

# Expatriates of Babylon

## *Preface*

I have observed that people of all political and religious persuasions want ninety-plus percent of the same things. These needs and desires are well served by alternative energy and structures that don't rely upon fuels and other resources from faraway countries.

A concern developed in more recent years relates to homelessness. Through personal experience in this area, I am deeply aware of the prejudice and stereotypes, the gut wrenching emotional toll and the extreme difficulty in recovering from situations that could not be prevented.

At the time I began this novel it was little more than an exercise of play. It was intended as a short story with no serious value other than to sort out my own thoughts, and as a personal experiment in attempting to write fiction.

Naturally enough, it soon became based upon situations actually experienced and observed.

A key aspect of this work is the use of appropriate technologies. These are real and proven, but currently underemployed. For the benefit of those interested, I have included an appendix that provides additional details on some of these tools.

This work is divided into three parts, with the first based upon personal experience and observation. The second two parts project current economic and political trends into their expected futures – but they are mingled with a scenario of hope.

Upon rereading it I realized that it is in fact a road map to a sustainable future – independent of those who manipulate nations and global destinies. It is a manifesto that embodies a plan for the youth and unemployed to create a future of their own, as they continue to watch a fragmented political system competing for their votes with clearly impossible promises.

Understand that this is a work of fiction and opinion, and is not to be construed as a narrative of fact.

## *Part I The Parallel World*

### *1*

#### *Falling Out of The System*

“Socrates said that when people know what is right or best, they will do it,” declared John.

“Trust me on this one,” replied Cindy. “When it comes to human relationships, Socrates was simply wrong. Instincts are better than intellect.”

As he was searching for a logical response to her irrational assertion, Cindy took another swing: “Are we having a little difficulty knowing what's right or best?”

In fact, John was loving it. Their conversations in the college coffee lounge were special to him, and he enjoyed an intelligent companion who did her own thinking. Again, before John could collect his addled thoughts, there was another interruption.

“Can we expect your lovely form at our party this evening?”

On *this* point Cindy was undecided on two counts. For one, these fraternity guys were having more parties than she had time for, and two, she was annoyed by the sexist reference in the invitation itself. Somewhere during her pause the interloper added a snide remark about her fraternizing with the lab help.

At this John quietly stood up. Slovenly dressed, a bit overweight, and not tall, a couple of the group began to snicker at his appropriate exit. However, to their bemused wonder, John had only stood up to address them.

“Why on earth would she consider favoring you children with her gracious presence? Perhaps she prefers to be around people of substance, rather than those dependent upon their funny little cliques for security and self-worth. For you to tarnish an invitation with a sensual reference demonstrates your total disregard for her intellect and other qualities that put her even further out of your league. Now if she finds you amusing, far be it for me to even suggest a choice for an intelligent and responsible person. I'm only in this conversation because you invited me 'Frat boy,' so here I am.”

Whew! What did I step in? wondered Frat boy. At six two and the lead varsity swimmer, he knew full well what he'd like to do, but he knew that *that* would be neither right nor best in this situation. And too, John's

absolute lack of fear – or even a trace of respect, was frankly a little intimidating. The resulting conflict between his instincts and intellect left him all but paralyzed. “Would you kindly just...” He tried again: “When I invite you to...” Frat boy would have been far better off if he had actually *known* that he was speechless.

When others attempted to assist their friend, they too were humiliated.

“What’s your name lab rat?”

“It has more than three letters, so someone like you would probably misspell it.”

“Are you her little brother?”

“Do you see a family resemblance? If you think I’m pretty, forget it – you’re not my type.”

“Everybody likes a little ass, but nobody likes a smart ass.”

“We’ve all heard that one before, but now I understand your humor – it’s half memory.”

“And the other half?”

“Half wit, obviously.”

And so it went. These guys were trapped, and John was having fun. Although they were clearly losing – both as individuals and as a group – it would have been extremely awkward for them to just walk away. The only one of their number who had been wise enough to keep his mouth shut also had a trace of humility. He finally rescued his friends by extending his hand and graciously offering: “If it were up to me, I’d invite you to the party as well. I’d much rather have you on *my* side.”

With grudging nods, they were now free to go without risking another word.

Unlike a couple of the bystanders who had accumulated during the scene, Cindy resisted the temptation to applaud, but her beaming smile and congratulatory nod said it clearly.

Cindy’s motherly instincts had been piqued. She had just seen a small dog attacked, only to rise up and humiliate a wolf pack. There was obviously a whole lot more to this loner than she had imagined – and there was another thing: He had protected her – that was a first. Others in this academic environment had only treated her like social furniture.

“Will I be seeing you here sometime tomorrow morning?” she asked, as she gathered her things to head off to her next class.

“I have some lab equipment to set up, but I’ll be free from about 10:30 on,” said John.

Although far beneath her station, John was a refreshing change from her usual fare. He wasn’t phony, macho, a jock or wealthy – decent looking, but he seemed to care little about his personal appearance. More intriguing

was that he didn't try to hit on her; he hadn't even asked her out. He was just a comfortable friend who seemed interested and knowledgeable in almost everything he encountered. As she further mulled the scene in her mind she pictured herself helping him with his dressing and social skills.

With the comfortable income of her family, college had been assumed for Cindy, but for her it was more of an extended childhood than a serious pursuit. She had however, become intrigued by the intricacies of living things, and was soon to garner a B.S. in biochemistry.

Cindy was often melancholy and seemingly disconnected from her surroundings – a very lovely girl, clearly preoccupied with deep and troubling issues. When she *did* smile, John felt the warmth of the morning sun.

As the middle child of a single mom, John was on his own when it came to getting an education, and his resources didn't allow him to pursue a degree. Still, he had been able to pick up a few courses in physics, chemistry and art.

His innate ability to solve problems enabled him to compete with graduate engineers in the industrial world. On the down side, his maverick career required exaggeration and networking to gain such positions. During an “in-between” period while working part-time as a lab assistant at the local college, he had met Cindy while helping with equipment in one of her classes.

Their friendship had begun when she encountered him outside of class and had asked a question about a lab procedure. Though not officially a teacher, he took the time to sit down with her in the coffee shop and provide a depth of understanding that illuminated other areas of confusion as well.

By this time their friendship had grown and they no longer needed an academic question for an excuse to hang out, and to share a few of their more personal concerns and experiences. It had been an attempt on Cindy's part to help John with his social skills that been interrupted by the soon-to-be-humiliated fraternity boys.

John tended to be inept socially, and Cindy could see that. His preoccupation with technical issues had proven to be a good place to hide his emotions, and his endless projects provided an excuse to do other things than pursue a social life. His refusal to be phony also put him at a disadvantage. He reasoned that he would rather not build a relationship based upon false impressions which he would either have to live up to or

suffer exposure. But as an insightful observer and listener, devoid of boasting, he managed to attract meaningful relationships at the platonic level.

Cup in hand, Cindy settled herself in the seat and sighed. She gave John a faint smile and a nod in lieu of a verbal greeting, and then proceeded to watch a bird flitting about a bush just outside the window.

“Alright, what’s bugging you?” asked John in his simple direct manner.

After a brief struggle, she finally relaxed and replied: “I’ll be graduating in a couple of months, and I’m going to miss you.”

John was surprised at how relieved he was to hear her say that. He too had been dreading the day but – ever the social pessimist – his mechanism for dealing with it had been to coldly begin plastering over the doorway to yet another nook of his emotions. Now he suddenly dared to consider that that might not be necessary. “We could keep in touch,” he finally suggested hopefully.

“I’d like that.” A long pause.

“That was only part of it,” discerned John, carefully observing her body language. Their mutual expression of wanting to see each other had emboldened him.

“It’s complicated,” she dodged. In actuality she wanted – needed someone to care enough to invade her privacy and be by her side. Another pause.

“And?” John’s tenacity was reassuring.

Finally Cindy dropped her head and began by talking to the table. “My parents have been fighting a lot, and they don’t care enough about me to leave me out of it. I’m moving out weekend after next, but I haven’t told my parents yet – I’ve already paid first and last on a two-bedroom apartment.”

“Would you like some help?”

“I would be very grateful,” she said, finally looking up. “I’ve never been on my own before, but the strife at home is killing me.”

“I’ll be there,” reassured John, and they began to discuss how best to break it to her parents.

After surreptitiously collecting a couple days worth of personal items from home she would contact her dad by phone at work, so he would not have time for a wordy response.

[Expatriates of Babylon](#) (159 pages) by William Huff may be purchased at [lulu.com](http://lulu.com) (click on the link)