kids in this movie,” agreed Ace. He mused a moment over the pinecones dropped from trees in Peggy’s yard, abstractly wondering if they were male or female cones.

“Those are male pinecones,” said Gyx, as if reading Ace’s mind.

“How do you know? I mean, they’re not like children.”

“Hard to tell with some kids too.”

“The gender of squirrels and birds is hard to distinguish. Kids are easy to see, their obvious sex, most of them, if you only look at them.”

“You can tell by what, their hair? They all dress alike now, move in unisex groups. Parents are allowing their boys to dress like girls and their girls to dress like boys these days. Some parents go so far as to give their kids synthetic hormones of the opposite sex! It’s disturbing to me that none of the tranzie kids wait until age 18 to morph, even though they’re not allowed yet to consent to having sex, while they change their sex—uh, change their ‘gender’. ‘Sex’ is no longer an appropriate term to use in biology or wherever.”

“Yeah, I get that.”

“Call coming in,” Gyx announced.

Ace knew the phone call to Peggy would be auto-recorded by WWW and scrutinized by its members for noncompliance or evidence of intent to molest a child. This was the part of their undercover scheme that most bothered Ace; without Gyx, the WWW had no way to listen in on phone calls or monitor internet activity. Yet it was all for the greater good, according to them, because his aim was to protect S.O.s from societal persecution.

“Hi, Auntie,” said Peggy into her phone: Gyx’s portable speakers clearly broadcasted the conversation in the coupe. “Are you home?” “Yes, I’m home. Have you heard from my dad?” “Not a word, Peg. He’s getting old! We have some screwy family lines, you know. Not very many aunts are younger than their nieces.” “I know, Auntie, I know. Oh, I wish he’d call me... I lost his number somehow when I went to jail.” “How did it go, registering for the sex list this afternoon?” “It’s on my to-do list for tomorrow. Tonight I’m going to try and readjust to the outside world—after what, half a year in courts and in jail? I’m so happy to be free again.” “You’re not free, Peg. What are your plans?” “Sleep, mainly, Auntie.” “You worry me, Peg.” “I worry myself.” “You need to be registered.” “I have until 3:45 pm tomorrow!” “My hope is that you honor the system. Our family hasn’t seen this much publicity since your great-aunt got mangled in that escalator.” “Your aunt was murdered, Auntie, because she was super smart and outspoken, on conspiracy theories and stuff, at age 13. Her outcry against abortion? Or what really happened with Watergate? She was a pundit.” “She had that incredible hair, like the singer Crystal Gayle, you know.” “I

know.” “It was the hair that killed her, you know.” “Auntie, I’m super tired.” “Are you sure you’re doing okay?” “I’m coping, yes.” “You do know your name and face are public information, on every search engine. Our family name is smudged.” “I realize that.” “Us Harthouses will never be the same.” “I realize that too... Auntie, how many times should I apologize?” “Enough, Peg. I will not hear it again. Get yourself some sleep. Call me after you sign up for the sex list.” “I will. Goodnight.” “Nighty-night.”

Gyx stared at Ace, who succumbed eventually to the seduction. They made furtive, impromptu love in the coupe (fellatio or sodomy—does this matter?) before the retiree again interrupted.

A text: **What goin on over there? Your windows r foggin up.**

Nervously, Gxy replied: **Hot out tonight.**

Ace rolled down his window.

On the dial-file computer screen: *Incoming from unknown caller.* “Hello, this is Peggy Harthouse.” “You do know Freud’s psychology: ‘5 Essays’; those writings spoke of gay sexual activity of 5-year-olds with adults. Respond if you’re a believer.” “A believer in what?” “The cause.” “What ‘cause’ do you advocate, you pervert?” “Girls as young as three have menstruated; boys almost as young as that have ejaculated spermatozoa.” “Ew, gross!” “Even the infant has seduced the adult with his or her suckling—” Peggy hung up.

“Of course she hung up,” said Gyx. “This call tops most of the cranks we’ve heard.”

Chuckling, Ace verified that the unknown caller was untraceable.

Peggy’s phone rang again. Gyx poised for erudition as he and Ace listened. “Hello, this is Peggy.” “If our supreme maker intended us to wait until age 18 to become sexually active we would menstruate or ejaculate at the age of 18 for the first time...? Am I right? Is this why you abused the penis of a six-year-old child?”

Clearing her throat, Peggy hung up again.

A text from the retiree: **This mega-sinner deserves death!**

Another text: **Five months?!!**

Another: **She gonna pay, big time.**

“She’s going to have a rough life, Ace,” said Gyx, disconnecting the mobile phone surveillance. “The Watch is going to trap her and send her back to prison.”

“To trap a Sex Offender,” agreed Ace.

“What if we intervene and they trap *us*? What then? Privacy is no longer private. I’m worried about the Watch. What if they investigate *us*.”

“What if? So we have a history, dating back to 2001. Who cares? Lots of straight couples are an adult male, dating a female in her early teens, marrying right after she graduates high school.”

“These days that design is suspect. Even 18-year-olds go to prison for statutory rape with their consensual 17-year-old lovers. There’s no statute of limitations on rape. If we got found out, I would be shamed and brainwashed into thinking I was a victim; you would go to prison.”

“I see your point,” Ace agreed, with a shrug. “My point is we have no arrests, no gossip, no scandal, as of now. We got together publicly in 2005 when you were 18; before then I was your math tutor as far as anyone in Sticksville knew.”

At home after their shift, Ace retold the story of their wild first encounter by the lake on which the resort where they met was located. Quite quick, Gyx orgasmed all over the sheets and rolled away for his usual snooze; feeling alone, Ace sidewinded nearer his mate.

Next morning, Peggy Harthouse slept in, til noon. Half the Watch was overjoyed, half was impatient because they wanted to cause a catastrophe that would prevent her from registering so she would go immediately back to prison. From their bed, Ace and his lover sat watching texts sent by the day’s crew—as could any member of WWW on a secure computer, thanks to Gyx—preparing to block those members from staging an incident.

“What do you think they’ll do to her?” said Gyx, musing at his lover waking just beside him.

Nude in the summer sun streaming through their master bedroom windows, Ace yawned, his musculature gleaming as he laid back on the bed. He and Gyx had also slept in after staying up half the night to discuss their predicament of possibly being discovered as spies within the Watch.

Gyx played one of their old favorite songs: “Love is My Drug” by Ke\$ha. Strangely, Ace felt distanced from the music and his usual waking playfulness; he supposed it was the stress of joining WWW and sitting up together most of the night rehashing the reach of the Watch. (Easiest to follow were the homeless; the S.O.s who drove vehicles kept the Watch running in circles as members followed them on errands or to mystery locales. Because Peggy had a car the day’s surveillance crew was anxious; the members might enact a flashmob, recruiting extra help to intervene in Peggy’s plans.) They listened in silence until it played its final note.

Then Gyx said: “I’m gonna hack the Watchers.”

“Good luck. They’ve surely been over-warned.”

“We will create a solution, Ace.”

“You’re the one taking the huge risk! Maybe you should ‘forget’ how to hack into phones and computers.”

“It’s all for the greater good, right? That was our consensus.”

“Let’s grab lunch,” Ace said, hopping off the bed, craving a cup of coffee, “and discuss our options.”

Gyx nodded. “At Nacho Mamas. We should monitor our investment.”

The neo-franchise location was small yet near enough to Belling University campus to attract plenty of students, alongside the steady influx of business lunch customers. Although the name of the original Sticksville venue was changed from Nacho Mamas to Nacho Amigos in 2010, due to a marketing ploy, the original name was resumed in 2013 (and new signage was removed, replaced by the old banner) to recapture previous flows of patrons. It was all because of anticipated profits. Ace and Gyx had opened their branch in 2013. Ostentatious red lettering on taupe surrounded by vines was their design for Capitol City, and the signage kept customers coming.

One wall-sized Picassoesque mural, hand-painted by Ace, was partly hidden by verdant foliage that crept around the dining area. Against the painting sat three peddy acquaintances (one convicted); they motioned the couple closer.

“Ace, Gyx, good to see you.”

“Where have you two been hiding?”

“Love must keep both of you indoors a lot.”

“Indoors and in bed, L.O.L.”

After ordering take-out, the couple chatted small-talk with their acquaintances. “Boys” by the Beatles, a deep-track almost lost in present-day Beatlemania, fought the rotation on the soundsystem to spatter the men with homage. Ace gave several winks to move their crowd into the back room.

To get to the private room the clique had to pass through the kitchen. At the grill stood Reese, a former vegan whom he and Gyx had known at Gyx’s dad’s resort back in 2001. They’d hired him because he was one heck of a cook; also, they’d bonded after the collapse of the male dorm there that caused the deaths of two coworkers. Perpetually single, Reese had always been kind to Ace and Gyx and when he applied to their help-wanted ad the couple agreed to employ him despite the possibility that

he knew their secret and might tell other people that Gyx was 14 and a freshman in high school when he and then-30-year-old Ace had started dating.

Lingering paranoia about Reese caused Ace to become chatty around him. He'd ask about the state of the kitchen, and the staff, and the customers. In return, Reese would ask about the lives of the owners, and about Gyx's dad, who owned the resort they'd all worked at years ago. The predictable small-talk eventually led Gyx to give Ace a signal and, receiving confirmation, they asked Reese to knock on the door to the private room when the food was ready.

The clique exited through the kitchen and into a private room. It had a bolted emergency exit: a plexiglass double-door covered in sun-peeling decals of stained glass; initially intended to be the bar, the space was currently nonpublic because the owners had decided to forgo a liquor license in favor of attracting families with kids. Plans for a playroom had also been abandoned. This room too had a mural—an orgiastic collage of Michelangeloesque men and boys, wearing bits of cloth. The clique took a seat against the scene, avoiding the greenery dangling above them as they got situated.

Ace began their informal meeting with a “minors tried as adults” analogy—about how violent teens sometimes get adult sentences, yet minors who are adamant about consenting to sex with an adult are treated like babies and brainwashed into believing that they are the victims of bad men. The practice of erasure was unsound, unconstitutional, he finished, opening the floor to discussion.

“Everyone should be questioning quote-unquote democracy. The Greeks coined that term and yet probably are the most notorious pederasts in common history.”

“Pederasty is also a Greek term.”

“Greece has been crumbling since 2009. This I think is no coincidence.”

“In Plato's *Symposium* the priest explains why bearded youths are to be romanced but never the pre-pubescents. Those younger boys may grow up good, or bad; there's no way of knowing what type of person they'll become. Whereas with teens (the bearded youths) their moral compasses are basically set.”

“That's Plato's argument?”

“That's the priest's argument. There's been some debate over the drama being completely satirical. Older versions of course contain keener translations of 'bearded,' going so far as to imply being just old enough to ejaculate.”

“Fellas, that's how the Catholic church was popularized. Unmarried men would enter the priesthood with the knowledge that sex with altar boys would be in their futures. And those who knew kept the secret, and those in the dark never found out or learned and kept the secret.”

“I had sex with a coach and my priest as a boy. I thought that’s what everybody did.”

“Yep, I wanted to, but never got the opportunity at that age.”

“What age exactly are we talking about?”

“Boys in certain cultures get facial hair earlier than most male citizens of the U.S.”

“True. Puberty is somewhat culture- and society-based. Kids with more knowledge and fear and responsibility are also more immature than they were last century. Personally, I’d like to see the age of consent lowered to when the child grows adult teeth. That makes the most sense to me.”

“Adult teeth! How perfect. What a perfect age to begin a sexual relationship.”

“Easily deduced by a smile, yes. Easy to prove that the kid is of age.”

“No I.D.s to check, no hassle.”

Gyx tapped Ace on the shoulder twice, receiving a complicit nod from his lover but no action. With a hurt expression the younger began fiddling with foliage, eventually finding a cloth and wiping off dust and water-spots. At first Ace thought Gyx was searching for audio or video spying devices. Then he watched him gently kiss the painted faces the elders in the mural.

Meanwhile the conversation continued:

“Why is pederasty now synonymous with pedophilia? We’re all about boy-fucking, right? Yet pederasty is being removed from the American lexicon because of this culture’s female equality design.”

“R-rated movies? How many children have seen R-rated movies without an adult guardian despite being under 17? Nobody follows that law these days.”

“Or porn, for that matter... The internet is full of porn for kids to watch. Hell, when I was a kid we had to steal porn magazines from gas stations to see any smut.”

“Again: if a 16-year-old is permitted to drive a half-ton hunk of steel and plastic at 80 mph, at that age he or she should also be allowed to decide who they wanna fuck.”

“At 14 they can get a job with a parent’s permission—why is having sex vilified at that age?”

“Vilified in the working classes, not the idle rich, who’ve always done just what they want to do.”

“Hollywood began with pedophilia-on-film. In many ways I think it still existed until the early 2000s, making peddy-kids into starlets, being passed from clique to clique in the halls of celluloid. Did you know that some of them are three years old when they start fucking? Disney’s mouseketeers are always suspect. But it dates back to Shirley Temple and, later, ‘Opie’.”

“Girls can go on the pill at a young age, despite having no legal right to consent to sex. The whole system makes no sense. It looks like the government is out to shame and restrict teenagers and the men (and women) who love them.”

“Boys can buy condoms without I.D., can’t they? I don’t even know.”

“Pederasty is probably the answer to date-rape.”

“Teachers who tell kids about sex are being victimized all over the country—sex education does not include a real ‘sex talk,’ does it.”

“Whatever happened with the 2nd-grade teachers who distributed condoms to their students? That story was dropped by the media immediately after it aired.”

“I don’t know a thing about it. Where did this happen?”

“The northeast I think; New Hampshire or one of those states.”

“Those teachers are both registered Sex Offenders now, I bet.”

“What about the grade-school teachers who blindfolded their students and made them eat gave cum-cookies? Just-came-on-cookies, like fresh, not baked-in cum. I think they were also imprisoned in the northeast.”

“Teachers get it the worst.”

“When was that Big Ten college football coach imprisoned for pederasty? Was it back in 2011? National news media frenzy... I still can’t understand why he denied doing those quote-unquote disgusting acts—his words, not mine! There were plenty of witnesses over what, a 20-year span. He had to’ve known they knew what he did with his protégés.”

“Yeah, I mean, several of the boys held onto old love notes from him. He obviously fell in love with most of them... but, he never admitted his love for those boys.”

“And then they moved on, out of the charity org he’d created specifically to meet male beauties from the ghetto, finally suing him for his money in a group.”

“After being programmed into believing that the coach had hurt them.”

“It’s possible he was calling out hypocrites with that ‘disgusting acts’ comment.”

“I’m frustrated, to say the least!”

“What are we going to do about the Harthouse situation? She needs to be the focus of today’s talk.”

“He’s right... All peds are stripped of their basic human rights, male or female. Peggy Harthouse is a wrench in our machinery if we let the Watch send her back to prison.”

“My idea that the concept of an age of consent is a bogus, constrictive design borne of the powered elite always gets a lot of flak. Yet it surely comes from separating the classes into rich and poor.”

“Back to the Greeks.”

“More like: Back to the Bible.”

“This is not a religious issue. (Some idiot Christians may think so.) Our Bible never condemns pederasty or pedophilia. The Bible describes the Christ healing the servant boy of an adult army captain admired by Christ, in chapters Mark and Luke. Newer translations of the Greek text reduce the servant boy to a slave, yet the original language is a salve, on our wounds, because a) the boy really was a lover of the captain; and b) Jesus never condemns pederasts. The slave was not an adult slave; the slave was a house boy. Jesus! the modern translators are doing numbers on us out of political sway and bribery or threats.”

“Is the resistance to pedophilia religious? I think no. It’s stronger than that.”

“Logically, under today’s age of consent law, all minor teens who do anything sexual with anyone (or to themselves in public) deserve jail time for illegally consenting to sex. Each state now is trying to grant minors legal leeway in different ways...”

“They’re all perverts—especially with porn so accessible.”

“...by adding gender-specific age-brackets within which, say, a 14-year old boy could have sex with a 6-year-old boy; or a 17-year-old girl could have sex with a 16-year-old boy but not a 15-year-old one. Nationwide, it’s a mess of conflicting statutes.”

“Let’s not forget that age of consent is 16 on military bases—”

“—Or that the military sex offender list is private, not public like other citizens.”

“I’m frustrated again! The legal age of consent was *seven* when this nation began. Why every citizen is either oblivious or ignorant of this fact is beyond me.”

“The age of consent was seven? What are your sources?”

“I’d have to pore through my notebooks.”

“The patriot-7-year-old motif!”

“We can all of us guess what’s next: Social anarchy.”

Obviously fed up with the delay, Gyx interjected: “Ace, our lunch?”

“Go and see that Reese made the order right, please? Thanks. We’ll be finished in just a minute.”

Sighing, Gyx obeyed and opened the door.

In the hall stood Reese, poised as if eavesdropping. “I’ve brought your food,” said the cook. He handed Gyx a large white bag and, after eyeballing the men in the room, returned to his post at the grill.

“How long was that cook standing there listening?”

Ace fumed. “I can guess for quite a while.”

With paranoid farewells the group dispersed back through the kitchen.

Before they exited Ace said to Reese: “Please announce your presence, at the door to the back room.”

Because Reese frowned, Ace lit up. The cook-runner was receptive.

Reese was anyway solvent. “A D.N.A. swab is mandatory with any felony charge, even if the person isn’t convicted of a crime.”

Gyx giggled at the pacifist ex-vegan. “You are right, Reese. The whole system is corrupt.”

“We’d better get back on the Watch,” Ace told his mate.

Nodding, Gyx checked the Harthouse e-files. As they exited Nacho Mamas he quickly gleaned the Watch’s goings-on. According to them, Peggy had tried to change her phone number but decided against doing so; then she’d attempted to sign up for spin classes but had been told sex offenders were unwelcome at the gym; then she tried each of her sons, receiving no answer but leaving sorry-sounding voicemails; then she’d gone grocery shopping. She got back on the phone and tried to change her bank account numbers and was told that all of her automatic payments would also need to be changed, so she’d given up, for the moment. It was already 2:15 and she’d yet to register. That left just over an hour to make it to the Capitol City police station.

To stop the woman's registration, the bulk of the Watchers organized a "kid blitz" to unnerve and keep her from entering the building. Myriad children—from toddlers to teens—crowded the street, departing from parents' cars or (oddly) school busses detoured from their routes. It was 3:05 and school had let out all over town. How the Watch had generated all of these kids remained a mystery to Ace; they were everywhere at once, impeding traffic with what could only be described as dangerous and erratic behavior, as if parents had conditioned the children to play chicken with all motorized vehicles to cause a disruption of traffic flow.

Then the retiree in the extended-cab truck who worked shifts with Ace and Gyx furiously drove pell-mell through a stop sign and smashed into Peggy's vehicle. Several kids were a mere yard from the carnage.

Sobbing and clutching her head, Peggy stumbled from behind her airbag and into the street. She appeared first disoriented then woozy among the children. Abrasions broke out on the woman's face. It was pandemonium. Parents gathered kids and escaped the scene, ostensibly to avoid prosecution by police.

The Watch members became enraged at the retiree (who was unconscious behind his wheel) and also at the parents and teens, who were dissipated. He would be ousted from the group for violence against a S.O., but not until he awoke from the crash, which would take several days and a hospital stay while he lied there and lied to police about his intent and competency.

What distracted the Watch from further interference of Peggy that day was sight of a "child on roof," as many WWW members perceived one roofer, who looked to them to be "12 or 13"; it turned out that the figure was named Jef Royce, a foreman of the roofing company reshingling a community theater. He was simply short and slight, far from being "underage and in danger" at 24. The embarrassed Watchers quickly vacated the scene and went to their homes, leaving only Ace and Gyx to continue their scheduled watch of Peggy Harthouse, who was forced to give up her insurance info to a fireman and a cop before finally being allowed to enter the police station. It was 3:28 pm.

While inside, a towtruck arrived to hook chains to Peggy's car and drag it away, being smashed on the passenger side and completely undrivable.

Ace and Gyx kept up their vigilance.

"Here she comes," informed Ace from behind binoculars. Heat from the day fogged the convex lenses yet he could still see her. The woman had a stack of flyers and a bereaved expression as she limped out onto the sidewalk.

Then her mobile phone rang. "Hello, this is Peggy..." "Mom." "Honey, hi! I just registered with the police. They fingerprinted me (again) and took photos (again) and asked for all of my phone numbers and email addresses. They told me I have to register again every year, on my birthday, even if I don't move; if I move, I need to go

in again within one day of moving. I'm so stressed. Someone just totaled my car!" "Don't move, Mom." "No, I doubt it would do any good. People are following me but they would know it if I moved because of these damn neighborhood flyers I have to hand out all over the community." "It's always about you, isn't it, Mom? Do you even care what my life is like now?" "What's new with you, honey? Are you learning a lot at school?" "College is a bore. Except for one course on women's equality—nobody in it can understand why this nation requires only the men register for the selective service. If we have a draft, women should also be called to action, do you agree? I'm opting to register, as a female. If women want full equality then why not start with rewriting a basic prejudice against us?" "You're what? Opting to register for the draft? Why would you commit suicide in that way? I don't understand." "You wouldn't, no. But that's not the whole of it. I want to champion the National Service; William F Buckley, Jr said: 'What severs the cord binding the generations also snaps the web that unites contemporaries.' I'm learning enough to know this government is fucked up and things need to change." "What is the National Service?" "It would require all citizens—male and female—to devote a few years to improving this country, before enrolling post-secondary." "Are you interested in changing the Sex Offender registration too? Or are you going to leave your mother out in the cold during the big governmental shift?" "It's not my fault that you were a bad babysitter, Mom. I had nothing to do with that." "You were also a bad babysitter, daughter-of-mine." "How so?" "Locking that child in a cedar chest, for one. And watching R-rated movies with that 10-year-old next door." "Mom, how long have you known about that?" "Everyone knew at the time, honey. It's why you quit getting any babysitting jobs." "I thought all of the kids were sitting for themselves." "Of course you did." "I think you even told me that's what was happening, Mom." "Of course I did." "Lies never help anyone." "Neither does telling the truth, I guess... I was incarcerated for admitting to one mistake I made with little Tull Allen oh so many years ago. Now I'm a Sex Offender for life. I registered today and my info will be all over the web by tomorrow morning." "Well, anyhow, Mom, I've gotta get to class. Take care of yourself." "You too, honey. Love you." "Yeah, I get that." Click.

Gyx gave Ace an eyeful of angst and shook his head. They continued to watch the Watch's latest person of interest.

On foot, still limping, widow Peggy disseminated the flyers featuring her mugshot, full legal name, birthday/age, felony conviction, conviction date, physical address. Ace tailed her from street to street, school to school, even to the library. It occurred to him that prostitutes, drug dealers, burglars, thieves, embezzlers, murderers and violent offenders were free to live anonymously after release from prison; they had no registration requirements or housing restrictions. (The internet did contain most of their mugshots; however they ran no risk of failure to register and an ensuing prison sentence.) Why society vilified child-lovers had its roots in politics, not philosophy, thought Ace. He tried to ignore more hopelessness in his heart. The registration concept was as precise as Hitler's scapegoating of the gays by marking them with pink triangles. How many gays were imprisoned for sodomy with adult lovers last century? Lots, and it's the same kind of criminality against love, was his thought.

“Let’s give her a ride,” said Gyx from behind the wheel of the sporty coupe.

“Where’s she gonna sit? We have no back seat!”

Gyx rolled his eyes. “How about between us?”

“All we can do is follow her, make sure she gets home okay.”

“We should say something to her, about the Watch.”

“And cause her more paranoia? Nope, bad idea, Gyx.”

“I guess you’re right. There’s nothing else we can do for her.”

The next day, someone in the Watch reiterated its agenda in a text from an unknown phone number: *“We blow in like the west wind and stake out neighborhood sex offenders. We interfere in their lives and they know this; they see us watching them, taking notes, flashmobbing on occasion; they have no proof. Our efforts have been successful in making the offenders move away, or turn to illegal drugs or alcohol, or commit suicide, or go back to prison where they belong. A few put up with us and that makes us angry. Do the few that remain feel safe, being watched? We think not. The final few need help seeing that we do not want them in our community and we take extra measures to aid their banishment. No direct physical harm will ever come to these offenders via the Watch. Yet they will feel our efforts and vanish from Capitol City! We are here to protect the children by using nonviolent force to oust any and all offenders from our community.”*

“We’ve got them,” Gyx said, overjoyed.

“I’m not so sure,” countered Ace. “It’s far from definitive.”

More texts came in from the Watch. Tomorrow on the WWW agenda: A plot to slander a newly-released pedophile by insinuating he had sex with animals. Dogwalkers by the dozens signed up to help create public scenarios with their leashed pets; most of them would also leave a pile of poop on neighborhood sidewalks during the staged incidents.

“We’ve gotta stop them from doing this,” said Ace, angry at the audacity of the Watch.

“We should not take this risk anymore. It’s getting too dangerous.”

“Yeah, I still say the time to act is now.”

“Now is not the time to protest, to march in the streets,” quavered Gyx. He tousled his lover’s dyed emo-hair. “This is impossible, an impassable juncture, a situation normal all fucked up beyond all recognition.”

“S.N.A.F.U.B.A.R.,” agreed Ace.

Then something else unexpected happened. Video of Ace Radway (name prominent) jerking off during a thunderstorm in 2001 surfaced on social media. With his glossy face tilted upward, the 30-year-old man looks demonic. Toward the end of the movie the viewer can see Ace and teen Gyx snuggled on a sleeping bag in a dirt-poor room, as if homeless and squatting at a condemned house. Littered with pop-up commentary, the video slanders and degrades, as well as entertains by labeling Ace as a “pedophile turtle in heat”.

Ace got upset, but not as upset as Gyx.

“Who could’ve done this? (Was it Kid Keen, from way back at the resort?) What if the Watch sees this? We’re dead in the water, Ace. Things couldn’t be any worse.”

Next day, the video got discovered by the WWW members. Immediately the Watch formally dismissed Ace and Gyx as “double-agents intending to deceive”. The irony astounded Ace less than did the gumption and timing of the documentarians— whoever they might be. Ace delved and spun with suspects from his past. A handful of suspects from the past rose to prominence: but Shredder and Beau were dead, squashed by the male dorm’s collapse. The culprit could only be Kid Keen or any of a dozen workers at the resort that season, including chef Reese, who was asexual, as far as he could tell.

Gay preference will make all the difference? thought Ace with apprehension. In light of the current politic, it seemed likely that society will erase pederasty from gay history, which would be tantamount to labeling all pedophiles as deviant instead of labeling them as pioneers to the makings of modern society; what a shame.

To save face, Gyx suggested that he and Ace join the flashmob picket line forming across the street from Peggy Harthouse’s A-frame. Ace considered doing so. He imagined spying amongst the angry neighbors would provide a good knowledge of the other side of international debate.