

## Remembrance

by Tim Goode

### \*\* A PERSONAL RECOLLECTION COMMEMORATING THE JANUARY 12<sup>TH</sup> DISASTER OF 30 YEARS AGO \*\*

I'd like to tell you a story from my childhood. I grew up in the days before mandatory GPS tracking of known possible-dissidents; before the Advisory Board saved us from a lot of pain and misery. I can still remember the mood in the neighborhood after the events of January 12, the distrust and fear that pervaded the complex hallways after the IdeaLoges, as they were known up to 1/12, managed to stage their violent attack on the Foreign Trade commission across the street from where my family lived. I admit that I was too young at the time to understand why the IdeaLoges decided that it was a good idea to destroy, *attempt* to destroy I should say, the foundation of much of our society's economic well-being. However, what I do remember clearly is that my father, Vin DeXue, was an economic analyst at the Foreign Trade commission.

Most of the public employees of that time (it amazes me still that the Commission on Economic Excellence had not yet removed governmental control of industry in order to increase

efficiency and quality!) were given priority in the apartment complexes that were close to their places of employment. My father had, upon his appointment to the Foreign Trade commission special task force on Intercontinental Immigration Levying, moved our entire family to the newly refurbished, high-ranking, high-efficiency apartment. Only the high-ranking, high-efficiency apartment complexes were fitted with the now-mandatory environmental dampening technologies. I remember my father telling my mother that not even a hurricane could upset the building's inhabitants (as if there *were* hurricanes that far north!), and that we were lucky to have access to an apartment complex with such architectural values. My father's high standing in the Body, based solely on his ability to bring value to the Body, earned him access to the appropriate economical advantages.

I was 10 years old at the time, and I can still remember the new-apartment smell that had been injected into the apartment's air-cycling unit. It reminded me vaguely of the previous year's intercontinental vacation to the Thay beach resorts. Something like the salt-tang mixed with organic coconut-dragonfruit milk. My mother, Fay Oponui-DeXue, had insisted that the apartment be refurnished with then-available organic all-teak furniture, as it reminded her of her childhood on her family's estate in Old New Delhi. She was quite old-fashioned, and her desire to have primary organic-source furniture instead of the more environmentally friendly brands available was proof, but my parent's economic contract with one another enabled them to share the cost adequately. It was their combined economic standing and efficiency quotient that allowed my brother and I to have separate rooms in the new apartment, and for a young girl becoming more concerned with her privacy, this new development was the most-liked feature of my family's move. I can still remember seeing my new private bedroom with its beautiful teak

bedset and a brand-new Access Tablet sitting on the black and white designer bedspread. Oh how my heart leaped for joy when I laid eyes on my new-found blessings!

My younger brother, Oliver, was 7 years old when we moved into the new apartment, and he seemed to be just as happy about having his own bedroom. It was smaller than my bedroom, of course, and he did not receive a new Access Tablet, as he did not have the economic capital that was at my disposal. I am a little ashamed to say that he was in the lower range of IQ scores at the 5 year testing mark, and I am sure that if the prenatal testing tools that science has given us in the past decade had been available he would not have had to endure the shame he has had to face in his lifetime. I loved my brother Oliver dearly, and I do to this day, but I sometimes wonder if it would have been better for him if he hadn't been born into this world at all. You see, he has never been able to match me for earning capability, and that matched with his wonderful competitive streak seems to have hurt him quite deeply.

Our family moved into the new apartment just as the holiday lights were going up around The Metropolis. It was the first week in October, and the streets were a bustle of early-arriving intercon-tourists who had come for Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. I did not realize till much later that The Metropolis was not always so busy, but for a 10 year old, the city held the magic of many different cultures colliding. As we got out of the personal taxi that my family had taken into the city-proper from the train station I was not prepared to hear the music of at least 3 different languages, all of which I had some training in, being spoken at one time. I know that our current educational system has been shaped by the demands of economic justice so that everyone now speaks a variation of the same basic vocabulary and grammar, but perhaps I am being nostalgic in my old-age when I say that I wish that we hadn't made Chinese or

English functionally extinct languages. I know that keeping multiple languages would have created economic injustices and perpetuated unjust systems, but I can't help but think that there may be a little beauty that has escaped the world when those ways of speaking left it.

Because I was so far ahead in my online studies, I was able to explore the neighborhood quite freely in the time between my family's arrival in The Metropolis and the events of January 12. Most days began with an early breakfast of organic oatmeal, followed by an hour of economic study. These classes were done on my new Access Tablet, which interfaced with an advanced standing classroom program run by the Education Board of The Metropolis. After economics my mother would teach my brother and I about the Bible before she had to leave for her work at the community mental health clinic where she worked as a counselor. (I am not ashamed to say that those hours learning the basics of Christian faith are what have sustained me throughout my life, and would help me make sense of the disaster of January 12.) Once we had finished our bible study, my brother Oliver would take the bus to his primary school, where he learned about basic science, math and reading with other children who had scored in the same range on their 5 year IQ tests. I spent the rest of the day, up until mother and father arrived home for dinner, in the hallways of our apartment complex and having mastered those I soon set about exploring the rest of our neighborhood.

It wasn't until after Black Friday that I was able to find a suitable friend in the neighborhood. I had first spied Alina when my family was returning from our neighborhood church on First Sunday After Black Friday. She was about my age and very tall, and was running back and forth on the sidewalk with a couple other girls, playing some sort of skipping game. As we passed the group of girls, my father told me in a whisper, "Dear, that giant of a girl

is the daughter of Joseph Ayerman who works on the task force with me. They seem to be a nice family, and he mentioned the other day that she has been wanting to meet ‘that new girl with the red hair who just moved into the neighborhood.’”

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“I guess she saw me when I was out learning the neighborhood, and finding the online hotspots,” I replied to my father as I looked back over my shoulder at the tall girl. I realized that she was returning my look, so I smiled and waved over my shoulder. She smiled and waved back.

“Probably dear,” he said as he walked forward to hold the door into our building open for my mother. If my mother was old-fashioned in one way, my father matched her in another. My face flushed with embarrassment and I hurried inside before the tall girl could see.

Alina and I quickly became friends. I found out that she was a member of another local church in our neighborhood, and that her mother had died 2 years before in a taxi accident. She said that it had not bothered her too much, because she had not known her mother (as her father and mother never signed an economic contract, and her father had gained sole custody based on his much higher economic potential). That her mother had been a drug-addict I did not find out until much later, and I do not fault Alina for keeping that secret from me. We made plans for the upcoming Christmas vacation: she spent Christmas Eve and Christmas day with my family while her father went on his yearly intercon-vacation to the English countryside. “I don’t like it there”, she said. “It is much too dreary since the majority of the population moved to London-Metro. There aren’t any people, just animals.” Alina never liked animals, and while I saw the economic and ecological sense in having some around, I understood her natural aversion to being around them. Animals were just too smelly, messy, and unpredictable.

I did not see much of Alina for the first week of the New Year. She attended a specialized artisan school, and the first week of every New Year at her school was devoted to creating something new for the public display on the Wednesday of Second Week. Alina was a masterful sculptor, and that year she was selected to be the featured artist, so she spent almost her entire free time leading up to Second Week perfecting her piece. In the brief moments that I was able to spend with her I was persistent in my attempts to find out just what it was that Alina was creating. She would smile infuriatingly then say, “I don’t want to ruin it for you because you are my best friend. But I will promise you that the wait will be worth it! I’m not good enough with words to describe it to you anyway.” I would respond with a harrumph, then continue trying to wheedle the information from her. Alina was as steadfast as a mountain.

Most of my time waiting for Alina’s artistic debut was spent in the rhythms of my family’s daily life: waking early, studying the Bible with my mother and Oliver, and then working on my assignments and classes for most of the early afternoon. I usually completed my work by three o’clock, so I usually spent about an hour reading news articles on my Access Tablet while I waited for my parents to return from work. Oliver would usually be able to cajole me into playing games with him, with much more leverage since Alina’s time was consumed with her preparations. He was much better than I was. He would grin, his cheeks red with exertion, as he would yell “Out!©” Oliver’s favorite game was Hoops©, and he played that game with abandon; his ability to run back and forth between the holographic hoops was apparently legendary at his school. My ability to complete the run before Oliver completed the “Out!©” puzzle was definitely below the average.

It was the Tuesday before Alina's much anticipated art exhibition, and Oliver and I were playing a game of Hoops©. Well, Oliver was playing, and I was feeling a bit tortured. He had just completed his second Hoop, and I was breathing heavily and trying to wipe sweat out of my eyes while working on the "Out!©" puzzle when I heard the door to our apartment open. "Alright Oliver, that's it," I said between labored breaths, inwardly glad that the gauntlet had ended. "Are you sure?" Oliver asked in a pleading tone, his eyebrows raised and forehead wrinkled. "Yes, Oliver." I responded, wiping the sweat droplets that had congregated on my nose with my Hoops© towel. "One of the parents is home, and it's time for my news update anyway."

By that time our father had looked around the corner into the family room. "Is your mother home yet?" he asked in a strained voice. There was a tightness at the corners of his eyes and in his voice that scared me. "Not yet, is there something wrong?" I asked, my heart increased its rate even beyond what my exercise had induced, and I felt like I'd inhaled a piece of ice. My father grimaced. "We should check the news feed," he said hollowly, as his head disappeared from the doorway. I followed him out of the family room, took a right down the hallway towards the screening room, Oliver following on my heels with his small sweaty hand holding on to the back of my shirt.

Father had turned on the news feed before Oliver and I arrived. The light from the news feed reflected on the antique glass frames of our family photos on the left side of the hallway. In a large family portrait Father and Mother's faces were tired, yet filled with joyful hope, I looked excited and a little overcome; the whole scene was washed in red flames, strangely curling around little baby Oliver cradled by my mother in the center of the photograph.

As quickly as the flames flashed over our family I turned the corner into the screening room on the right of the hallway, by this time holding Oliver's hand in mine. Father was standing, silhouetted in the dark screening room by images of a large brick building burning, fire crews spraying water and chemical fire suppressants at the base of the flames. The air shimmered with the heat, and the smoke billowed black, as if whipped by giant hands. "Where is that Father?" asked Oliver as he pressed the side of his face against me as he hugged my arm tightly. "That is the Foreign Trade commission building, Oliver," Father responded. "It's apparently the only building targeted," he whispered, his right hand tightening into a fist, "so it must be a small group."

"Father! That's where you work!" I exclaimed. "Were you there when it happened? What happened?" "I was taking a late lunch, and received a call from my supervisor to go straight home and not return to the office," he responded, not turning his eyes from the aerial footage of the burning Foreign Trade commission. *"Government sources are stating that a terrorist group calling themselves the 'IdeaLogues' are claiming responsibility for this act of armed aggression,"* the deep voice of a news anchor intoned steadily. *"Officials state that investigation is underway and that the group will swiftly be brought to justice. No fatalities have been reported as the IdeaLogues have apparently targeted memory banks containing trade and financial information."* "Hah," said Father, standing on his toes for a moment and pumping his fist in the air, "we backed up that information two days ago! The IdeaLogue's information must have been faulty!"

*"Breaking news, we have been given a live feed by the Justice Department of an ongoing operation to bring the IdeaLogues to justice, please standby while we take you to this*

*feed.” The news screen cut quickly to an aerial image of a tall apartment complex, “According to officials, the Justice Department has determined that the explosions were caused by a complex computer virus. Investigators have tracked the origin of the virus to a network in what the authorities are 99.999% certain is the base of operation for the group...” I could feel Oliver press his body closer to my side. I held my breath. The camerabot floated slowly around the apartment building, the sun’s rays reflecting off of the windows as the news anchor paused his commentary. “Justice will be done,” said my father in a startlingly loud voice. Just then, there was a flash of light, and a whole section of windows exploded at once, flames shot out briefly then died, and the sound of the blast reached the camerabot just before the shockwave.*

Transfixed, I stared at the shaking screen, at the same time seeing my father jumping up and down with his hands in fists over his head and shouting, “Get the bastards! Justice will be done!”

*“The strike team has neutralized the IdeaLogues command center...” narrated the news anchor. I realized at the same moment that Oliver had pressed his face against my side hiding the screen from view. “...and now report all terrorist operations have been halted. Authorities anticipate no more attacks utilizing...” The apartment door opened, and Oliver released his hold on me and ran down the hallway. “Mother!” he shouted, “The strike force got them! They got the Idealos!” Staccato footsteps sounded, getting louder as they approached the screening room. “Vin, you’re alright!” gasped my mother as she moved quickly into the room to embrace my father. Oliver followed with his face wet, joining Mother and Father’s hug.*

“Yes Fay, I was on a late lunch and was nowhere near the Foreign Trade commission building when the *IdeaLogues* attacked,” responded my father with a smirk for Oliver as he corrected him. “They got them just before you walked in, blasted their headquarters to kingdom

come. It was a beautiful bit of justice. Maybe they will show a replay in a moment.” He spoke as he turned towards the news screen, right arm holding my mother close, with Oliver on her right holding onto her belt and staring at the screen. “*...please mind that because of the likelihood of secondary operating bases, we cannot at this time release the location of the possibly first of several terrorist operating centers...*” The rest of the afternoon and evening was spent watching replays and commentary.

I had difficulty falling to sleep that night. I replayed the images of the burning Foreign Trade commission building and the exploding windows over and over. Finally exhausted, I slipped into fitful dreams of fire consuming photographs of my favorite economists.

The following morning I awoke and remembered that Alina’s showcase was that evening. I felt guilty for having forgotten, even for the evening, that it was her big day. My daily routine went by slowly. First, Bible study, then studying, then lunch, then more studying, then news feed of the events of the previous day with commentary and analysis, each seeming to stretch out endlessly. Father did not go to work that day, but instead spent the majority of the day in the screening room. Late in the afternoon he was actually interviewed for a special on the effect on the common citizen that the IdeaLogue’s attack had produced. “If they had succeeded,” my father said forcefully, “they would have effectively crippled the ability for the common citizen in the transcon to be productive for at least the next two months. I am sure that the psychological damage would have been devastating.”

I became more impatient as the afternoon worked towards evening, and went early to the exhibition without my family at about seven-thirty. Alina had not arrived yet, but the supervising artist, a tall man with thin gray hair tied back in a ponytail, assured me that she would be there.

“She finished setting everything up yesterday morning and went home to take a much needed break. I believe she said something about spending most of the day today with her father. Driving in the nature preserve or something like that.” He said all of this while glancing over my head and twisting his neck to the left and the right squinting. “Excuse me dear, I need to make sure that all the artists’ works are in place.” “Thank you,” I responded feeling slightly deflated. “*Surely Alina knows how excited I am to see her,*” I thought. “*I guess she changed her mind about animals.*”

My family found me about half an hour later, sitting on a bench in the large glass domed exhibition hall surrounded by draped works of art. The stars were just starting to become visible through the glass, and the other guests were walking around the hall, talking softly so that the entire space seemed to be filled with magic. “We left earlier than we intended,” said my mother as she and Oliver neared my bench, the tone of her voice held an exasperated edge, “because your brother was so excited to come.” “Yeah!” broke in Oliver, his round face the very picture of barely contained excitement. “I really like the music they play here, and they have a big playground, and my best friend will be here, and it’s going to be great!” He was bouncing on his toes peering around, probably to catch a glimpse of his friend. “What about Alina’s art, Oliver?” asked my father as he walked up behind my mother carrying two programmes. “Oh yeah, I bet Alina’s stuff is going to be nice too,” Oliver responded, still peering about. “That’s Chris over there, I’m going to go play with him!” With that Oliver rushed towards a short, fat Middle Eastern looking boy about his age.

“Attention everyone,” boomed a voice over the Public Address system. It was the tall ponytail-wearing man I’d asked about Alina earlier that evening. He was standing on the

opposite side of the room at a podium that had been set near where Alina's artwork was covered with a white piece of fabric that shimmered in the light. "It appears that our featured artist will not be joining us for the unveiling of her artwork, there is a Lt. Rouge from the Defense Force who has an announcement to make." My heart jumped into my throat, and it seemed as though time slowed down as Lt. Rouge, a fat man in his police uniform with a hat tucked under his arm, walked to the podium. His short, hard booted steps echoed in the now quiet hall. Pop. Pop. Pop. Pop. It seemed to take an eternity for him to reach the podium. I glanced at my brother who was whispering to his friend, both of whom were looking at me with what might have been looks of concern. "*Did something happen to her? Is she lost at the nature reserve? Did her dad go off the approved track and get them into trouble?*" Pop. Pop. Pop. Pop. Silence.

I looked back towards the podium. The tightly dressed Lt. Rouge had finally reached the supervising artist at the podium, who had moved towards Alina's covered art. The lieutenant placed his hat on the podium and pulled a piece of paper out of the right pocket of his black, button-up military coat then cleared his throat noisily. "It has come to the attention of the Justice Department that Jack Arturo Grimming was involved in acts of terrorism that threatened the disruption of the economic wellbeing of our country. We have some suspicion that his daughter, Alina Heather Grimming, was at the least aware of the planning of these acts..." *This cannot be true.* "...and may have played a role in the carrying out of these acts. However," he paused and wiped sweat from his flushed forehead. *Alina was not a terrorist.* "she is unavailable for questioning due to unpredictable circumstances arising due to the outcome of ongoing Justice Department operations..." I felt a hand on my shoulder and looked back. It was my father, a pained expression on his face as he focused on the man speaking from the podium. *I will not cry,*

*Alina is just missing, that is all.* “and will be considered innocent in accordance with the code of justice. Therefore, her art will be permitted to be viewed by the general public.” He cleared his throat again, folded the paper he had been reading from, placed it in his pocket and returned the hat to its place under his arm. My father’s hand tightened on my shoulder for a moment as the hall filled with whispered conversations which drowned out the sound of Lt. Rouge’s retreating footsteps.

I turned to face my father. *He could not have meant what I thought he meant.* “What did that mean father?” I asked, as my eyes started to sting. He looked down at me, his eyes red and shining. “It means that Alina is not coming, dear one. It means that she is never coming.” I felt my mother wrap her arm around me and my parents embraced me. Now I could cry. I still do.