

3. No Exit

Ideally, universities are dangerous places, where students are subjected to education unlike that of their previous schools of lower education. They are challenged to think for themselves, not brainwashed, though there is a place for that, usually in small seminars where the favorite— usually fashionable — ideologies of professors assert their superiority. Such professors could not exist without the youthful exuberance of students who provide the mass approval of their radicalism. Thinking for themselves is often, perhaps inevitably, confused with questioning everything of the older generation. “Question everything” is fine except it becomes a tool to support an uprising or protest, in which the protesters instead of thinking for themselves behave without thinking as in an angry mob. Historically, dramatic changes in societies may develop or be fostered by such uprisings, protests, and demonstrations of university students. Probably, student protests helped end America’s war in Vietnam.

In a later case I will report to you how Colmes dealt with an uprising that threatened the existence of the entire university. In the case that I am about to describe, the entire university was not under attack or threatened, although at times it appeared as though it might be, along with all universities everywhere. This case is also of significance to me personally, because it was in this case that I first met Professor Colmes and was the case that brought the two of us together.

I came to the United States from Australia in the nineteen seventies. I prefer not to give specific dates because it would make it possible for some of my agile readers to track down the identities of some of the characters I mention in my stories. And while the people I describe are indeed real persons, I have of course reconstructed their features and habits to protect their privacy, in the true American spirit .

The seventies was the period in which the Weather Underground was in action throughout American universities. The members of that essentially communist organization, actually I should not call it that. It was more a coming together of like

minds, and though its organizational skill was limited, did manage to have a loose network of members in many universities, and to pull off some successful violent attacks. If they were communists, of course, their organization would have been rigidly structured, each “cell” with its tough leader who ruled the cell with strict and merciless discipline. In that decade, discipline was the last consideration in any protest movement.

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I was hard at work studying for my constitutional law exam, sitting in one of those cubicles they provide doctoral students in the maize of the main library that inhabited the entire west side of the university’s square podium. There was no door to these cubicles, we students just sat at our desks that faced the wall, a shelf for books, a hard chair, the rest of the library at our backs. These cubicles were hard to come by and during periods of examinations, they were strictly let out only for limited periods, usually for two hours. There was a small slot attached to the cubicle entrance into which we had to place our library card and fill out our name and time of entry.

I was engrossed with my reading (a bit of an exaggeration, maybe I was dozing) when I heard a light tap on the side of my cubicle. I turned and there stood a strong looking man, medium height, a long chiseled face, thin lips, a slight twitch at one corner, and a gleam in his blue-gray eyes.

“Mister Hobson, I presume?” he asked, his voice a slightly high pitched but most penetrating one, rather like the warble of an Australian magpie.

“G’day,” I said in Australian, “and you are?”

“Interdisciplinary Professor Thomas Colmes, but you can call me just Colmes.”

“OK. Colmes it is,” I said with Aussie bluster, “and you can call me Bill. What’s going on?”

“Hobson, if you don’t mind, I never call students or anyone else for that matter, by their first name.”

“No problem, mate,” I replied a little put off. His accent was kind of English, as though there was a plumb in his mouth, like my Dad used to describe all pommies (English migrants to Australia). “You’re a pom...I mean English?” I cheekily asked.

Colmes ignored the question. I would find out later that his particular origins were a bit of a mystery.

“I need a student I can trust who is unbiased, forthright, and down to earth.” And then he added, unnecessarily I thought, “I see you are reading Tribe’s *Constitutional Law*. I hope you have spied his deeply buried biases.”

“Don’t think so, Colmesy.” Just learning it by rote for Professor Garcia’s exam.”

“Excellent!” he almost smiled. The bloke was too serious for my liking. “And it’s Colmes, if you don’t mind.”

I ignored the correction and then asked the obvious, “so you wanted me specially for something or other?”

Colmes took a deep breath and looked around. “We cannot talk here. What I have to tell you is something that is of a very serious nature, and requires the utmost care and secrecy.”

“Well I do have my comprehensive exam tomorrow,” I kind of announced like the information wasn’t especially directed to him.

“I am aware of that,” said Colmes, “and I also know that it is an open book examination, is it not?”

“Yair, but...”

“I need your help, Hobson, and I might add that it is a matter of life or death,” he said firmly, his English accent exaggerated.

“Well, I suppose if you put it like that...” I mumbled submissively.

“I do indeed. I do indeed,” spoke Colmes, a big frown on his forehead, his long ears slightly flinching.

I turned to my desk, shut the books I had open, placed them on the shelf above, grabbed my small canvas bag that contained my notebooks and lunch, and turned back to face this mysterious man called Colmes.

“Alright. Alright,” I replied with a big grin, mimicking what I would later discover was his favourite expression “indeed.”

Colmes had already turned and walked towards the library exit. I trotted along trying to catch him up

In other cases, I will describe for you Colmes’s office, deep in the bowels of the underground tunnels that served the university. By my reckoning he led me down and through a maze of tunnels—as I thought at the time, now I know them like the back of my hand—to his office that I reckoned was somewhere under the main podium, maybe even under the big fountain that gushed next to the clock tower.

Colmes fiddled with his keys that were on a small chain hanging from his trouser pocket, not unlike the chain on a watch fob of older days. He led the way in, grabbed a wicker chair that sat just inside the door, and placed it at the front of his desk, across from his own desk chair. "This is your chair," he said all businesslike.

"The other one," I said jokingly pointing to the overstuffed leather chair in the corner, "looks more comfortable."

"The wicker chair," emphasized Colmes.

I was beginning to see that Colmes did not have much of a sense of humor, or at least showed it only rarely. On the other hand, we Aussies knew that the English had a pretty poor sense of humor compared to us Aussies. And they certainly couldn't take a joke. I was about to plonk myself down on the overstuffed chair, but held it back. Instead, I calmly sat on the wicker chair as directed.

"So what's up doc?" I said foolishly, indeed flippantly.

"If we are going to work together, it will be necessary for you to excise your Aussie superficialities. The business before us is very serious," lectured Colmes, a straight, now seeming gray to me, even sallow face. Did I really want to work for this bloke?

"Are you acquainted with a criminal justice student named Akira Tanaka?" asked Colmes seemingly unaware of my not well disguised doubts about working for him.

"Don't think so, Colmes," I said with a hint of belligerence, or that is how it seemed to me, calling an esteemed professor by his last name.

"I want you to find out as much as you can about his background, and especially as of now, what he is doing, what examinations he is lined up for, what courses he likes and dislikes. I would normally have Rose my Russian assistant do this for me, but I think that you would be less imposing or shall we say less scary than would Rose."

"Rose?" I asked with a grin. "The one with the knitting? Everyone knows Rose."

"Indeed, they do," answered Colmes. "She is a treasure, but not good for this particular job."

"So what do you want me to find out about this Akira guy?" I asked, and before he could reply I added, "what's the problem?"

"As you may have deduced, Hobson, he is Japanese. It has

come to my attention, from a confidential source, that he is having suicidal thoughts.”

“I leaned across his desk and muttered, “isn’t that a Japanese thing? Like, Hara Kiri and all?”

“Perhaps one should not call it a Japanese thing,” corrected Colmes.

“I thought you wanted me to be straight forward, no bull shit,” I answered defensively.

“Indeed. Indeed. You are right Hobson. I thank you for being open and forthright. I doubt that in this case it is particularly that he is Japanese, but simply a matter of his fear of failing his final comprehensive exam.”

“I can attest to that,” I said with a wry smile. “And you didn’t say who gave you this information.”

“Right again, Hobson. I did not...”

“And besides,” I continued, “I’d say all grad students facing their finals suffer the same psychological trauma.”

“Very good, Hobson. You have mastered the jargon of the psychotherapist,” said Colmes, and I thought I heard a quiet chortle, like a magpie.

I was about to add that I was a psychologist in my former life in Australia, but Colmes cut in first. “Yes, you worked for the Victorian education department. I hope it was not too Victorian?” This was Colmes’s idea of a joke.

“Probably not enough for you,” I countered.

Colmes fingered his key chain. Then turned serious again and began to answer my original question. “The student counseling people have reached out to me. It seems he went to them saying that he was going to commit suicide, but would give no reason or hint of what it was that was driving him. Usually it is some form of depression, as you would no doubt know, Hobson, in your former role as psychologist.

“My cases were mainly younger children,” I answered, “so I have no hands-on experience with teens or older. Nevertheless the fact that Akira went to the counseling department surely is an indicator that he is serious and is seeking help, a good thing.”

“Indeed. Indeed. Now I want you to find out everything you can of him, his friends, any support group. Where and what he does every minute of the day. Rose had a brief poke around and reported to me that he is very secretive and does not mix much

with the other students. Understandable, since according to Rose, he speaks very little English.”

I was frankly flabbergasted. “No English and he’s doing his comprehensive?” I gasped.

“Apparently it is all an open book written exam, an exam method that is all the rage these days.”

“Seems to me that gives an advantage to students who can read and comprehend quickly,” I mused.

“Perhaps. But it maybe works against a student who can memorize answers to anticipated questions, then write their answers down in the exam within the strict amount of time permitted. It’s a matter of learning by wrote, as against reading, filtering, organizing and extracting information on the fly, as one would say, if it were open book.”

I was most impressed by the way Colmes had succinctly summarized the situation. “So you think that this open book form of exam discriminates against those who come from an education system that emphasizes rote learning, as is common in some if not all, Asian countries?”

“Precisely. Indeed. Indeed. It is why I have taken on the case. In fact I informed the counseling department that I would take the case providing that they kept out of it and gave me complete control. They were only too happy to agree, They did not want a suicide on their hands.”

“Neither do we,” I said, making us a royal ‘we’ without thinking.

“Indeed. Hobson my boy. Indeed,” endorsed Colmes, which much pleased me, except for the boy part.

I walked out of Colmes’s office with a light step, pleased that this big deal professor had chosen me of all people, to assist him. I came away, though, only with the name of the student and nothing much more. Had I stayed in my position as president of the criminal justice students’ association, I would have surely known Akira. But I had given up the students’ association a couple of years back when student protests were running hot. I didn’t mind the protests in themselves, but it was just mentally exhausting, and too much conflict for my liking. But I had best keep those things for another case, which pivoted around student protests.

Akira being Japanese made it a simple matter to find him. I

looked up the class schedules that were pinned on the school noticeboard, and dropped by any that were meeting. It was the last week of classes, so I knew that I had to get on it right away. The final exams would be the following week. I saw that Professor Garcia's constitutional law class was on right then, so I hurried across the Podium to the lecture center. It was always a large class because his was a required class for all students, the Constitution after all, considered to be, the very core of criminal justice, and rightly so, in my opinion. I slipped in the door at the back of the lecture hall, way at the top, so I could look down at the rows of students, all sitting there, nervously waiting to be called on, by the professor, as I will describe in another case.

Looking down, though, only gave me a view of student heads, and since Akira was Japanese I assumed that his hair would be straight, copious, and black. I now realized that this was not a good idea, but now that I was in there, I would wait until class was dismissed and hopefully catch up with him as they all left. Eventually, not seeing any sign of him, I asked a student who looked Asian to point out Akira to me. I know, my doing this was tinged with a bit of racism, "they all look the same" mentality, but I did it anyway. And it paid off, to some degree. The student was most friendly, and said that Akira was in the class but he did not come to class because he was too afraid he would be called upon and couldn't speak much English. She then invited me to a meeting of the Asian students' association which Akira did attend, because it was a group that helped each other with studying and preparing for exams. And because Constitutional law class was by far the hardest and scary class, they all met after class in a small room that the school assistant dean had kindly put aside for them.

There were three others in the room, and I quickly recognized Akira. He was the only Japanese, the others were Chinese, I guessed. They all opened their notebooks, except Akira who sat with his notebook closed, staring blankly at the floor. One looked in my direction, then turned back to her books. I sat in the corner and watched them work, most industriously. They were studying the law on whether individuals could be committed to a prison or asylum without a trial.

After fifteen minutes or so, Akira stirred, the other students turned to him, then he picked up his books and left, bowing

nervously, backing out of the room until he hit the door, which I quickly opened for him and followed him out.

“Akira!” I called, “just one moment, please.”

He stopped, and waited for me. He was a smallish person, of stocky stature, one could imagine him playing soccer, edging opponents out with his body, running fast up the field. “May I speak with you?” I asked.

He stopped and looked down. It was easy enough to see that he was not a happy person. “Speak English?” I asked.

“No,” he said, shaking his head.

“I am Bill Hobson. Professor Colmes sent me to talk with you.” I hoped that he had heard of this famous professor. Indeed, his eyes lit up a little, but then he looked down again. “I am here to help you,” I said trying very hard to be kind and helpful.

“No one help me. Not can,” he replied in a deep voice, unexpected from such a small person.

“I understand that the final Con Law exam is next week, a week from today, right?” He seemed to understand, nodded a little. “I am sure I can help you. Professor Colmes has found a Japanese translator who can sit with you in the exam. It’s an open book exam, you understand what that is?”

Akira nodded, and he almost smiled, but there was a very deep frown on his face, his eyebrows forced down almost shutting his eyes. I started to gesticulate trying to convey what I assumed my English did not. “Come with me,” I said pointing first to him then to me, “and we will meet with the translator and get everything sorted out.”

I wanted to put my arm around him he seemed so forlorn, so deeply unhappy. But he appeared to have understood me and did follow me as I led us across the Podium to a small office buried in the labyrinth of the library. It was located in, of course, the Asian studies collection area, which heretofore I never knew existed. We entered the small office, not much bigger than a cubicle, three walls totally glass, one could see all the way down the library stacks. The translator, surprisingly, was not Asian at all, or did not appear so, though there was some hint of high cheek bones. She saw me gaping at her and said quickly, “I am a descendant of the Japanese who were locked away during World War Two,” she said, then turned directly to Akira. “Please take a seat,” she said. He complied, then to both our consternations, he

broke down and cried. His head in his hands, his knees pulled up to his elbows, so that he sat precariously on the edge of the small chair.

The translator looked at me. "My name is Joan," she said. "Let's see what the problem is."

She leaned over and stroked Akira's head, as one would when consoling an unhappy dog, and out of her mouth I imagined came a stream of goodness, all in rapid Japanese. This seemed to have some effect, as Akira's sobbing gradually became less violent, and soon, just one small sob came every now and again, and Joan offered a tissue for him to wipe his eyes. He then responded with a stream of Japanese, gesticulating wildly, his face contorted with what looked to me was close to rage.

Joan sat back and looked across to me. "He is frightened he will fail the course because, he says, the open book exam makes it impossible for him to read the material quickly and then write an answer in English."

"Perhaps he could write it in Japanese and you, if you would be prepared, could translate it for the Professor to read?" I suggested.

Joan addressed this suggestion to Akira. His face became contorted again, as he replied at length to Joan, who frowned and said to me, "he says he tried that, even went to the Dean to request it, but Professor Garcia flatly refused. Seems that this professor once failed a student because of his illegible handwriting."

"I'm not at all surprised," I answered. "Then we will have to find another way."

Joan then spoke to Akira in a kind and motherly way, I thought, though I did not know what they were talking about. I assumed that she was reassuring him that a solution would be found. But when Joan spoke to me after her long conversation with Akira, she expressed much concern. It seems that the possibility of failure in Japanese culture, according to Joan who says she believes it to be so, for a family member to fail, especially he being the eldest of the three children in his family and the only male, is not unlike failing on the battlefield. The shame can only be eradicated by one thing, the only way out, suicide.

"Are you serious, I mean, is he serious?" I asked, aghast.

"Yes! Yes!" cried Akira. And he got up and left. I was left

wanting to speak more with Joan to see if there was anything we could do, but also wanting to chase after Akira to try to talk some sense into him. I rose from my seat, but as I did so, Joan grasped my arm.

“Leave him be. I think he is in the process of resolving the problem for himself. You may have noticed that he almost smiled.”

I had noticed that, but had thought I imagined it. “What is he going to do?” I asked.

“He assured me that he will not commit suicide. At least not before the exam.” She replied.

“That’s not much of a reassurance,” I said.

“No it’s not. But at least it will give you a little more time to try to work something out with the professor, who sounds like an ogre, if you ask me,” Joan said, raising her eyebrows.

“Indeed he is,” I agreed, retreated to the door and expressed my deep appreciation for her help.

It was a week until the final exam.

I reported back to Professor Colmes, who praised me for my hard work, but was a little perturbed. “I am a little concerned that, after such an emotional outburst that you describe, he then miraculously, recovers and walks off saying he has a solution. We all know that the only viable solution is suicide. Unless...” Colmes mused.

“What,” I asked, “what?”

“I will speak with Garcia. Maybe he will listen to me, but I doubt it. I will suggest to him that he simply pass the student,” said Colmes as though he were the Godfather who would make an offer that Garcia could not refuse.

“Really? You could get him to do that? And besides, is that not unfair to the other students who have worked hard to get their degrees. It cheapens their degree, don’t you think?” I said in a most forthright manner, one that I regretted, only having just started work for him.

“I appreciate your toughness, Hobson, Indeed I do. But really, what does it matter? One student, going back to Japan. Gets his degree in an unorthodox manner. His family are happy. So what? Is it worth losing one’s life over an exam?” Colmes looked at me square in the face. It was a forceful, intellectual, or

was it emotional, challenge?

“Whatever,” I said dismissively. “Garcia will never go for it. He’s heartless.”

“We will see,” said Colmes tapping the fingers of each outstretched hand together, communicating a kind of satisfied though pensive state of mind.

“Then we’re done?” I asked Colmes, as I made to leave.

“Not quite. This case is not solved yet, we must keep at it. I will meet with Garcia and see what I can do. You should keep an eye on Akira to the extent that it is possible.”

“You mean tail him? I mean, I’d have to live with him every minute of the day to stop him from trying to do himself in,” I asserted.

“Of course. Just do what you can and let me know if anything happens.”

“No problem,” I replied, “and you will do the same, I take it?”

Colmes nodded and I took my leave.

As it turned out, from that day, Akira disappeared. I could not find him anywhere. If he had killed himself, surely the body would have been found, even if he jumped in the Hudson river. And Colmes insisted that we not report him as a missing person. That he would show up sooner or later.

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The day of the constitutional law final exam came, and nervous students sat in their assigned seats chattering, arms full of books, waiting for Professor Garcia to show. Until now I have refrained from calling him by his nickname Ted the Red, because this was the very first case in which I was involved, and people except students did not refer to him by the nickname. But for this case, the nickname is pertinent, given that he earned his nickname from the demonstrations he had participated in downtown, protesting outside the legislature and capitol in Albany, against whatever issue it might be, for the most part the Vietnam war, death penalty abolition, homelessness, hunger, corruption, whatever the SDS or Weathermen or Black Power movements were pushing. All of these referred to by politicians and the popular press as communists of one kind or other. Hence Professor Theodore Garcia’s nickname Ted the Red.

Now I sat at the back of the lecture hall and waited for Ted

the Red to enter. He did so, carrying a stack of blue books, the traditional exam booklets in which all students were required to write their exam answers, and of course, the sheaf of legal size papers containing the exam questions. To my surprise, I spied Akira sitting in the front row. This being an exam, there were no assigned seats as the professor would not be calling on individuals by name.

I walked down to the lectern where Ted the Red was standing, checking over his list of students, counting them to see if all were present. He smiled at me as I passed Akira who seemed to be writing furiously and covered his work when he saw me. His round face seemed to be free of stress and anxiety that had overcome him during our meeting. What on earth could have happened, I wondered, and even suspected that it had all been an act. Ted waved at me with a sheet of paper in his hand. He looked amused, and looked down on me his face wrinkled with a mixture of amusement and superiority.

“Take a look at this,” he said, handing me the paper. “Now you can see that I was right all along. The asshole was faking it.”

I took one look and was struck speechless. It was a note typed in capitals in the middle of the paper that said:

PASS ALL CON LAW STUDENTS NOW OR SUFFER
THE CONSEQUENCES.

LONG LIVE THE WEATHER UNDERGROUND

“You have to dismiss the class,” I proclaimed, “It’s a bomb threat!”

“Bull shit! It’s that little Japanese asshole trying to weasel his way out of the exam,” he growled.

“But it’s the Weather Underground. They’ve blown up several places over the past couple of years. You’ve got to dismiss the class!” I turned as if to address the class. “If you will not, I will!”

Ted grabbed me by the arm and roughly dragged me to the door of the lecture center and pushed me out. I tried to forced my way back in, but he was too strong and held the door closed. Thereupon I decided that my only alternative was to raise the alarm. I looked for a fire alarm, but could not find one. Then I realized that the bottom doors to the lecture centers opened into

the tunnels. I would run to Colmes. He would have a solution, I hoped. I ran one way, then turned and ran the other. I had only been to his office that one time when he hired me. It was like a rabbit warren down there. Then I heard the clacking of a typewriter and followed the sound, which led me to a large office with one person, surrounded by TVs and other audio and video paraphernalia.

I rushed in and grabbed at the typist's phone that sat on her desk. This gave her a big fright and she was none too pleased.

"What are you doing?" she asked, "who are you?"

"I need to use the phone," I said.

"Put your quarter in the jar there and you can use it. Dial 7 to get an outside line."

"But I don't have a quarter. Besides this is an emergency," I cried.

"We have to mind our budget down here," said the typist as she grabbed my wrist in a very strong grip.

"Colmes! " I yelled. "Where's Professor Colmes's office?"

"Oh. Him? The one that never even says hello when you pass him in the tunnel," she said in a most disapproving manner.

"His office. Where is it?"

At this point she at last comprehended that there was something serious going on. She let go my wrist and pointed, "Go that way, first right, second on the left."

I rushed off and soon found Colmes's office and banged on his door. The lock quickly opened, and Colmes appeared, frowning. "What is it?" he asked.

"I went to Professor Garcia's exam in the off-chance that Akira might show, thinking that he would not be there of course, since he hasn't been seen for a couple of weeks."

"Indeed. Hobson. The situation is very serious. We must get to Garcia's class immediately. I have more information as we get to his class. In fact I was about to go there when you banged on my door," said Colmes.

"It's just a few minutes down the tunnel," I said. "Akira showed up to the class and seemed to be writing his exam."

"I am sure that he was faking it. In fact, I have reliable information that he has been meeting with the Weather Underground and that they are, or have been, planning to plant a bomb in the examination classroom."

“That is what I was coming to tell you. Garcia received a bomb threat, here it is.” I handed him the note but he pushed it away, saying that he could not read it. It was his dyslexia, of course, but at that time I did not know this. I simply put it down to his being easily annoyed and wanting to do his own thing. “I tried to get him to make an announcement and dismiss the class. But he would have none of it. Would not take the note seriously, even though it was signed by the Weather Underground.”

“Yes,” said Colmes as we got to the lecture center door, “that is to be expected. He has his reasons, I can tell you.”

Breathless, I opened the lecture center door and we rushed in. All was quiet. Garcia walked back and forth in front of the blackboard of the lecture center. I spied Akira still apparently writing his exam.

“I’ve been waiting for your arrival,” grinned Ted the Red, “you can see that we have not yet been blown up.”

Colmes took a deep breath and walked up to the lectern. “Attention class!” he called. “Please close your examination booklets, make sure your name is written on the front and leave the classroom in an orderly fashion. Take all your things with you, and hand your exam booklet to Dr. Garcia, Mr. Hobson or myself as you leave. There has been a bomb threat and we have good reason to believe that it is the Weather Underground.”

Ted the Red was extremely angry. “Hold it! He screamed. “I will have no one vacate my class, or submit to threats by persons of violence and insurrection!” Some students stopped, others ignored him and kept going. Garcia continued and it was clear that he would not let up. “My father, his father and many of his relatives were murdered by the Nazis during world war two. It was only by the tenacity and bravery of my mother that she managed to escape with me out of Germany, and eventually, since none of the allies would take in Jewish refugees, we ended up in Cuba, and eventually the United States after the war was over...”

You can understand how strange, yet moving, this appeared. Here were scores of students scrambling to get out of a classroom to escape a bomb, and Ted the Red is reciting his personal history, banging the lectern to drive home his point, seemingly oblivious to the danger into which he had thrust his students.

Colmes gathered up Garcia’s papers and wedged them under

his arm, then gently, but nevertheless with some necessary force, guided Professor Garcia out of the classroom. I walked through the aisles collecting the exam blue books, as they called them (the covers were a light blue). I stayed until all had left, except Akira who remained, sitting silently, staring into space.

“You need to leave,” I said softly.

Eventually, Akira did gather up his things and leave. I was the last one out, and there was, obviously, still no explosion. In the meantime, Colmes had called the authorities to report the threat. And as I exited, a couple of bomb specialists, dressed in their military-like uniforms, though they were New York State troopers, showed up to search for the bomb.

In fact a small bomb was found sitting in one of the cupboards that contained chalkboard materials just below the blackboard. According to the experts the bomb was poorly made, and they could find no indication of how it would be detonated, though there was a sizable amount of TNT sitting there. The days of remotely detonated bombs and suicide bombers were yet to come.

However, settling the dispute, and dispute it was, concerning the Con Law grades was no simple matter. There were two reasons for this. The first and obvious one was what is called, indeed revered, the principle of academic freedom. Supposedly the professor has total and complete authority to make all academic decisions including the content of their courses, grading of their students, and behavior in the classroom. So Ted the Red was completely within his rights to ignore the Weather Underground demands. The second was, how to assuage the inherent skepticism of the Weather Underground and their supporters that the professor's submission of the grades would in fact be recorded in the students' transcripts. The recording by a professor of a student's grade went through several layers of bureaucracy until it was finally entered into the student's official academic transcript. The process took weeks, if not months to be completed. Though the Weather Underground probably had no understanding of the lengthy process of recording a student's grade, they nevertheless were sufficiently distrustful of the people who were, derisively, over thirty years old, so effort would have to be made to assure them that indeed their demands had been met.

Of course, there is one final unfinished matter that I must now attend to. Did Akira commit suicide? And was he truly involved in the Weather Underground?

Colmes had the answers, although there was some controversy as to the true outcomes. Certainly, Akira did not commit suicide. Or at least not during the difficult negotiations with the Weather Underground whose representatives proved most cantankerous. But, according to Colmes, he was deeply involved in the Weather Underground planning and implementation of the bomb. He knew this from the intelligence he received from none other than his housekeeper Rose (later known as Rose the elder for reasons that will come clear in later cases) and permanent graduate student like myself, who had obtained the Weather Underground's confidence by the simple fact that she was Russian and spoke English with a strong Russian accent. They assumed, wrongly, that she must be a communist, and therefore could be trusted even though she was probably over thirty.

Colmes, therefore, knew about the planting of the bomb, especially Akira's central part in it. Akira appears to have overcome his supposed deficit in the English language to convince the Weather Underground to attack Ted the Red, claiming that he was a CIA spy and only pretended to be a left wing extremist. Colmes claimed that this was a cunning trick on Akira's part, to get the Weather Underground to have Ted the Red pass all students regardless, the argument being that giving grades was just one more overbearing tactic of the professorial elite to keep the students in submission and stop them from seeing through the obvious hypocrisies of the academic ruling class. This was quite ahead of the times. There would be demonstrations throughout the United States and even Europe charging that assigning grades was a heartless act of authoritarianism and discriminated against those students who were not good at tests. Colmes leaked this information to the FBI and Akira was listed for deportation, which occurred soon after the faculty senate and university administration caved to the Weathermen demands and all Con Law students were given a passing grade. Needless to say, this created an uproar among all other students who immediately demanded automatic passing

grades in all their courses.

Thus, concluded Colmes, a suicide had been averted, one life saved, at the cost of degrading the education of all other students from that time forward.

