

Sunflower Seeds



Wichita on the River at Night

Zoom meetings on Saturdays at 4:00 PM

**January 2022, Volume – 50, Issue # 1
Kansas Sunflower Mensa Newsletter**

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Chapter's Official Web Sites

<http://www.kansassunflower.us.mensa.org>

www.facebook.com/groups/773587949355460SunflowerSeeds

Submissions Guidelines

The Sunflower Seeds is published monthly. Quarterly there will be a larger newsletter with more articles. Submission deadline is the first of the month. Members in good standing may submit articles, puzzles, photography, etc. to the editor for publication. To submit an article for the newsletter send it to grandledge@hotmail.com

Articles should be submitted as a WORD document or Mac Pages document. The font should be Times New Roman 12 pt.

Why You Should Write For Seeds

This is your newsletter. You are talented and can make it better. More participation strengthens the group. People have told the editor that they like the Seeds. If you feel that way it is time to write.

The Pig-Out Column

Recommendations from the Head Pig, Mike Dickson:
Check with Mike (316-871-3379) if you have suggestions or questions concerning the Pig-Outs.

February 5, 2021, 12:45pm

Cancelled due to winter weather and so many sick people

March 5, 2022, 12:45 pm

YaYa's Euro Bistro, 8115 E. 21st St. North, Wichita. Invite prospective members meeting. You may bring a friend. The group will pay the first \$20 for everyone who RSVP's by February 20, 2022



Pig-Outs are the perfect place to invite friends.

Mike Dickson's Wisdom

Albert Einstein quotes: The only thing more dangerous than ignorance is arrogance
The difference between genius & stupidity is that genius has its limits.
Waste no more time arguing what a good man is -- be one. ---Marcus Aurelius

Daffynitions for Seeds

Submitted by Mike Dickson

Agnorant (arrogant & ignorant)
Oblivious (oblivious idiots)

'Mysteries, yes' by Mary Oliver

Submitted by Mike Dickson

Truly we live with mysteries too marvelous
to be understood

How grass can be nourishing in the
mouths of lambs
How rivers and stones are forever in allegiance with gravity
while we ourselves dream of rising.
How two hands touch and the bonds will
never broken
How people come, from delight or the
scars of damage,
to the comfort of a poem.

Let me keep my distance, always from these,
who think they have the answers

Let me keep company always with those
who say
'Look!' and laugh in astonishment,
and bow their heads

I hope an occasional poem is not out of line
for the Seeds. Something that reminds us to
stop & smell the roses, and sometimes even to plant a few. There is time before spring.

Cathryn Hay

Cathryn Hay is a member and gave a talk at a program meeting. Just thought this might be helpful to some members.



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Cathryn A. Hay, Ph.D.
Clinic Director

Appointments:
Call: (316) 689-4233

151 Whittier, Suite 1000-A
Wichita, KS 67207

www.irlen-wichita.com

Meeting Schedule

1st Saturday, February 5, 2022,(12:45pm - Pigout

Cancelled due to winter weather and so many people being sick

2nd Saturday, February 12, 2022, 2:00 pm - Program Meeting

Cancelled due to winter weather and so many people being sick

3rd Saturday, February 19, 2022, 11:00 am

Cancelled due to winter weather and so many people being sick.

4th Saturday, February 26, 2022, 7:00 pm

Cancelled due to winter weather and so many people being sick

Hopefully March will be better.

Zoom Meetings Saturdays at 4:00 PM

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/72081034487?pwd=aWdKUStzbEVhNktjRzF0VEYxQTISQT09>

Igor Ponomaryov is the Zoom coordinator. Contact him or the editor for Zoom information.

LocSec Corner

Bill Barnett

The group is looking for an editor. I enjoy it, but I am wearing too many hats. Contact me if you are interested.

The group has one proctor and is looking for another. It would be better to have three. Contact me or Dan Gollub if you are interested.

Send your pictures to the editor along with their stories and they will be published here. You are talented and can be a writer for Seeds. Send your articles, letters, comments, and pictures for Seeds.

Heartland Mensa Region Seven

Beth Anne Demeter

As I write this, I'm looking forward to the new year...or maybe just an end to 2021! Seriously, though, many things happen in the new year. We set (and achieve, right?!?) resolutions, reconnect with friends, look forward to positivity and more. Or at least I do! Here's hoping there's a lot of Mensa positivity in your life, too!

And as I reflect on what's coming in 2022, we're already hitting many milestones! For instance, the Mensa Scholarship deadline of January 15th shows that we'll soon be reviewing, judging and awarding younger folks scholarships for college education. Also, registration rates begin to increase for the Annual Gathering in Sparks, NV, showing that we're moving ever closer to another great chance to meet with our fellow Mensans!

Also in the near future – specifically February 4th-6th, 2022 – Mid-America Mensa will be hosting a Regional Gathering! It's tough to time this writing and publication, so I know many of you might not see this in time, but I sincerely hope more than a few of you will plan to attend! Their Cabin Fever 4.0 RG is already shaping up to be a good one with several stellar speakers. I don't have space for all the details here, but check out a few speaker highlights here:

- (Keynote) Jim Lammers on the hit television series ARCHER and other animation-related topics
- A career guide and investigator of Kansas City hauntings, ghosts, paranormal and more
- Johnson County Coroner and Chief Medical Examiner
- Vice President of Curatorial Services at Negro Leagues Baseball Museum
- Pixie Smash Forge bladesmith and Past Champion on History Channel's Forged in Fire

Wow! And this is all in addition to games, tournaments, hospitality, a soup contest, beer tasting, wine tasting, ballroom dance lessons, puzzle scavenger hunt and more! Use the link www.mamensa.org/cabin-fever-4-0 to register and find more information.

So be ready for some great stuff in 2022! Looking forward to seeing you soon.

Cabin Fever 4.0!

Mid-America Mensa is hosting an RG in Kansas City February 4 to 6, 2022 and you're invited! We are closing in on our final speaker list. Check out these presenters!

- Jim Lammers, Keynote speaker, will present on his work with the hit television series ARCHER on FX, and other animation related topics
- Becky Ray, Author of Kansas City Hauntings: History and Mystery of the Paris of the Plains, a guide for Kansas City Hauntings and an investigator of the unknown for over 35 years – ghosts and other paranormal stuff
- Diane Peterson, Johnson County Coroner and Chief Medical Examiner – what do they do and what have they seen?
- Ray Doswell, Vice President of Curatorial Services at Negro Leagues Baseball Museum
- Rita Thurman, Pixie Smash Forge bladesmith and artist, Past Champion on History Channel's Forged in Fire
- Matt Henry, Society for Creative Anachronism – making what's old new again
- Tim Bodendistel, Master Designer, Hallmark Cards
inspiration and following your talents plus sharing some projects

Inc. on
unique

In the games room we will host several tournaments (scrabble, to Ride, Mexican Train Dominoes, Poker, etc).

Ticket

In the Hospitality suites (one family friendly, one adult only) we will have lots of great snacks and drinks, as well as a soup contest on Saturday NOON (be sure to bring your crockpot and ingredients if you want to compete for the prize! Please email us at CabinFeverMensa@gmail.com so we will know you're planning to participate in the soup contest with your crockpot so we will have enough space for everyone.

We will have a beer tasting Friday evening in the adult suite and a wine tasting Saturday evening in the adult suite (donations to the MA Mensa Scholarship fund appreciated for each). After the keynote we will also have ballroom dance lessons in the Lenexa Ballroom. Late at night in the adult suite we will have a Shibari demonstration.

Want something different? We will have a puzzle scavenger hunt around the hotel for prizes, as well as a social mixer hunt to help make new friends.

Be sure to sign up before January 7, 2022 to get the early bird discount of \$75, or \$90 after (processing fee applies if paying online). Visit www.mamensa.org/cabin-fever-4-0 to sign up now! A link to the hotel reservation page is in that link.

NOTE: We will follow the CDC guidelines for indoor masking when not eating and drinking. Participants who optionally present proof of vaccination will be given a vaccinated sticker for their name tag.

Still have questions? Send them to CabinFeverMensa@gmail.com
Cabin Fever 4.0 | Mid-America Mensa
mamensa.org

Rob Swenson

Send the editor your photos for the next issue.

You are talented. Send a photo and a story.

Program Speakers

This is your group. You are talented and can make it better. Its time for you to speak to the group. Contact Bill Barnett with your topic.

Maarieda The Book

Bill Barnett

The short stories here are finished. They will be rewritten and expanded into a book. The crew will explore new planets sometime in the future. It's all about the future. Will we become a multi planet species? Or will we be a one planet species? How much time do we have left here on Earth?

Found, The Twins

Bill Barnett

The school bus pulled into the hamburger place with a hungry track team. They just finished a regional track meet in the next county. The kids rushed the counter. Rob was looking for the girl he saw at the meet. There was something about her that totally caught his eye. He didn't know what it was, but he couldn't get it her of his mind. She had looked at him too, but they weren't able to get together at the meet. While he was getting into the end of the line the another bus pulled into the place. Another bunch of kids rushed the counter. Lagging behind was one girl who seemed to be looking for something. Their eyes met, it was the girl. They walked towards

each other and stared each other in the face and then looked up and down at each other and then into the eyes again. It was as if he was looking into a mirror. She had his eyes, one blue and one green and they looked almost identical, as if he was looking at a mirror. She had his red hair and the same freckles as him.

“You’re my twin!” They exclaimed in unison and surprise. After a few minutes of staring at each other Rob raised his hand toward her. She did the same. It was there, the same lines. Rob had very unusual lines in his hand. The Roma girl at school was astonished at them and said they were important, but would never explain what they meant. He even offered her money and she wouldn’t say. So much for a gypsy fortune teller, who wouldn’t tell. He always thought how useless a teller was who wouldn’t tell.

“They match!” they exclaimed in unison, turning their hands back and forth and looking at them. “They are mirrored images!” they exclaimed again. The lines in Rob’s right hand were the exact mirror image of the lines in her left hand. They were startled at how they were saying the same thing at the same time, as if it was coordinated. But it wasn’t.

“Let me see your shoulder!” they demanded in unison. They turned with his left shoulder and her right shoulder toward each other pulling down their track tee shirts. “Its there!” They exclaimed in unison as they saw almost identical hour glasses on each other shoulders. For what seemed like an eternity they just stared.

“Do you have the snowman?” they demanded in unison, pulling down the front of their running shorts almost too much. “Its there!” they said in unison and astonishment. The rest of the kids were laughing at them, but they had tuned out everyone else around them. There was a sideways snowman at the bottom of their tummies.

They circled each other examining each other as if they were lost in space. “What’s your name?” they demanded in unison. “Rob,” he said and “Bobbie,” she said at the same time. They spent the rest of the time talking and exchanging contacts. It was as if they should know each other.

“Time to go,” coach shouted and Rob was heading back to the bus. After sitting down he realized he was starved. His hamburger was lost back in the restaurant. Someone else probably ate it. The track team never left any food uneaten. He joined in all the chatter on the way home. The team did well. He got 2nd place in the 1600 meter.

The next day at breakfast his mom asked him how the meet went.

“I got second place!” he exclaimed.

“Good job!” his dad replied.

“And I met my twin,” he said.

“You don’t have a twin,” his mother insisted.

His two little sisters were watching with eyes wide open. Their eyes were fastened on him, but they seemed somehow unsurprised.

“What do you mean?” asked his cousin Ralph. Ralph had to stay with them when his parents were out of town on business. Rob’s parents always felt uncomfortable with Ralph, but tried to be kind to him. Rob was a genius nerd who always seemed to have every trivia data possible.

“When I saw her it was like I was looking into a mirror. She had my eyes, one green and one blue eye except on the opposite sides and they looked the same. Her hand had the same lines as my hand. She had the same hourglass and snowman, except opposite sides,” Rob replied.

“What were you doing showing those things. That isn’t being modest,” his mother replied getting a bit angry.

“They have the same fortune. Its written in their hands!” exclaimed Ralph.

“We’ll not have any of that witchcraft in this house,” Rob’s dad demanded.

“Its not witchcraft,” Rob’s little sister, Mary, said. “Its just a hand. Sofia wouldn’t even say anything about it.”

“She’s your doppelgänger,” Ralph chimed in.

“You’ll not be calling any demons in this house!” boomed Rob’s dad angrily. “We don’t have that in this house.”

“Dad, it just means they look alike. Its not a demon,” pleaded Mary.

“That’s the end of this conversation,” Rob’s mom decreed.

They ate in silence. After dinner the kids went to their rooms before their parents could send them.

A few minutes later Mary and Beth snuck into Rob’s room. “Tell us about her,” Mary whispered.

Rob told his sisters the whole story and they listened with wide eyed intent and then slipped off to their room to sleep.

The next day Rob sent Bobbie a text and she replied. She told him she would be at the track meet the next Friday. They spent an hour texting each other. They even had the same birthday. Rob

thought to himself: *I never hooked up with a girl, they are all just friends, but now I'm totally connecting with this one. Who knew I had a doppelgänger, pretty rad stuff. Even Sofia would be surprised.*

On Wednesday Rob went up to Sophia and told her the story. "Is that what my hand says?" he asked her.

Sophia just looked at him.

"Tell me," Rob pleaded.

"No," Sophia said.

"Why can't you say something?" Rob asked.

"It's real, and no," she said, smiled, and walked off.

The next Friday Rob watched Bobbie between his runs. She was the star of the other school's junior track team. She was the fastest. *She runs like a boy*, He thought. *Weird*. But she looks like a girl. After the meet they talked while they were waiting for the bus. Then she looked at him longingly, and after waiting she said: "KISS ME!" He kissed her and they left for the busses. He felt dreamy all the way home.

They were at different track meets for the rest of the season, but they planned to meet on Saturday. His parents forbid him to see her. They said he shouldn't be around a 'strange woman'. Rob forbid his sisters to talk about her to their parents.

On Saturday they met at the hippie gift shop at the mall. His parents would never go there.

"What did your parents say?" he asked.

"They said we couldn't be twins, some people just look that way" she said. "They said we could be friends, but not anything else. What did your parents say?"

"They said you were a strange woman and dangerous to be around," he replied.

"Hahahaha!" she laughed herself silly. "Everyone thinks I'm strange. The track team thinks I'm dangerous. That's why they like me. I'm dangerous to the other team." And she was beside herself with laughter.

After roaming around the mall they were back at the gift shop. "Look, there's Zoltar, let's ask him," she said. They went to Zoltar and the machine was lifeless.

“Not like in the movies,” he said.

They kissed and left. It was time to get back home. Rob was thinking: *I have a girl friend. Wow.*

They kept meeting on Saturdays. The people in the shop knew them by name and they always bought something, just to be nice to the shop people.

It was the regional finals and all the track teams were there. Rob got a third place. Bobbie was first place in everything she ran. They meet after the track meet.

“I bet I can beat you,” they said in unison and off they took around the track. They were an even match no matter how much they both tried to pass each other. After four laps they gave up and walked and talked and kissed.

“I wonder if we are related?” she said.

“How would we know?” he said.

“A DNA test,” she said. “Get a DNA test and see what it says.”

“Cool, let’s do that,” he said. And they were off to their buses.

Rob ordered a DNA kit and had it mailed to Ralph. He knew his parents would freak. A few days later the results came back.

“This is weird!” he said when he read the results. “It says I’m a girl.” He was really freaking out and then thought the DNA thing was a hoax so he called Ralph.

“It says I’m a girl,” he whispered to Ralph.

“I always knew you were strange,” sneered Ralph. “Bobbie’s not strange, you’re the strange one. Just wait till you mom finds out you are a girl,” and he laughed himself to derision.

‘I’m serious,” Rob said. “How could it say I’m a girl? I’m not a girl,” he quivered.

“You could be your own twin, a Chimera, that’s even cooler than a doppelgänger,” he said.

“What the hell is that?” Rob asked.

“You have a twin, but its not Bobbie, its you.” he said and went about explaining what a human Chimera was.

“How could I know?” Rob asked a bit worried.

“Another DNA test,” he said. “Take it from another part of your body. Is there any part of your body that looks different?”

“Yea, the snowman on my tummy.” Rob replied.

“Take a DNA test there,” Ralph replied.

The next Saturday Rob met Bobbie at the mall.

“What did your DNA test say?” Bobbie asked.

“It didn’t work,” Rob replied. Ralph said I should scrape some skin off my snowman. Can you help?”

She helped him get a tiny skin sample from the snowman. The store people watched and were smiling and laughing. They always saw weird things in their store and that’s why they worked there.

A few days later the results came back and Rob was relieved that he was a boy. He had Ralph go through the whole results.

“Cool!” Ralph said. “You’re a Chimera and have a doppelgänger. I knew I had a cool cousin.”

Rob was beginning to feel better. At least Ralph thought he was cool.

The next Saturday Rob and Bobbie met at the mall.

“I found out what happened to the test,” Rob said. “The first test said I was a girl. That’s crazy, I’m a boy.”

Bobbie laughed outrageously.

“Its not funny,” Rob insisted.

“Its totally funny,” Bobbie replied. “My test said I was a boy. What a joke. I didn’t want to say anything. But now its totally funny, I’m a boy and you’re a girl, yeah right.” she laughed.

The store people were really getting into the joke too. They were enjoying the romance.

“I have two DNAs,” Rob said. “I’m a chimera. I’m my own twin.”

“That’s weird,” Bobbie laughed. “Let’s see your DNAs,” she insisted sarcastically.

They looked at each other's DNA and both gasped.

"My DNA matches your boy DNA," Bobbie said astonished. "We are identical twin brothers. That's the craziest thing I ever heard of. Did we somehow mix up DNA?"

"Probably, but not for the test," Rob laughed and explained the whole story as Ralph told him.

"This is for you," the store manager said as she gave them a small statue of a mythical greek chimera. "For you its free. I finally met a couple of real chimeras. Best thing I ever saw in this store and I've seen a lot."

It was time to go and they gave each other a big kiss.

"You're my brother / sister," They said in unison and shock as they looked at each other in disbelief.

"We didn't DO anything," Bobbie said. "See you next week." And she headed home to order another DNA test and call Ralph. She took the mythological chimera. Rob's parents wouldn't allow it in their house.

Bobbie did another DNA test from another part of her body. Both she and Rob had two different skin colors. They were almost the same and she had noticed them before, but didn't think anything about it. When the test came back it said she was a girl and it matched Rob's first test. She went to talk to her mother. If she and Rob were twins they were adopted and her mother never said so.

"Mom, we have to talk," Bobbie said.

"We can talk when your dad gets home," her mom replied.

"We need to talk before dad gets home. Just you and me. NOW," she insisted. "Sit down with me and talk."

Her mom sat down with a very worried look and asked, "Are you pregnant?"

"No, its not anything like that to worry about," Bobbie said. "Why didn't you tell me I'm adopted?"

Her mother was shocked and said nothing for a few minutes. "What makes you think you're adopted?"

“I have a twin brother, the boy I met at the track meet that looks like me. We did a DNA test and we are brother and sister. We have the same birthday. We are twins.”

“Oh my God!” her mother gasped as she put her hands into her hands and looked down and began to sob. There was a long silence as her mom cried.

“Mom, its okay. I just need to know,” Bobbie said.

When her mother came to her composure she began to speak softly, “We couldn’t have children. We tried. So we adopted you. We love you. We didn’t know there was a twin. They didn’t tell us.”

“You should have told me,” Bobbie ordered her mom.

“We didn’t want to hurt you,” her mom insisted.

“It didn’t hurt finding out that I had a twin or was adopted. It hurts a lot that you didn’t tell me,” Bobbie replied.

Her mother cried some more. When she regained her composure again she asked, “I’m sorry. So he’s your boyfriend?”

“Well yes, but not really, I mean we didn’t do anything, except kiss a little. Now he’s my best friend,” Bobbie said.

They had a long hug.

“What else didn’t you tell me?” Bobbie ordered her mom. They had a long talk.

Mary and Beth were talking about their new found sister. It was exciting. They wanted to meet her. They didn’t quite understand the whole thing, but wanted to find out if the two really looked like twins. Their mom overheard the conversation and asked them sternly, “Is Rob seeing that strange woman?”

“Mom, she’s not strange, she’s his twin sister, they got tested and they are twins. It was DNA,” Mary replied.

“Dad will have a talk with him when he gets home. Rob doesn’t have a twin. And he’s not going to keep seeing that strange woman,” their mom replied. “Get to your room. You’re grounded,” the mom said.

“But mom,” the two girls pleaded.

“NOW!” their mother screamed.

They were off to their rooms.

Rob’s dad came home late and after talking to his wife the two of them called Rob into the living room. “I told you not to see that strange woman,” Rob’s father said.

“Why didn’t you tell me I’m adopted?” Rob asked.

“You’re not adopted!” his father ordered.

“I have a twin sister,” Rob said. “That means I must be adopted.”

“As best I remember only one baby came out of me,” his mother said with an angry voice.

“We were tested,” Rob said. “Its scientifically true.”

“Science, smience, we don’t believe in that crap!” his father shouted.

Rob looked at the cell phone in his father’s pocket and then the TV blaring religious programing and just shook his head.

“That’s the end of it. You never see that strange woman again. And no more talk about a twin or adoption. That stuff’s a lie,” His father said.

“But it’s true,” Rob said.

“I’ll show you,” his dad said as he began pulling out his belt.

Rob was out the door in a flash. Track practice paid off. He was out of sight before his father made it out the door.

The next day Rob’s father took off work to talk to his pastor.

“Come in and sit down. What’s on your mind?” the pastor asked.

Rob’s father told him the whole story.

The man bit his lips to keep from laughing. “I will talk to him tomorrow. Leave him alone until I talk to him.”

“You’re ordering me?” the father asked.

“Damn straight,” the pastor said. “I’m ordering you!” and stared the father straight in the eye.

The father stomped out. He had thought the man was too wishy washy and almost suspected he was a liberal. But now the man ordered him. He had to obey.

The next day after school Ron went by to talk to the pastor. He trusted the man more than his father, at least the guy seemed reasonable.

“What’s going on?” the pastor said.

“I found a twin sister,” Rob said and just waited to see what the man would do.

“How did you find that?” the man asked becoming interested in the story.

Rob explained the whole story and the pastor just listened.

When Rob finished the pastor said, “Wow, that’s quite a story. So you have DNA proof?”

“DNA proof twice,” Rob replied.

“Cool,” the man said. “That’s an amazing story. That could never happen by chance. What are the odds, 1 in a gazillion? I can do math and don’t even know how to calculate that.”

“You’re not upset?” Rob asked.

“Why should I be?” the man replied. “I’ll talk to your father. Keep staying at your cousin’s house until I talk to him.”

The next day the pastor called Rob’s parents into his office. They came in and sat down angry but hoping for backup in dealing with their son who had gone astray.

After a period of silence the pastor said, “Why do you come here?”

“Its the house of God,” they said.

“Why do you listen to me?” the man asked.

“You are the man of God,” they replied.

“Are you going to listen to me now?” the pastor demanded.

They both gulped and said, “Yes.”

“Are you going to tell me the truth?” the pastor demanded.

They both stuttered and said nothing.

“Are you or not?” the man asked. “I can’t help you if you don’t tell me the truth. If you won’t you can leave now and not come back.”

They both gasped and then whispered, “We will.”

“Is Rob adopted?” the man asked.

There was silence. Then finally they said weakly, “Well, yes, but we couldn’t have children.”

“There’s nothing to be ashamed about that,” the pastor said in his most reassuring voice.

“It was, um, complicated,” Rob’s father said. “We aren’t suppose to talk about it.”

“I don’t care about that,” the pastor said. “You need to be honest with your son.”

“We don’t want to hurt him,” his mother said.

“It will hurt him more if you don’t tell him the truth,” the pastor said.

“There are these other people, you don’t know what they are like,” Rob’s father said.

“I don’t care about them. If that’s important to you tell Rob. You don’t have to tell him everything about whoever. And I don’t want to know either.”

“We can’t,” insisted Rob’s mother.

“He already knows,” the pastor said. “And damn near everybody else in town knows too.”

“Why do you talk like that?” Rob’s mother cried.

“What does it take to get you people to listen? You came here for help. I can’t help if you don’t listen,” the pastor replied.

The parents were trembling and crying.

“Come back when you are ready. We need to talk,” the pastor replied.

Rob’s parents left in shock holding each other.

Rob and Bobbie were now the sensation of their schools. They even got twin chimera tee shirts and everyone was kidding about which one was the goat head and which one was the lion head. Rob's mother was mortified when their children made the news. His father forbid his son being interviewed. Bobbie was interviewed for a news show.

Two weeks later Rob's parents were back at the pastor's office.

"Why are you here?" the pastor asked them.

"We need help," Rob's father said. "You said to come back. So we did."

"Are you going to listen this time?" the pastor asked.

"Yes," they meekly replied.

"Why won't you tell Rob? He's 16 and old enough to understand," the pastor asked.

"We couldn't have children," Rob's mom said.

"They told us we didn't qualify for adoption," Rob's father said. "I gave this man a bunch of money and he let us adopt Rob. Rob was a twin and was going to go with the other twin, but the man let us adopt him. We couldn't have children."

"That's in the past," the pastor assured the parents. "You need to take care of Rob now."

"We can't talk about it," Rob's dad said. "That man was a mafia or something. Even the adoption agency was scared of him."

"The world knows now. I don't know what to say about the mafia guy. Maybe he is gone or forgot about it. Any way you need to be open and honest with your son," the pastor said.

They had a long talk and then the pastor prayed for them before they left. They had an order from the pastor, take the whole family to a family councilor and go for six sessions.

"See you in church," the pastor said as they were leaving.

A few weeks later Bobbie was at Rob's house eating dinner with Rob and his parents.

"Look what I found," Bobbie said to Rob. "A doppelgänger app. If we can't be married I can find someone like you." They spent the evening playing with the app.

Vashti

Bill Barnett

Her eighteenth birthday was approaching. Just two weeks. Joan had a party planned that Vashti did not care for. It was all about Joan's ego. The birthday would be the great escape. She will be an adult and able to do what she wants. Time to get the hell out of Dodge. There would be the new car. Dave and Joan would make it the most decedent car possible to prove to everyone how blessed by God they were. Give and you shall receive and bullshit and bullshit, etc. It only strengthened her atheism. She was as committed to her atheism as she was unconvinced. Dave and Joan did not like her calling them by their first names, they wanted her to call them mom and dad. After learning about her adoption history she would have no more of that mom and dad stuff. Soon it would be time to find her real parents. Dave and Joan thought it was a teenage phase. They did not realize how much she knew about how they got her or how the story affected her.

The week before she was in a session with Selah, her therapist. It was the same discussion, but it made her feel better to have someone who would listen and understand. PTSD and Reactive Attachment Disorder. It came from the time she was in a cage for two and a half months. She still had nightmares, they would not go away. All she had to do was close her eyes and there was the cage. Selah helped her find her way through the minefield of emotions. It was the only way to keep from going crazy. She was an adult with a child therapist, but it was really the opposite. In reality she was a child with an adult clinical social worker. Joan took her to a church counselor years ago. It was a disaster. He blamed her for disrespecting her parents and told her she needed to repent of her bad attitudes. Then there was the guy at church who tried to cast a demon out of her. If anyone had one it was him. That is if someone believes in gods and devils. But she was sure they did not exist. So she found a therapist online and went to visit. The social worker was a nice lady. After filling out the paperwork the lady said she needed to get her parents to sign the papers too. So she said she would and never went back. When Selah gave her paperwork to fill out she lied about her age. No problem. It worked. The PTSD reactions were diminishing with help from Selah. Slowly her brain would rewire itself, partly, not totally. The RAD was there to stay. She just had to learn how to manage it. That was tough. She felt alone, except with Selah.

The trip was planned. La Flor, Mexico. She had never been out of her hometown since she was in the cage at the border. Her Spanish was childish. The books and cartoons she was looking at online were helping her remember. It was eleven years since she spoke Spanish to another person. As a home school student she could study what she wanted, as long as it was religious and not Spanish. Spanish was as forbidden for her as porn. The internet solved that. Everyday when she went to work and passed the high school where there were students like her, sort of. She so wanted to talk to them. It was forbidden. She could never meet them. They were all white. She was almost white. Not really white or brown, something in between. That is why Dave and Joan picked her. Red hair, freckles, and almost white. She could pass as white if not for the aztec nose. Joan swore that would be fixed. If Joan hated the nose Vashti loved it. She wanted to meet

brown people. Maybe they were like her. She found a box of old papers in the attic that had her immigration papers. She read about the family she was born into. She remembered them and missed them. Manuel and Rosa Auglia of La Flor had been deported. Juan her brother went to jail for assaulting an officer. Maybe he was in La Flor too by now. She was the only one born north of the border and could not be deported. So she was put up for adoption.

She missed Juan so much. He was her protector. At ten years older he made her feel safe, even in the cage. She was frightened and held onto him all the time, that made her feel safer. The guards prohibited touching and took him away. When he was gone she was terrified. He was not allowed to touch her, they said. He fought with the guards to protect her and stay with her. They beat him and took him away in chains. That was the worst day of her life. One of the others touched her after he was gone, but not the same way. It was bad. When Juan protested that he needed to care for her they did not listen. There were two more months alone in the cage squeezed between strangers. The nightmares were a vivid memory of the cage. If only Juan was here to protect her. She searched the internet and even hired a detective agency to find him, but to no avail. The kindly private detective warned her that Juan may not be alive.

Dave had all the records hidden in the attic and did not know she found them. That was from his and Joan's former jobs. Joan worked in the detention facility. Dave was a contractor for ICE. He would pose as a delivery truck driver and spy on people at the factories he visited. He was making two incomes. One from ICE and one from the delivery company. When she found out she told them they were devils for doing that. It was a big mistake to say that, she was whipped and grounded for months with nothing to do but sit in her room and do home school homework.

The next day was another meeting for the "200 Plan" and she had to be there. It was more give and get. The Bible had a story about people planting seeds and get forty, sixty, or even a hundred fold return. Dave received a vision from God that there was now a way to get a two hundred fold increase. People were excited to come. Everyone would make a big offering when they came. They were all salesmen and all very religious. This is why she was an atheist. If god was real why did he let people do this. She could fake it for two more weeks until the birthday. Dave had his church and made more money than he ever managed as a double dipping immigration spy. It was a sole proprietorship church. Dave controlled everything. The board did what he said.

She wanted to speak out. It was not possible to have any conversation about her past or Dave's church. Sometimes she thought "perros" when she looked at them, but could not even mutter it under her breath. He would kill her. That was the Spanish insult. It was time to get back to her studies. She could show up at work, not clock in until later and use her computer. Her boss was good with that. She was almost an online college junior in physics. The day she bought a cellphone Dave confiscated it. Too worldly. They did not trust her. She never took the computer home. It had everything from real biology, and astrophysics to sex ed and everything else at her fingertips. The pagan courses Dave had forbidden.

Jeremy would be there at the 200 Plan meeting. Dave wanted to arrange a marriage between Jeremy and her. She told Jeremy he could go to hell before she would let him touch her. Dave told him in a reassuring way that she was waiting until they married. When Jeremy talked to her about marriage she screamed: "I will send you to hell myself before that happens!" He backed off. Dave assured him it was because she was virtuous and had not been with a man, not to worry.

The travel agency had the passport, maps, and travel brochures. All she needed was some cash and a birthday. The meeting was terrible. She wore the frumpiest clothes she had hoping they would leave her alone. Joan told her to dress better. Dave's assistant pastor told her she was being too suggestive and should not be tempting men that way. She could feel their eyes crawling all over her body. It was not her fault she was sexy even in frumpy clothes. She got more respect everywhere else than at the prosperity meeting. Dave was excited, still not enough money to buy a jet or even start a TV program, but he was getting there.

The next morning she saw the high school track team out early. God how she wished she could join them. There were deliveries to make to the processing center after the meeting, a whole stack of 200 Plan commitments plus the mail in prayer requests.

Time flew. It was birthday time. The party at church was the most decadent thing she ever saw. "I am a little cynical," she muttered to herself. After the music and cake came the big moment. In the middle of the parlor was a hump covered by a sheet. After a long speech Dave pulled the cover off of the Executive Lexus and gave her the keys and title. Paid for in full. Everyone cheered. God had blessed her for giving. She was getting the 200 Plan increase. And it was just a start. Vashti could not wait until it was over. It was as if their eyes were raping her. No where else did she feel this way. At midnight they went home. It was too late to hit the road.

First thing in the morning she was up with a suitcase in the trunk and off the to the certified pre owned lot. They laughed her to shame. She insisted, so they made an offer. Dave told her that a new car loses \$4000 in value when you drive it off the lot, but not to worry, with God nothing is too good for a member of the 200 Plan. The offer was \$8000 under. She took it. She did not care. She signed the papers to their astonishment, took the check and left. The Uber was waiting for her. A trip to the bank, a trip to get her computer, and she was off to the airport. The flight to El Paso would only take four hours. She had to wait two hours for the plane. The timing worked out. The world around her was surreal. She had only seen the world in pictures.

When the plane landed it was beginning to feel real. The Uber driver said she should spend the night in a hotel and get the early bus in Juarez. And he told her not to travel alone. Not to even consider doing that. After some heated discussion he dropped her off at the hostel. There was a friendly lady there, looking about sixty-ish who asked her what she was doing. Hanna, the lady, was a retired school teacher and defiantly the alpha type. Vashti confessed the whole story. She wanted to see her birth parents. Hanna said she was going that way and they could travel together. There was no stopping Vashti. Of course they had Mexican food. But it was different. It

was so good. When Vashti realized her birth parents were from Mexico she wanted to learn everything about her history and even learn to make the food, wear dresses, etc. Dave and Joan would not let her cook Mexican food. They were concerned about her finding her roots. She had to make Mexican food secretly at a friend's house. As a small child she did not think about where she was from or anything being different. Now it was all she could think about.

Hanna told her story. She was a reverse wetback. Her parents crossed north back when it was easy and nobody cared. She was born on the north side and had been back and forth hundreds of times. Her husband, Raul, was a businessman and owned a factory on the south side of the border, so they lived there. She was going to visit a friend and could stop by La Flor. She knew people there too. It was a beautiful place, but a small, poor town. "You should not travel alone." she told Vashti.

"But you are alone." Vashti replied.

"I know the place." she replied defiantly. "And I know what to do with bandits. They don't scare me."

It seemed like nothing scared Hanna. Which made Vashti feel good.

"And I understand your name too." Hanna declared.

"But, no one understood." thought Vashti.

"We are birds of a feather." Hanna continued.

Dark thirty and they were off crossing the border to get the bus.

"What are you doing here?" barked the immigration officer.

"Spending money." barked Hanna back at him. He stamped their visas and let them through.

The bus was a shiny new executive bus with comfy seats, food service, and good air conditioning. It was hot outside already and would be hotter. The desert landscape was amazing to Vashti. She had only seen it in pictures. The bus seemed to fly down the highway, not stopping in the small towns, and going airborne as it crossed the speed bumps. It was a different world, but exciting and beautiful. At lunchtime the bus stopped in one of the larger towns. The town was densely populated. There were no ranch style houses. Next to the bus stop was a fruit stand full of exotic fruit Vashti had never seen. Hanna helped her choose a variety to try on the trip. The restaurant had outdoor seating. They sat at a table on the side of the street and ate a delicious exotic meal. It was wonderful. Down the street were the same fast food places as where Vashti grew up. And a mall just like the one at home. Somehow this was better.

The bus was off again flying through the desert and bouncing over speed bumps. The driver did not care. He just kept going. In the afternoon they came to another bus stop. It was time to change buses. They would ride a local bus line. It was an older bus, much like a school bus. At least it looked in good repair. The bus left the interstate highway and took off on a winding blacktop road. There were farms, livestock, and people walking everywhere. Everyone seemed happy and friendly here.

“Where were the bad guys?” Vashti thought. She asked Hanna and the reply was: “Killing people and selling drugs.”

“Aren’t you afraid?” asked Vashti.

“We are not worth bothering with.” was the reply. “Just don’t go where they are.”

“How do I know that?” thought Vashti. “Good thing she is with me.”

It was getting late when they came to another bus station. They bought the tickets. The bus would leave before the sun came up so they slept in the station. Not the best place to sleep, but Hanna thought it was ok. There was an announcement for the bus. They scurried up to the gate. The most miserable excuse there ever was for a bus was waiting for them. It looked like it was from the dinosaur time and had never been repaired. It must have been in fights with trucks and cactus and drunks. But it was running and waiting for them. The toothless driver smiled and welcomed them aboard. Vashti was glad to have Hanna with her. She realized that Hanna had lied. She never came here before, but did not want to leave the young woman alone.

Off the bus went down a dirt road. It seemed well maintained for a few miles, but after the first village it was rougher. It did not need speed bumps. The ruts in the road functioned just like speed bumps. The driver did not care. He sped on. The next station was an adobe farm house. The lady of the house invited them in to eat. As they were eating the bus took off back to where it came from. That seemed scary. They were truly in the middle of nowhere and had no transportation. As they finished lunch another bus came up looking like the worse twin of the bus that brought them.

“How much further?” asked Vashti.

“It’s not far. A couple of hours.”

The landscape was amazing. And frightening. What a place to be lost. The bus blew out a tire and they had to wait for a repair. The driver removed the tire and hitched a ride to the tire shop in a small town. The cows came up to check them out. As well as a few chickens and a donkey. There was a farm house nearby. The lady there gave the bus driver a ride to the town. An hour later he came back with a new tire and they were off again. This was beyond any adventure she imagined.

Finally they came to La Flor. It was a small sleepy town with a gas station, a store, a school, and four houses. Vashti's heart was racing. She was going to see her parents that she lost twelve years ago. The bus stopped at the store and she rushed out and into the store. Surely in a town this small everyone knew everyone and they would know where her parents lived. She had mailed letters but there was never a reply. Her Spanish was coming back to her. She finally had people to talk to in Spanish. But her Spanish was a child's Spanish. It did not matter, the people were friendly and welcomed her. After what seemed like a forever greeting she finally got to ask her question.

To Be continued.

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