

Damian Garcia:
***PhD Drug
Smuggler***

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Preface

This is a story of Damian Garcia and the international drug trade in opium and hashish by PhD graduate students in New York City, circa 1972. It is a story of friendship, family, loyalty, and an exceedingly discreet and extremely profitable drug smuggling business plan. The business plan was a new combination of opium and hashish product, which the family branded as *O/H*. The targeted demographics for *O/H* were graduate students at major university campuses, and nurses and doctors, attorneys, and accountants worldwide.

O/H became the professionals' drug of choice.

The mood of the country was fading from the glory of the Woodstock nation of 1969 to the realities of the Vietnam War of 1972. The music was changing, and free love was fading into free infections. America was turning from a nation of peace and love into a nation of hate, violence, and hard drugs.

Graduate students were intellectually curious, politically liberal, and anti most things establishment, and definitely anti-police. They were the perfect consumers for marketing the business model for opium and hashish. The financial returns vastly exceeded their wildest imaginations, with significant monies going towards social services helping those in need, professional development, and legitimate business investments worldwide.

The combination of both opium and hashish into a high-profit, higher quality product was a true marketing genius for the time. It took the combined brains of graduate students in international business, banking, and law to practice what they studied in school.

If only their professors knew how talented their students truly were!

O/H became an international enterprise unknown to all but a few. Those who knew would never tell; that was the family code.

The story is through the eyes of Damian Garcia, looking back in another day, when life was more trusting, the social and political climates were more interconnected, and personal relationships truly mattered.

This is their story...



The characters, names, locations, and descriptions are fictional. Any resemblance to reality is purely coincidental, and completely unintended.

CHAPTER ONE

Damian Garcia and The Family

When we first met Damian Garcia, he was a street-wise man from New York City, both in spirit and attitude. Damian wore his hair long with sideburns and a mustache. He always carried a pocket watch like the railroad conductors favored, wore wire-rimmed glasses, and his clothing was mostly jeans or dark pants, a shirt, and a sports coat. His body was built lean and hungry, and he walked briskly like a man on a mission.

Damian's draft number was 69, which meant he was front line Vietnam War fodder. Damian was a peace-loving vegetarian, and dropping napalm bombs on innocent people in a foreign land that just happened to produce the finest marijuana was not on his agenda.

Passport ready, Damian Garcia was ready to move to Vancouver, Canada, for the rest of his life, if the alternative was going to war. Graduate school was the only deferment available, and given the circumstances, it was an excellent career choice.

Damian was a fast learner and survived by instincts. Hard experience taught him to read the streets and be alert for signs of trouble. He could sense by the hairs on the back of his neck if he was being cased for a hit.

Once when Damian was walking home alone in the dark, four punks, two on each side, blocked his path. Damian kept his eyeglass case on a clip on the left side of his belt, partially hidden under his sports coat. As the punks approached, Damian casually reached his right hand across his belt, towards the left side, and put his hand on the eyeglass case.

Damian observed one punk on his right side had a six-inch, dou-

ble-sided switchblade knife in his right hand. One blade had a serrated edge, and the other blade was sharp as a razor.

The punk on Damian's left side was holding a .38-caliber revolver police special in his left hand, blued in color so it would not reflect light. This was the issued weapon that detectives and patrol officers for the New York City Police Department carried.

Damian thought to himself, *Why is this southpaw, left-handed punk carrying a NYPD gun? Is he a cop killer?*

Damian processed this information in a microsecond, and he acted.

As Damian passed by the four punks, two who were visibly armed, he tipped his hat with his left hand, while resting his right hand across his belt on the left side.

Damian said in a tone of authority, "Good evening, gentlemen."

He borrowed this demeanor from a popular television police show. Obviously, the four punks were not smart enough to separate fact from fiction.

The punks stopped, thought about it for a second or two, and allowed Damian to pass. Damian kept his normal pace and slightly nodded to the four punks. He had a look on his face that said, *You do not want to piss me off tonight, punk!*

The left-handed dude could have shot Damian in the back as he passed the punks. The right-handed switchblade punk could have stabbed Damian in the chest or back of the neck.

Damian was lucky this time.

The lessons learned were that the outside world sees only what you show them. Damian showed the four punks that he was either a wise guy or an undercover cop, and it was in their best interests to leave him alone.

With training, Damian reasoned, you could become anybody you wish the world to see you as. Your inner soul may stay the same, but you can determine your own external image. Public image can translate to strong passive security, in that who would suspect a graduate

student of being an international drug importer and money launderer?

By flying below the radar, one avoids observation.

That was powerful information, and the basis for survival and success, which Damian later incorporated into the business plans and operational procedures for O/H Incorporated. This was required learning for all O/H investor-franchisees and their distributors.

He lived his life in the shadows and always below the radar.

It was safer that way.

George Carlin Dog met **Damian Ogden Garcia** one cold morning in January 1972, when Damian was on a breakfast mission, and late to class as usual. Damian stopped to watch a very personable and friendly-looking dog, of many uncertain breeds, peeing on the yellow line in the middle of a major New York City street. Taxis and busses were passing by, and this dog was quietly doing his thing, oblivious to the hustle and bustle of the world whizzing around him.

They made eye contact. The dog slowly strolled over to Damian with his tail wagging and a happy smile on his face. Damian and Mr. Dog sat on the front steps of the apartment building he was sharing with other graduate students. Damian started petting and talking to Mr. Dog, and he responded with licks and a happy tail. They spent the next hour communicating on the steps as the human race went by.

Damian looked at the railroad conductor style pocket watch he always had with him, and realized he missed that class.

Life does have its priorities, and meeting a new canine friend took precedence over a boring lecture. *I will get the notes from some chick in class anyway*, Damian reasoned in his head.

Damian brought Mr. Dog upstairs, gave him a warm, sudsy shampoo bath, and dried him off with a bath towel.

Damian exclaimed, “Mr. Dog, you look so much cleaner and you smell better too. Let me give you a good brushing, my canine friend.”

Mr. Dog enjoyed the affection and attention as much as Damian

was enjoying his new friend. That was the start of a beautiful relationship. They became inseparable soul mates.

Damian made two peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, one for Mr. Dog and one for himself, and placed a bowl of fresh water on the floor. They munched their meals happily, communicating in silence.

Apartment 3A's door opened, and the graduate student housemates walked in. They had been doing laundry and food shopping. In this neighborhood, it was safer to shop as a group than individually. The concept of safety in numbers was well understood in the animal kingdom, and they were living in the human version of the animal kingdom.

When everyone sat down, Damian said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to present my new friend and our new housemate, Mr. Dog."

Vash, Roger, Howard, and Marguerite all bent down and took turns introducing themselves.

Marguerite said to Damian, "I like our new housemate. I am a dog woman, and he has a big personality. We could use a dog for security. This is not a safe neighborhood, especially for a woman, you know."

Howard added, "I will second that."

"Likewise," Roger nodded in agreement.

So it was decided that Mr. Dog would be Director of Security and provide escort services whenever someone left the apartment alone.

Mr. Dog bonded with Damian and the housemates, as the group was bonding with each other. The addition of a cool dog for friendship and security was a positive influence.

A few evenings passed and the group was sitting in the living room, smoking hashish, drinking wine, and watching TV. George Carlin, the comedian, was doing his politically incorrect comedy routines.

"That is a perfect name," Damian announced to everyone, exhaling hashish smoke during a commercial. He declared, "Mr. George Carlin Dog will be your name!"

Roger added, "I like that name."

The group agreed.

George responded with a tilt of his head, as if to say, *I like that name also. This may turn out to be a nice place to live.*

Damian said to George, "Welcome to the family, George Carlin Dog. Your adventures, my friend, have just begun."

As Director of Security, George was in charge of all things human. He proved to be a brilliant studying partner for the small circle of over-stressed brains, reminding them when it was time to take a break from studying, and a walk in the park was required.

George would say, *Grey matter requires rest to rejuvenate; otherwise it collapses into useless mush. Therefore, humans, I require a long walk in the park. In other words, get off your sorry asses and open the damn door, please and thank you.*

The humans obeyed his command, because George knew best.

George had no clue what a leash was. He never wore one, and he never needed one. George responded purely to quiet voice and subtle hand commands. He would wait at intersections, following Damian very closely, hugging one leg, as they crossed the street together.

George would sit quietly in front of a bodega or ethnic grocery store while Damian shopped for groceries. When Damian walked out of the store, George would follow closely. George would agree to casual petting and attention from strangers, but he would not allow anyone to get too close.

George Carlin Dog was as human as a dog could be, and Damian considered the concept of "dog food" disrespectful. When the humans ate, George always enjoyed the human meals. The group was mostly vegetarian, by economics, choice, or culture, and George by default was a veggie. If given the opportunity, he would gladly chew on a steak bone.

Damian Garcia, Lori Wilson, Vash Gupta, Roger Rajiv, Marguerite Nguyen, and Howard Pavel, all between 27 and 30 years old, started

as graduate student housemates of Apartment 3A. They were placed together, along with George Carlin Dog, by fate, providence, or pure luck—either bad luck or good luck, depending on your perspective.

Over time, they grew to become a lifelong family and the brain trusts of the international O/H drug trade. The quiet O/H family of highly educated graduate students living in Apartment 3A included the most diverse, brilliant, analytical, and devious masterminds of the international drug and money-laundering trades. They also believed in the concepts of giving back to the community and helping those in need, and over time, large sums were invested in non-profit humanitarian foundations.

On a blustery Sunday, the group decided they should nestle in for the evening and connect. Schoolwork was up to date, and it was time to relax, bond, and talk. Food was a priority, and the group was very adept at making small quantities of different stuff, merged to become large wonderful meals. A jug of wine was placed on the table to be enjoyed, as was a bong crammed with hashish.

They enjoyed life on a shoestring. The group shared wonderful meals, family, and friendships together, and Vash happily provided the family with excellent opium and hashish for all to enjoy. They were poor, happy, highly educated, and high.

Damian asked Vash, “Vash, my friend, I love the products you always have available. How do you get this stuff? I have been around New York City for a long time, I know people, and I cannot get this stuff.”

Vash said, “Funny you should ask, as you Yankees like to say. I will tell you about my family, and then you will understand completely.

“I come from a very large extended family in northern India, where various family members collectively own thousands acres of fertile farmland.”

Damian smiled broadly in recognition. “Exactly what are the crops

you grow, and how fertile are we talking about?”

Vash smiled shyly. “The land is very fertile, and we grow only high-value crops, using a farming cooperative method, and we share in the success and failures equally. The family farms produce the finest opium, hashish, and marijuana the world has ever known. And that, my housemates and friends, is how we are smoking the finest hashish and opium unavailable anywhere except Apartment 3A.”

The group smiled in complete appreciation.

Vash Gupta was tall, skinny, very friendly, with a happy smile on his face, a wicked sense of humor, and seriously smart. Vash was studying for his PhD in Economics. His expertise was statistical analysis and all things math, which were not Damian’s friends.

Vash said to Damian as they shared food and wine, “Thanks for the cooperative effort writing the parts of each other’s assignments that are our personal weaknesses.”

Damian replied, “And likewise, my friend. We complement each other to help each other. That is what friends do to help each other succeed.”

The bowl of hashish was lit and passed around the table. George made himself available as each person exhaled into his mouth and nose. George became exceedingly stoned, rolled over on his back, and watched his humans upside down. The group laughed.

Vash said, “You know, I had a choice of places to get my PhD, but I chose Cardiff University because it offered an excellent economics program and because I wanted to live and work in New York.”

Marguerite said, “The centers for international business, finance, engineering, and law are in New York and London. That is why I am here also, as I am sure is Roger.”

Vash said, “I must admit, back in India and London, I lived in nicer neighborhoods than we live in New York. I feel like we are living in the slums and ghettos.”

Damian said sarcastically, “Yes, we are, my friends. Welcome to New York City! As bad as this area is, I grew up in rougher places. From my perspective, Vash, I am moving uptown, and up the social ladder. It is nicer than the neighborhoods I left.”

Roger said, “And from our perspectives, we have moved way down the food chain.”

Marguerite noted, “This is a drug-infested, crime-infested, dirty and dangerous place to live, especially if you happen to be female.”

Damian added, “Life is all about perspectives, and objectives.”

Howard said, “It is also about attitudes and philosophies of living. Like Roger,” he continued, “I come from a very comfortable and highly educated background. My parents are prominent doctors in India, as are my brothers, sisters, and other family members. The Pavel family is inter-connected with the medical industry in one form or another.”

Vash added, “And living in this neighborhood in New York in these turbulent times is a rude awakening. How do you say it? A reality check.”

Howard quipped with a big smile, “The reality of life in this city is not exactly what the travel agencies portrayed in those pretty brochures.”

Smart and ambitious people adjust quickly, and Howard was both.

Howard Pavel was studying for his PhD in International Finance, and he was not a man to be underestimated. He was more devious than he was brilliant, and he was truly brilliant. Howard would make a huge impact on the financial community and influence future economic events.

Howard’s character was more conservative than liberal. He wore his hair closely cropped, favored dry martinis, stirred not shaken. Howard preferred white shirts, dark ties, and dark business suits during the day, and he wore matching pressed pajamas to bed at night. He was fastidious.

Howard would iron and starch his clothing on Sunday evening so his wardrobe would be ready for the week ahead. The man was so punctual you could set your watch to his habits. This was good, because somebody had to keep the unruly housemates in line, and Howard de facto volunteered.

As our resident consultant on international banking and money laundering, Howard understood the finer points of moving mountains of cash worldwide. He provided strategic expertise in business processes, operational procedures, funding mechanisms, money laundering, and credit instruments, including the Swiss banking system; all needed to keep the wheels flowing as the enterprises prospered into the future.

Howard said, "I wrote a paper last week, outlining various business models and operation plans. Obviously I changed the names and enterprises, as usual, but I am sure you can put it to good use."

Marguerite said, "Of course, it is flawless and on point, because Howard has the innate ability to visualize into the future."

Howard added with a smile, "If I can give you the road map to follow and prosper, then my job will be done, and I will be a happy man. I like to plan, organize, and make things happen. That is what I do best. Soon, I will make my mark on the world, creating really big, complicated financial deals."

Without question, Howard Pavel was destined to control the future.

Howard advised, "It is important to anticipate business interruptions, and to build layers of liability insulation to protect the inner organizational core from potential problems. The U.S. dollar is the strongest currency in India and has extraordinary buying power in the black market economies. Buying goods in U.S. dollars yields far better returns than buying the same goods in rupees. The dollar is like gold. It is king."

Howard was also the driving force for better grades. He would tell

the group that discipline and concentration were important, saying, “School first, family second, career third and social life is last.”

He would lecture, “Through disciplined study habits, you get the best grades. The best grades equal the best jobs, and therefore the best employment opportunities. I am very ambitious. Ultimate success is my ultimate goal. Work harder than everyone else and you will succeed. For me, it is a very simple formula.”

Marguerite smiled. “How does one argue with rational logic?”

Vash said, “I am going to add some opium to the hashish, and I would like your feedback on this combination, please.” He smiled. “Ladies first. I would like Lori and Marguerite’s opinions on the combination. Then we will reload a bowl for the men. George will be our test canine.”

The group agreed the opium and hash combination was exceptional.

Roger Rajiv was earning his PhD in Chemical Engineering. He possessed a highly analytical mind, with the ability to process vast amounts of data at warp speeds. He usually wore a white lab coat with pocket protectors.

Roger was always trying, mostly unsuccessfully, to get as much sex as he could. Occasionally he would get lucky, and he would be chipper like a songbird for days.

As a chemical engineering doctorate student, Roger had access to the university’s labs. He utilized the labs during the overnights and weekends when he had the privacy to perform experiments. He would bring donuts and coffee for the security and janitorial staff, who thought he was working late.

During the day, Roger would go to classes and write esoteric papers. At night, he would lock himself in the university lab, wearing his white lab coat with pocket protectors, like a mad scientist, and refine the O/H experiments until they were beyond perfect. Roger preferred to wear his white lab coat around Apartment 3A also. It was his signature.

How Roger stumbled upon the method of using steam infusion was one of those rare eureka moments. One Sunday while Howard was ironing his dress shirts, Roger observed that after steam ironing, the shirts were not puffy on the ironing board. Perhaps, he reasoned, opiate-hash could be steamed, making it pliable, bendable, moldable, and compressible.

Roger went to work in the lab, and a week later developed the technology to steam O/H into various shapes and sizes and to compress the volume. When you are dealing in kilos of product, compressing the volume into smaller sizes is very beneficial. Steaming the product greatly improves the freshness and quality by preventing the products from becoming dry and brittle when exposed to air. The steam infusion process increases the shelf life and chemical potency. A moist opium/hashish product smoked cooler and cleaner, with a smooth high.

The finished products were shrink-wrapped to seal in all the delicious qualities. An odorless product was vital because border crossings in Europe and the U.S. used drug-sniffing dogs.

Dogs never detected Roger's packages.

Marguerite Nguyen was Apartment 3A's legal scholar. She provided the legal framework needed to develop and implement the O/H business models and operational procedures. Marguerite advised on methods to maximize profits, minimize exposure, increase assets, and keep the family prosperous, socially conscious, and out of prison.

Marguerite was a brilliant researcher, with an extremely well reasoned and analytical mind, resting on an exquisite frame. Marguerite's father was British, her mother was Vietnamese, and she was multilingual and educated in Vietnam and London. She wore a size six; her hair was long and silky.

Marguerite was gorgeous, and she knew it.

She was fond of saying, “If you’ve got it, flaunt it.” She had it, and made sure others noticed. They did.

Marguerite would find the worst-case scenarios, and the group built the business plans and operational procedures based on her legal opinions. The research she provided was part of her legal course work.

Marguerite said, “I chose Cardiff University, and New York City, because the combined Jurist Doctorate International Law program is world-renowned, and New York is the place to be.”

Marguerite would always be the controlling queen of her world. Nothing would stop her sweet-smiling ambition from acquiring whatever she chose, whenever she wanted, and whomever she sought.

Marguerite said, “I have been thinking how our relationships living together are developing. Friends are family you choose. We are family.”

She added, “I will be straight up with the family. I have high expectations for myself, and I will always make my own destiny in life. I will never screw over anyone, without justifiable reasons, and I will never allow anyone to shaft me. That I promise you.”

There was not a shred of doubt in anyone’s mind about Marguerite’s capabilities, tenacity, intellect, and beauty. This woman had it all.

Eye candy is a wonderful thing.

Marguerite had the sweetness that kept the group happy and smiling, and the intellect that kept the family out of prison. Her brilliant legal talent created the framework that would make O/H an extremely profitable, low-key enterprise, known only to a handful of people who would never tell.

The men favored Marguerite, and she quietly returned the favor. Howard and Roger were her personal favorites.

Lori Wilson was a feisty and fiery redhead, and an emergency room nurse. Lori had piercing blue eyes and a determined personality. She was highly intelligent, highly gorgeous, very high maintenance, and

usually high on pharmaceutical drugs. She could be adorable, warm, kind, and funny, or a complete bitch.

The sex was always delicious, and Damian was captivated. Damian's main weakness in life was that he was attracted to strong women, much as a moth is drawn to a bright flame.

One evening when the housemates were relaxing in Apartment 3A, Damian said, "Let me tell you a true story of life in the urban jungle, and how Lori and I met. They are part of the same story.

"I was walking down the street early one evening, and the first thing I feel is the crack of a baseball bat on my head. The four dudes beat me to a bloody pulp for what must have been a good ten minutes. I remember a crowd gathering to watch. Survival adrenaline kicked in, and I started swinging at everything. Apparently, I must have connected with the punks, because after a while they stopped. I fell to the ground. The crowd applauded. The beating was the show. I was the show. No one helped, and no one called the police or ambulance. No one cared."

Damian said, "That is the message. The attack was street theatre and the crowd applauded."

Lori said, "In New York no one cares."

Damian continued. "When it was over, I was barely conscious, and no one came over to help or take me to the hospital. My body hurt. I remember lying on the pavement, unable to move. People were stepping over and around me, and no one stopped to help. That was the sad reality."

George put his head on Damian's lap in sympathy.

Damian continued. "I found the willpower to help myself, knowing in my beaten brain and body, I had to find a hospital or die on the streets. All I remember, I was a bloody mess, staggering across major avenues. No cab would pick me up. The cab drivers probably did not want to clean up the blood on the seats. Nobody wanted to

get involved with a crime scene, and no one wanted the police asking questions. I stumbled into the hospital and fell unconscious on the waiting room floor.”

“I remember that,” Lori said sweetly. “I was on duty. You were a bloody mess and in very bad pain,” she said sympathetically.

Lori picked up the story. “When Damian regained some form of semi consciousness, the doctors were removing pieces of wood from his head and stapling his wounds.”

Damian joined in. “My left eye was swollen, I had deep cuts on my face, and my right knee was twisted. I hurt.”

Lori said sweetly, “Morphine solved your pain, Damian.”

Lori said to George, “The nice part, George. I took Damian home.” She paused and said, “To my home!”

Damian replied with a smirk, “Sweet!”

Lori added with a smile, “And that is how Damian and I first met.”

Damian said, “And we shall see what the future might hold for us. Seriously though, I want to make a point here. I was lucky. I lived, and survived, and it has taught me to be cautious and continuously read the streets.”

Lori said philosophically, “Life does have an interesting way of turning seemingly random acts of violence into lifelong journeys.”

The family lived in a decaying brownstone next to Mario’s Garage, an auto repair shop. When you walked into the building, the front door was broken, one light bulb was hanging from the ceiling by a wire, there were broken mirrors on the walls, mice and roaches scurrying around, and the stairs were creaky and dark. The building smelled of old piss, rotten garbage, and mixtures of ethnic cooking.

Apartment 3A was a combination of all the apartments on the third floor, and it was large and funky. It had two living rooms and a large dining room, two semi-functional kitchens, six bedrooms, three funky bathrooms, and extra alcoves used as studies and workspaces.

It easily accommodated the group's needs. Security consisted of gates on the windows, cross bars on the doors, and multiple locks. George provided additional security. It was big, cheap, and within walking distance to school. It was home.

To survive in New York City during this time, one needs to understand urban living in the lesser neighborhoods. Heroin, cocaine, and meth were major street problems, causing crime waves of legendary proportions. The city and state budgets had been cut; the various city unions were angry and on strike on a regular basis. The police stayed away from our neighborhood. It was a hostile urban environment. New York was suffering from a decaying infrastructure, corrupt government, corrupt cops, corrupt unions, and corrupt politicians. It was business as usual.

Life on a daily basis for the group consisted of school, work, and normal domestic chores, like food shopping. Daylight and early evening were relatively safe, if you were cautious.

The graffiti on the walls marked each gang's territory, usually divided by the streets or avenues, and being caught in a crossfire could be costly. Gang gunfights and bodies were common, and violence against the police was up. Snipers would shoot police cruisers from rooftops. It was the urban Wild West. During the day, they watch you. At night, they catch you.

You could buy anything you wanted on the streets of New York. In 1972, vendors selling clothing, stereo systems, and all things electronic sprang up everywhere. "Name-brand labels for less." This business model did not escape Damian's attention, which was to sell nice stuff for cash, stay mobile, and stay low key. Cash businesses are harder to trace.

The house decided they needed to buy a dynamite sound system, with a mega amp controlling four big speakers, and a balanced turntable. They found a system that met their needs at a pawnshop.

Apartment 3A had a super sound system and a great collection of albums stored in milk crates.

The Rolling Stones sounded so good when they were stoned.

The Beatles sounded excellent when they were tripping.

Food in New York was everywhere. Pizza, hot dogs, and knishes were the staples of poor graduate students' diets. It was fast food, before the real fast-food market exploded. For a few dollars, one could buy two slices of pizza, or two knishes, chips, and a can of soda. It may not have been the healthiest diet, but it was cheap and filling. Graduate students were notoriously broke and always hungry.

The group house was in need of all types of furniture, and shopping at a furniture store was not in the budget. The first major item deemed vital was a large table for eating and gathering. The group required something big, comfortable, and familiar.

A picnic from the park was the clear choice. The motley crew consisted of four stoned men, one woman stoned on hash, one woman drugged on pharmaceuticals, and one stoned-out dog. Late one evening, the group liberated the special picnic table from the park. It was large, solid, heavy, and easily could seat ten people.

The seven amigos borrowed two four-wheeled dollies and moved the picnic table half a dozen blocks back to the apartment building. There were extensive discussions about angles and best methods to maneuver up the three flights of stairs and into the dining room of Apartment 3A.

The special table expedition and acquisition became an evening-until-the-next-morning event. The new picnic table needed extensive cleaning, followed by sanding and painting. With the aid of superb hashish and good friends, a vital piece of furniture looked better than new by morning.

A few days later, the group sat down to eat and talk about life.

Marguerite interrupted the flow of conversation, saying, "We need to have a blackboard and a whiteboard to cover the gray peeling wall.

We can use the picnic table as a conference table, and convert the dining room into a board of director's suite."

Queen Marguerite was getting ready to rule the legal world.

Howard announced, "I know where there are a bunch of blackboards and whiteboards that are on wheels, in the basement of the business library. Apparently, the school is painting some rooms, and they are storing stuff in the basement. I am sure we can liberate as needed, Marguerite."

Problem solved.

A few evenings later, George took Damian for a walk in the neighborhood, and Damian found two large red beanbag chairs. George sniffed the beanbag chairs in approval.

"Another person's trash is our treasure," Damian said to George.

George guarded the remaining chair while Damian carried the first chair home. At the apartment, George surveyed the two red beanbag chairs and informed the group that the larger chair nearest the kitchen was his.

George asked, Are there any questions?

Over time, George and Damian became tired of living in poverty. The house was broke. Damian needed to find a job. It had to be flexible, to work around school, studying, and sex. Damian's answer was to become a New York City taxi driver. He passed the tests, received a hack license, and started driving a yellow cab. The cab garage was six blocks from home.

New York City has thousands of cabs prowling the streets 24 hours a day. The yellow cabs were medallion or licensed cabs, mostly owned by large taxi companies. The drivers preferred to cruise the streets in safer, more populated areas. The other type, called "Car Services" or "gypsy cabs," were private cars, and worked the parts of the city yellow cabs refused to go.

The way the taxi system worked, the driver and the cab company

split the meter fare, and tips belonged to the driver. The money could be decent, about \$75 per shift on a good night. Each fare was a challenge. Speed was more important than safety. It was like driving in a sea of yellow bumper cars racing around the city looking for fares.

Most fares were normal pick up and drop off. Damian picked up this one fare in front of a very nice hotel. The fare jumped in the cab and straightforwardly asked Damian, “Would you do a couple of complicated runs with me, on the meter, and I will give you a tip of \$200 above the meter?”

Damian understood he would be driving a drug dealer around town as the fare was making his rounds. “No problem,” he said. “Where are we going?”

The man replied politely, “I will tell you as we get there.”

What impressed Damian was he did not look like a drug dealer. He was clean cut, spoke quietly, carried a briefcase, and dressed nicely.

After a few runs, he asked Damian to stop at an abandoned building with burned-out cars on the streets.

He told Damian, “Keep the engine running, with the back door open, and be ready for a fast escape. If I am not back in six minutes, or if there is too much activity on the streets, leave before the shooting starts.”

The man was serious.

Damian looked at his pocket watch and set the stopwatch feature. Four minutes and four seconds later, Damian heard two shots in the building as the dude raced out, dove into the backseat. Damian sped out of the area.

When they were safely away, and sure they were not being followed, the fare leaned over the seat, reading the hack license posted, and said, “Thank you very much, Mr. Damian Garcia. That was some good driving.”

Damian replied, “My pleasure. Are you all right?”

“Yes, I am,” he replied. “Thank you for asking.”

After a few minutes, Damian asked, “Where are we going next?”
“Next stop, Staten Island.”

At dawn, the passenger handed Damian a \$500 tip, plus the meter fare and a nice bag of clean cocaine. The dealer said, “Thank you for a job well done.” He stepped out of the cab and into the crowd.

The house enjoyed the weekend smack. Damian now had money to pay the rent, buy food, pay for books, and live for a few weeks.

The graduate student poverty lifestyle could not go on forever. Apartment 3A was living hand to mouth and sometimes missing both. School was primary, and income was secondary. The family needed solid employment of some sort that was flexible, creative, and paid well.

Vash always had a nice supply of opium and hashish, which the group enjoyed. He had a business concept for a niche product of marketing opium and hashish as a combination product to sell to graduate students.

The following Sunday, the group was seated around the conference table as Vash began his presentation. He walked to the blackboard.

“I suggest we create a unique product and therefore a profitable business model. It must be a product not currently or easily available, therefore eliminating competitive pressures and it must be a product where we create the demand, and we control the supply.”

Vash paused to allow the group to process the information.

“It must be a product where we have direct control of the supply chain from start to finish. There must be adequate profit for all parties concerned to justify the risks, expense, and exposures. And, this is most important, we are not caught. No gangster stuff and no prison time, EVER.”

Vash clanged his wineglass and said ceremoniously, “Ladies and gentlemen, I have the product solution to our poverty dilemma.”

The group listened attentively.

“We have all enjoyed the opium and the hash separately. It is even better when you combine the two in the correct mixture. Therefore, I propose we combine the two into one product. We shall call it O/H, which is descriptive of the product’s active ingredients, opium and hashish.”

Vash had the group’s complete attention.

“We will create a new product, unavailable on the open market. The high is exceptional. We are smoking it now.”

Damian added, “Reality cannot be denied. The high is exceptional, and we have enjoyed this for a while.”

Vash continued. “Since we control the product, we can control the quality and type of high. Here is the cool part; we sell our product exclusively to graduate student types on major college campuses. We can also wholesale it to suppliers, and they can handle distribution on other campuses. The details can be worked out.”

The group was speechless.

George was asleep on his red beanbag chair. It was time to refill the bong, refill their stomachs, and process this data. The group went into deep thinking and analyzing modes.

Marguerite suggested, “We sell the product in a very discreet fashion and fly below the radar, so to speak. I would also like to make the product cost effective so that students can eat, do the laundry, and get high. If we are nice to our graduate students, they will be nice to us.”

Roger said, “Marguerite, you are a lawyer for the people.”

Howard added, “Our product would cost less than dinner and a movie, and two could enjoy a wonderful evening of sexual bliss.”

Marguerite said, “O/H is a special high. It gives me a clear-thinking look at the world. I write my best papers after a few solid tokes.” She smiled. “And the sex is superb.”

Roger and Howard smiled slyly in complete agreement.

Damian said, “Marguerite is correct. The high is special. The sex is special. It is a clear-thinking high, which gives the user physical

and mental energy, deep analytical thinking, and an understanding of everything.”

Howard interjected, “The product will sell itself. Companies want happy customers, and we will keep our customers happy. That is how we will succeed.”

“As word gets out, and the benefits understood, we will control the graduate student and university market,” Roger advised.

Howard said thoughtfully, “The problems I can foresee are how to control expansion, supply chain issues, and how do we invest the profits. If O/H becomes an international success, we will have volumes of cash to move around and invest in legitimate businesses. Money laundering is the backend of the drug business.”

Vash said, “Transactions involving many countries, continents, and cultures must be considered in this business. The financial transactions must look legitimate, yet not excessive. The objective is not to attract the attention of law enforcement or government agencies.”

Lori suggested, “The operating principles are to sell a product at prices consistent with quality; to ensure repeat and loyal customers; know your customers well; develop trust relationships; live life in the shadows and below the radar; and the most important, be very discreet.”

The house agreed by unanimous consent.

Howard advised, “It is important to follow a business plan. We must all be on the same page.”

“Marguerite,” Howard added, “what have we decided our mission statement should be?”

Marguerite read from her legal note pad, “The Mission Statement: To sell a high-quality opium and hashish product, called O/H, primarily to graduate students at major universities; with the objective of keeping the prices affordable so students can eat, do the laundry, and get high.”

Lori stated, “As a boutique product, business should be conducted

by invitation only. Exclusivity creates demand, making it easier to control the product and protect our people.”

Vash added with a smile, “O/H plays on so many levels. It is a combination of the two products, opium and hashish, and O/H sounds like a one-word expression when said, ‘Oh,’ and it describes the high you get when you smoke our product.”

Lori added with a big grin, “Take a toke, and I feel *oh so good!*”

Howard said, “Welcome to Marketing 101 in the real world.”

Marguerite continued. “We must develop the legal framework for the O/H business plan. Without laws and regulations governing how we do business, we potentially could risk anarchy within our ranks. Every business has bylaws that govern their actions.”

Damian said, “I agree.”

Lori added with a smirk, “However, I cannot help but think what an oxymoron that really is. We want to develop a legal framework for what is essentially an illegal business.”

Damian added, “I find that rather amusing, would you not agree?”

Lori said, “Thinking about this more, I am in total agreement with Marguerite. We must run our small enterprise as one would run any other business, legal or otherwise. Every business does need operating rules.”

Vash interjected, “It is interesting you brought this up, Marguerite. The India drug trade does have binding rules and regulations. If the rules are not followed, the offending party rarely sees court. Justice in India in these matters is handled quickly and often very harshly... if you get my meaning.”

The group looked at each other knowingly.

Howard said, “In my humble opinion, I think it is best to develop prototypes so we can learn from our mistakes. Sometimes what looks good on paper does not work that well in the real world.”

The group decided that was excellent advice; develop a campus prototype, study the results, and using that data, adjust the business plan.

Vash explained, “The black market drug market trade has been going on for centuries, and with bribes, products move with a fair amount of security and relatively freely. My older brother owns Livingston Books, a small reputable bookshop near London. We could use his store address as a shipping point. He does a nice trade sending special-order books worldwide. It is completely legal. I am sure he would be happy to join.”

The group smiled collectively, realizing they were onto something.

Howard said, “As far as moving currency to pay for materials, we have options. The money movement must look like a legitimate business transaction, from business to business, or business to consumer. Providing invoices for products sold, especially when it passes through a legitimate business, should not attract attention, especially in smaller amounts. It all must look legal and normal.”

Lori added, “Discretion is paramount.”

Marguerite said, “We can all agree on that!”

Vash said, “What we have said tonight is all true. Let me explain the ancient art of the courier system. The couriers are actors playing a part. When a courier is transporting large amounts in U.S. currency, for example, our family likes to use a man and a woman with kids. They look and act like a family. This appears normal.”

Lori asked the obvious question that was on all their minds. “What happens if they are caught? What happens to the money and the family?”

Vash finally replied, “If they are caught with cash, the excuse is the family is planning a major purchase such as a house, car, boat, or whatever is appropriate. If they have established collateral coverage, and can back up the reasons why the family is carrying hundreds of thousands of U.S. dollars, then the scenario usually works.”

He continued. “The couriers know the risks. It is part of their trade. If the couriers are caught, they do not inform on their own. For their loyalty, their real families back home are protected and their needs are assured.”