

**CARDINAL
HOAX**

KARL BOZICEVIC

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DEDICATED TO MY FORMER LAW PARTNER CAROL LASALLE,
WHO CONSISTENTLY ENCOURAGED ME TO WRITE THIS BOOK AND
WHO PASSED AWAY IN 2011. SHE WAS NOT ONLY MY PARTNER,
BUT A DEAR FRIEND TO ME AND TO SO MANY OTHERS.
WE MISS HER ADORABLE QUIRKY SMILE.

*Do you want to know who you are? Don't ask. Act!
Action will delineate and define you.*

—Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826)

On a crisp autumn afternoon, Herbert Sedlack and his friend Thomas Freeman headed into the woods surrounding Herbert's home on the upper Michigan peninsula. They each carried BB guns fully loaded with copper BBs poured into their guns from a small tube Herbert had bought that morning. Herbert was nine years old and filled with a sense of adventure.

About one hundred yards into the woods the two boys stopped, looked up, and spotted a cardinal sitting on a pine-tree branch thirty yards away. The bird was bright red, singing, and facing directly toward them. Herbert raised his rifle to his shoulder.

"You'll never hit him from here," said Thomas. "He's out of range."

What Thomas didn't know was that Herbert had taken his gun apart, put in a stronger spring, and lubricated the piston to make a tighter fit. He could smell the gun oil as he aligned the sight toward his target. He fired. The BB flew in a slight arc from the barrel to a point well above the target, then dropped and hit the bird directly in the center of

its chest. A few small feathers flew into the air around the point of impact, and the bird fell.

"You got him! I can't believe it, you got him!" Thomas shouted.

Immediately Herbert felt sick. He never expected his gun modifications to work so well, and never wanted to kill the bird.

The scene flashed through his mind almost fifty years later as he sat nervously in a high-end restaurant on the edge of San Francisco's theater district. He picked up the empty plate in front of him, examined the intricacies of the design around the edges, and put it gently back on the table. Generally a happy person, he was feeling anxious and using the plate to stall. He picked it up again and smiled at the reflection of his overweight face. He wondered how much he would reveal tonight, and just how to do it.

He'd accomplished a great deal as a particle physicist, and acquired a degree of wealth from companies formed based on practical applications of his work. His success flowed from his ability to focus his intellect in a way few others could.

He studied the abstract art on the walls to avoid eye contact with Korin, a tall, attractive venture capitalist ten years his junior. A large brass impressionistic statue dominated the center of the room, surrounded by tables that were spaced apart to provide diners with a degree of privacy. A small cluster of yellow flowers in a simple silver vase caught his eye next, and he noticed how they contrasted with Korin's stylish deep purple dress—a dress that left one of her shoulders bare.

Korin had asked the waiter to decant an '82 Petrus she'd brought to entice Herbert to meet with her. The sommelier

returned the filled decanter and empty bottle to their table. Herbert picked up the bottle, examined the label, and ran his thumb back and forth across the Petrus name. He looked forward to smelling the wine, tasting it, and drinking every drop.

"So, where did you get an eighty-two Petrus?" he asked. "This is an amazing find. Did you find a new dealer? Someone in Saint-Émilion?"

"I bought a case in the original box when I was in Bordeaux last year. The dealer had just picked it up from a local who needed the cash. But I'm not here to talk to you about wine."

"But I really enjoy talking about wine," Herbert said.

"I know, and we'll get to that. Right now I need to understand why you didn't show up for the dinner on Saturday. I had fifty people there. Those people expected to see you. They invested in your ideas. You never even called. What happened?"

The previous week, Korin had invited a group of wealthy investors to a celebration dinner. They had put money into a company she'd formed based on one of Herbert's inventions. The company had gone public, and their originally risky investments had paid off well. Some of the guests knew Herbert, others were expecting to meet him, and Korin had promised he would be there.

Herbert continued to direct his attention to the wine label. "I don't like big events with lots of people. I don't want to be the center of attention. It was just too difficult for me."

"That's a start. But I know there's more to the story. I set you up with a date for the dinner, and this isn't the first time you've stood up someone I arranged for you to meet. We've

known each other a very long time, and think I deserve more of an explanation." Korin gently removed the bottle from Herbert's hand and placed it to the side, which Herbert understood to mean that the wine would come later, but for now she needed his attention.

Herbert wasn't quite ready to answer. Perhaps some wine would help, he thought. He picked up his glass, swirled the wine, smelled it, took a sip, and held this amazing complex Bordeaux in his mouth with his eyes closed and enjoyed himself.

"I know this wine deserves a more sophisticated compliment, but I'll just say it's really yummy. What did you pay for this stuff?" he asked.

Herbert knew Korin was becoming increasingly frustrated as he avoided answering the very questions he wanted to answer. He knew she prided herself on her interpersonal skills, which included her ability to get others to talk openly. He admired this skill, in part because he believed he lacked it. At some point, he hoped to unburden himself about his deepest secrets. But perhaps not tonight.

"I paid about a hundred thousand dollars for the case, when you make the Euro-to-dollar conversion. But you're still not talking to me. I have feelings too, Herbert. I was hurt when you didn't come—not just embarrassed. I thought we were more than business associates. I thought we were friends, and I deserve to know what happened last Saturday night and why you never seem to care for the women I introduce you to. I'll give you the rest of the case of Petrus if you'll tell me."

"Well, it's not as though I'm seeing someone else," said Herbert with a slight laugh.

"On the one hand, that's good to hear," said Korin. "But I was almost hoping you'd tell me you were getting back together with your high-school sweetheart. At least I could understand what was happening."

"I never had a high-school sweetheart," said Herbert. He knew why that was. He also knew that he didn't regret the lack of a high-school romance. Many people had never had a meaningful romantic relationship in high school. But Herbert knew that most people had wished for one. He had not.

"Was that a disappointment for you at the time?" asked Korin.

"No. It wasn't a disappointment," said Herbert.

"That's fairly unusual. Is that because you were focused on your studies?"

The waiter arrived with their meals and provided Herbert a chance to think. He cut a piece of roast beef and lifted it to his mouth. He chewed slowly, savoring the tender meat, and then spoke.

"It's actually the opposite of what you're proposing. I focused on my studies because I had no interest in romance."

"Well, maybe you were too young at the time. People mature at different rates. Did that change in college?" asked Korin.

The direction of the conversation was making Herbert uneasy. "We're not here to talk about my lack of dates in high school. I was working on a new breakthrough the night of the dinner, last Saturday night. I just couldn't leave my lab," he said.

"How many times have you told me there was some new breakthrough you were working on? Dozens of times over

the last fifteen years you were making a discovery that was going to completely change the world of electronics. Why should I believe you now?"

"Because it's the truth. It's really important, and I got so involved I forgot about everything."

"Well, I've known you to be an incredibly driven and focused guy when it comes to your science. What were you working on?" asked Korin.

"I was working on a way to make electrons much smaller," said Herbert.

"One thing I know is that electrons are very small. So why is it important to make them smaller?" asked Korin with a smile and a slight laugh.

"I know you don't want a long scientific explanation. I also know you've heard me get excited about my work in the past. Just trust me when I tell you this could be the most important scientific discovery of all time. Last Saturday I made an important breakthrough, not just on the science, but on a practical application of what I'm doing. You need to see what I'm doing to appreciate it," said Herbert.

"Why would you want to show me? I'm no scientist. I won't understand it."

"It's not complete, and I don't need you to understand the science behind it. I've put a lot of my time and nearly all my money into this project. I've put millions of dollars into it so far. It's far enough along now for me to show someone, but I don't want to disclose it publicly. I need more money now, and I'd like you to invest in further development."

"Invest in it? If it's as important as you say, why don't you keep using your own money and reap all the rewards?" asked Korin.

"I'm not poor, but unlike you I don't have ten million dollars lying around. I know there's still considerable risk, and I've already spent a great deal of what I have. Much of it was spent going in the wrong direction. I'm on the right path now. After you've seen it, and I tell you what I want to do, I'm sure you won't be able to resist being a part of the project."

Herbert knew his interpersonal skills left much to be desired. He also knew Korin well, and thought it best to say very little at this time and let his accomplishments do the talking for him. He had great confidence in his work and enormous excitement about the possibilities he knew would flow from it.

"I'm intrigued. When can I see it?" asked Korin.

Herbert smiled. He had interested her in investing, and this was his primary goal. He'd said what he wanted to, and not said what he wasn't ready to tell.

"How about tomorrow morning at eleven, my place?"

Korin removed her iPhone from her purse and checked her schedule.

"That works—and this evening has worked as well. I'm glad you told me what was going on. You're an interesting guy, Herbert."

"You have no idea how interesting," said Herbert with a wink.

Their dinner proceeded, and he could tell that Korin was more focused on his invention than his having missed her dinner party. He had assumed she would react this way. In fact, he'd counted on it. Dessert wine was ordered and the evening wound down.

"Let's finish off our d'Yquem and I'll see you tomorrow morning," said Korin.

“One more thing. To make sure you show up, I’ll promise you something. I know you like jewels. Tomorrow morning I’ll tell you something about diamonds you never even imagined. It fits into the story about my work,” said Herbert.

“Fascinating,” said Korin. “I can’t wait.”

Herbert left the dinner feeling very satisfied. He had someone who was very wealthy interested in investing, but Korin wasn’t just any investor. He liked the way she saw things differently. Korin made her own rules. This was, in part, why he felt she could help him move forward with his project. He had in mind a plan that would break all the rules.

CHAPTER 2

It is neither wealth nor splendor; but tranquility and occupation which give you happiness.

—Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826)

Korin Prentise stood in front of her bedroom mirror assessing what she saw, a tall, athletic woman approaching fifty. Her features carried traces of both her Italian mother and her British father. Her flawless white skin with the faintest hint of brown contrasted with her bright green eyes, and her thick, wavy brown hair hung just below her shoulders. Korin understood the importance of appearance and knew she had a classical beauty. She would look good without even trying, but she did try to look her best. She wanted to look fabulous, while appearing as though she wasn’t even trying. She also knew it was her inner energy, more than anything, that attracted men and women to her.

As she headed downstairs, she paused to admire an original Marc Chagall that hung on the landing. The dreamscape made her reflect on just how fortunate she was.

Half an hour later, she was driving north on Highway 280, looking forward to seeing what Herbert found so very interesting—and wondering how it might be connected to diamonds. She exited off 280, passed through the small commercial area of Woodside, and headed west toward Herbert’s.

Trees lined the winding two-lane road and hid most of the homes from view. Woodside was one of the wealthiest small towns in America, and its residents paid generously for peace and privacy.

Herbert had more than once exaggerated the importance of his work. Sometimes his exaggerations and enthusiasm served to convince others to invest. Herbert had, to an extent, made her wealthy, or at least her work with his inventions had. Some of his inventions and those of others she had handled with were little more than minor modifications of the original pioneering inventions. She'd been able to take those slightly modified inventions, market them, build companies around them, and sell those companies for many multiples of the original investments. Building another company and making more money was a way to have more influence. She wanted the power and influence that came with money, but she also wanted something more from life. She wanted something that really challenged her. She suspected that what she was about to see would do just that.

She arrived at the large black iron gate in front of Herbert's estate, pushed the intercom button, and waited.

The speaker came to life. "Is that you, Korin?"

"Yes, it's me. Who else would it be, your high-school sweetheart?"

The gate swung open. She drove up the driveway and saw Herbert leaving his house with his yellow Lab, Quark. He gestured for her to park by the building she knew to be his laboratory. He and Quark followed on foot. As soon as she turned off the engine and stepped out of her car, Quark bounded over to greet her. She hugged him and pressed her cheek against his as Herbert approached.

"So Herbert, what kind of quark is Quark?" she asked, pulling a handkerchief from her purse to wipe her face.

"As you know, quarks are subatomic particles," said Herbert, breathing a little hard. "There are all kinds of quarks—red, green, blue, up and down. But he's none of those. I liked the name because of its first appearance—in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*."

"Interesting. I never thought of you as a reader of Joyce. I brought you something." She handed him a pink box containing the jelly doughnuts she knew he loved.

"Thank you," said Herbert. "I knew you'd remember. Do you mind if I eat one now? I haven't had breakfast."

"Please do," Korin said.

They headed toward the lab. Large oak trees shaded the area, their trunks bent in intriguing ways. The ground was covered with small smooth pebbles that crunched beneath their feet as they walked. Quark trotted at Herbert's side, looking up in hopes of falling doughnut crumbs.

The door closed behind them with an electronic click and buzzing noise, and Herbert gave it a tug to confirm it was secure. The lab was brightly lit and filled with electronic equipment, most of which appeared to be new and partially disassembled. Instead of conventional artwork, boldly signed photos of scientists were mounted on the walls, supplemented with glass cases containing old models of patented inventions. She couldn't identify all of them, but some looked to be miniature steam engines and others were railroad cars.

Herbert seemed a little uneasy as he looked around the lab. "So, Korin, I know you're always telling me to simplify my explanations. So I'll try. Have you heard of Moore's law? I'm sure you have, right?"

"I have, actually. I think most people dealing with computers in Silicon Valley know it's got something to do with the capacity of computers to double every two years or so."

"Well that's right," said Herbert, offering Quark a small piece of doughnut. "One of the cofounders of Intel was a guy named Gordon Moore. In the sixties he noted that since the development of the integrated circuit, the number of transistors that could be placed on a given chip was doubling every eighteen to twenty-four months. He wrote a paper about this, and then around 1970 or so a guy named Carver Mead read Moore's original paper. He did further calculations and coined the phrase 'Moore's Law.'"

"I'm guessing you're telling me all this for a reason," said Korin.

"Just give me a chance. I'm trying to give you some background. I'm not good at this. So you know that until now Moore's Law has been shown to be true. Most people think it will continue to hold up for maybe another decade or two, and they're still focusing on making silicon transistors smaller. But at some point those transistors will be as small as they can get, and something different will have to be used to get more and more information onto a given space."

"Whatever mainstream researchers are working on, I'm sure you're working on something different," said Korin.

Herbert looked up with a smile and some powdered sugar around his mouth. "You know me well. The reason the silicon transistors can only be made so small is that at some point the electricity running through them will melt them."

"So you figured out how to cool them down?"

"No, but that's what some folks are working on. It turns out that diamonds conduct heat very well. You remember I told you I'd work diamonds into this?" asked Herbert.

"Of course I do. Go on," said Korin.

"Although diamonds conduct heat well, they don't conduct electricity at all. That is, most diamonds don't."

"But some do?"

"Yes, blue diamonds conduct electricity," said Herbert. "The Hope Diamond is the most famous. Take a look at this."

He led her to a large curved black table with a rough textured surface. Three computer screens were positioned side by side on the table just behind a keyboard. Herbert sat down, activated the center screen, clicked on an icon, and brought up a photo of the Hope Diamond. The stone was brilliant blue, cut with dozens of facets and surrounded by sixteen clear diamonds of varying shapes. Its size was difficult to judge, but unmistakably huge.

"Quite beautiful," said Korin.

"If you shine ultraviolet light on a blue diamond then turn off the light, it will glow. Here's what the Hope Diamond looks like in the dark." Herbert clicked on the photo. The white diamonds dissolved and the blue diamond emerged as a brilliant red glowing stone. It looked completely different from before, at once opaque and translucent. The facets were barely visible, and the diamond reminded Korin of red-hot metal.

"The glow you see comes from electrons. It shows that the Hope Diamond is conductive. Others are working on ways to make diamonds conduct heat and electricity. It has some promise. I decided to take a completely different route. I decided to see if I could make the electricity itself different," said Herbert.

"Different electricity? That sounds strange."

"I'm a strange guy. Simplifying, what I did was try to make electrons smaller. I generated an electron flow and used

positively charged energy around it to focus the electrons to a smaller and smaller stream. This produced effects that I never predicted."

"What effects?" asked Korin.

"That's what I brought you here to see."

He led Korin to an elongated black-marble-topped lab bench. At one end was a large crude-looking machine, with a tube leading from it to what looked to be some small pedestals at the other end.

Korin was all but certain none of this involved a computer, but she had no idea what it did involve. She was hoping Herbert wouldn't start writing equations on his white board, and that whatever he did show her would be something she could understand.

"I'm sure you know what this is," said Herbert, pointing to a gumball machine next to the bench.

"Yes, but you didn't bring me here to show me a gumball machine."

Herbert put a coin in the slot and pulled the lever. Out rolled a green gumball. He handed it to Korin.

"Take a look at this. I just want you to know that it's an ordinary gumball," said Herbert.

"Yes, it looks like an ordinary gumball to me."

"Take the gumball and put it on that pedestal at the end of the tube on the bench," said Herbert.

Korin placed the gumball as directed, then looked at Herbert. "Now what?"

"Just stand over here behind me and keep watching the gumball," said Herbert as he walked over and switched on the power to the equipment on the table. Quark began to bark. Herbert turned a large black dial that looked as though it belonged on a large safe.

"Just keep watching the gumball," said Herbert, "and stay behind me until I've switched this off."

Korin suspected a trick of some sort. She stared intently at the gumball and the pedestal where it was positioned. As Herbert turned the dial, the equipment hummed quietly. Quark barked anxiously and moved back behind Korin. Then, without fading, without moving, the bright green gumball simply disappeared.

A pulse of adrenaline shot through Korin, followed immediately by a wave of excitement, nearly sexual in its intensity.

She swung her gaze to Herbert's calm face. He switched off the power, then sat on the floor to hold and comfort Quark. If this was a trick, the dog was playing some role, but all seemed so genuine.

"Where is it?"

"Go take a look," said Herbert, stroking Quark.

Korin moved quickly to the pedestal, touching the surface where the gumball had been. She checked the bench, the floor, even the ceiling.

"It's not here. What happened to it?"

"Nothing happened to it," said Herbert. "That's the whole point. It didn't go anywhere I can detect, but it's gone."

"That makes no sense. I think even Quark would understand that if it's gone it went somewhere."

"I've lost a gumball machine full of gumballs. Every time I turn this on, Quark barks. He detects something, and then the gumballs appear to be gone. I've tried, but I haven't been able to get them back."

"Is your machine here somehow vaporizing them?"

"No. If they were vaporized, they'd be here, simply in some other form. It would be gaseous. I've checked, and there's no

gas from the gumballs. I even tagged some gumballs with transmitters and searched for a signal, but nothing. The whole thing just completely defies conventional physics," said Herbert.

Korin didn't answer right away. She knew without a doubt that she'd just witnessed something very important. If Herbert could replicate his results on larger objects, perhaps his invention could be used for waste disposal, or maybe even tunneling through mountains. Instead of demolishing old buildings, you could remove them in their entirety. The possibilities would be endless.

She made Herbert rerun the demonstration three times. Each time, she changed some variable of the experiment. First, she put the gumball in a glass. Next, she filled the glass with water. Lastly, she put the gumball behind a block of lead. But each time, the gumball disappeared, leaving everything else in place.

After the final experiment, Korin left Herbert and Quark in the lab and took a walk around his property, her head spinning. When she got back, she asked, "So what kind of investment were you thinking about?"

"You came here today thinking I was exaggerating, didn't you?" said Herbert.

"Okay, I admit it. You've done it to me in the past and I had the same expectation this morning. But I was wrong. I'm a little disappointed I'm not getting a diamond, but this looks very important."

"I want more than your money," said Herbert. "I want a serious commitment from you."

"What kind of commitment?" asked Korin.

"I'm sure you've already thought about the possibilities, if I'm able to develop this technology. One of the first things I

thought of was using it to dispose of nuclear waste, assuming the objects that disappear don't just end up somewhere random. Then I envisioned ridding the world of nuclear weapons."

"I know you have strong antiwar sentiments. But if the nuclear powers found that their weapons were disappearing, they might get very nervous. You could end up creating a war," said Korin.

"We're getting ahead of ourselves. There's no way to know where this might go. I need more money to develop it, but I don't want you in on this just for the short term, in order to sell it to make some quick money."

This was something that Korin and Herbert could agree on. She didn't want another project she would promote and sell quickly. She wasn't sure Herbert had shown her everything, and she knew that people often had a strong subconscious component to what they really wanted out of a project. Understanding the influence of that component is what she believed to be her best asset. She was certain that Herbert's subconscious was suggesting to him what his discovery might be used for, even if he didn't consciously admit it. She needed to explore this further.

"It always concerns me when people say they're not interested in quick money," she said. "I wonder if they're being realistic. It usually means they have poorly formed ideas, or simply want to do something that makes them feel good. That's not what makes the world work. To create a successful project, you need a lot of greedy people working very hard together with the goal of making lots of money," said Korin.

"Maybe my idea to rid the world of nuclear weapons isn't workable. But it's the kind of idea I'm thinking of. Something

that will shake things up. We'll get back to that later. For now, I want you to invest ten million dollars. I'll use the money to move the project forward, and I want you to have some skin in the game. I need you helping me to come up with possibilities for using this. Something very different from what we've done before—not just cashing out with a profit on the low-hanging fruit. I need you to give me time to develop this, and I need you to keep it a secret," said Herbert.

"I'll keep it a secret. But the legal rights need to be locked down. Have you filed for a patent?" asked Korin.

"If I tell some patent lawyer, he and everyone in the office will know about it. That's not what I want. I might want to use this in some truly unconventional way, and the fewer people who know anything, the better. I'm not saying the use would be illegal, but others might not agree with it."

Korin was already excited about this project, but his mention of an "unconventional plan" upped her level of interest. Risk was what Korin was all about. She thrived on risk. She'd been enormously successful by taking huge calculated risks.

"Does anyone else know about this?" asked Korin.

"Not a single person."

Korin actually liked the idea of keeping the invention secret for now, although the idea of not filing for a patent made her uncomfortable. She knew she could lose her entire investment if someone else filed for a patent before Herbert did.

"Are others working on the same idea?"

"As far as I know, no one in the world is working on anything like this. Others are focused on making smaller semiconductors or artificial diamonds. No one is trying to make smaller electrons," said Herbert.

"That's what everyone thinks. Everyone thinks no one else has the same idea, and then two different people invent the telephone on the same day. What makes you think that won't happen here?" asked Korin.

"Others would announce it. They would need publications to get funding. I'm not announcing it because first, I don't need to publish and second, I'm getting all the money I need from you. Third, I want to do something I may not want to tell others about. Those three things are extremely unusual, and all three would need to be present for someone else to have this idea and not announce it," said Herbert.

"You make some good points. Still, I'm not sure I agree with you. Others could be working on it, but be less far along than you. From what I'm hearing you may have a long way to go on your own invention. You don't even know if the technology will work on something bigger than a gumball."

"That's why I need your investment. To build the system you're looking at bigger. And before that, to figure out where the gumball goes, and how to get it back," said Herbert.

"Why would you want to get it back? Getting rid of something could be an end in itself. Bringing it back defeats the purpose, doesn't it?"

"Not at all. Eventually, I want to be able to make anything, including people, disappear from one place and reappear in another," said Herbert.

"You really think you can do something like that?"

"When you came in here today, I'm sure you never thought an object could just disappear. Now that you've seen it work you see things differently. Korin, I know I can figure out the science behind this and make it work. And I'm convinced you won't regret this investment."

She knew he was right. “Even if you never figure out how to get the gumball back, it’s an amazing invention. So what’s next?”

“I want you to put an agreement together. You’ll get an ownership position. I’m suggesting ten million dollars for ten percent. That’s enormously generous. I’m doing it because it’s you. I don’t want just your money, I want your help in thinking through a plan and helping me carry it out, even if it could get us both into a lot of trouble. But first, I want you to go home and think about it.”

“I’m not interested in getting in a lot of trouble,” said Korin, though in fact that was the part that most intrigued her. “But I do understand that you have something very interesting here. I’ll think about it. If I decide I want to invest, I’ll see about moving money.”

They both stood and said their goodbyes. Before she left, Korin looked under the bench one more time. She was all but certain this wasn’t a magic trick, though she always enjoyed a good magic trick. She reflected on shows in Las Vegas where objects far larger than a gumball had disappeared at the deft hands of a magician. Herbert was a kind of magician, but a very different kind.

“You know something about those gumballs, don’t you boy?” she said, stroking Quark gently as she left the lab.