

# CHAPTER 8

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The Federal Express driver brought the orange and purple package directly to Zach's office. With one motion Zach signed for the package, got up from his desk and headed for the clean room. Troy was in the dust free room testing new blocking diodes, he was now the acting engineering technician.

"Is that the bronze tinting?" Troy asked when Zach entered the negatively pressurized room.

"Yes, it was just delivered." Zach set the package on the stainless steel workbench.

"I have the glass all prepped and ready to apply the special adhesive." Troy picked up a piece of glass by the edges and carried it to the workbench.

"Good," replied Zach as he pulled a small bottle of blue liquid from the package.

"How much tinting did they send?" Troy asked.

Zach pulled a roll from the package. "It says twenty square feet."

"Good, I disassembled two of the quad panels. I thought we should test one with the tint on the outside of the glass and one with the tint on the inside. If the results are close, we should probably manufacture the panels with the tinting on the inside."

"Good thinking." Zach unrolled the dark film on top of an antistatic pad. "The manufacture specs show twenty five percent UV breakdown after ten years. Since solar panels are tilted for maximum sun light it will be faster."

Troy retrieved the second piece of glass. "I've been checking auto glass manufactures, their specs are better."

Zach paused and looked directly at Troy. The way Troy was dealing with quality control was the same way Eric had. "That's good to know. Thanks for researching that."

32           "Of course there will be an additional cost per panel. I created a  
33 spread sheet on a cost analysis based on twice the power per panel."  
34 Eric spouted, wanting to show that he had computer skills too."

35           "The upside is that we will be producing four times more power."  
36 Zach stated with a strained confident.

37           "We should not compromise more power for reliability. A  
38 multimillion dollar solar farm that fails after ten years would hurt the  
39 green energy deals of the future. The greed of today could ruin it for  
40 alternative energy investment in the future."

41           Zach stared directly into Troy's eyes. "Did Eric talk to you about  
42 taking out two layers of cells?"

43           "Yes, he did." Troy broke eye contact with Zach. "But Eric was  
44 more into the God's in control thing mind set. Kind of like how you  
45 named the business Son Source. The Arts and Mother Earth is what I  
46 studied. I also studied the proven science of global warming."

47           Any thought of having Troy take over for Eric vanished with the  
48 Mother Earth, global warming comments. "I need to go back to my  
49 office for a while. Can you finish up here?"

50           "Sure, no problem. I'll bring my spread sheets to you later."

51           About two hours later there was a knock on the office door. Zach  
52 looked up and motioned for Troy to come in. "I got the tint applied and  
53 panels reassembled. Do you want me to start testing this afternoon?"

54           "Let's wait until tomorrow. It will allow for some additional time for  
55 the adhesive to dry." Zach set a toy piece of metal down.

56           "I can stay late!" Troy offered, eager to show off his capabilities.

57           Zach's head jerked up. "Absolutely not! Haven't you read the new  
58 safety guidelines? There will always be two employees on the roof at  
59 all times."

60           "I understand," Troy's eyes were drawn toward the metal object.  
61 "You might also want to add a guideline for no blaring music. Eric  
62 always played his boombox way too loud. It was dangerous for  
63 everyone."

64           "What?" Zach replied with a stern glare.

65           "The loud music in the shop." Troy paused. "Eric used to turn up  
66 that Rock and Roll music so loud you couldn't hear the backing up

67 alarm on the forklift. You're lucky someone didn't get run over in the  
68 warehouse."

69 "Troy, let's not pick apart a dead man's love for music."

70 "I'm not! But blaring music in a workplace wasn't smart. Some of  
71 the guys in the warehouse are now blasting Rap Crap on his old  
72 boombox."

73 "Troy, what's your problem? Eric's dead, have some respect."

74 There was a long uncomfortable stillness. "Mr. Slenski, I'm not  
75 trying to disrespect or talk trash about Eric. He was a good man and a  
76 great father. I'm just concerned about the distraction of loud music. I  
77 wouldn't want to see anybody else get hurt."

78 Zach leaned back in his office chair and closed his eyes. Troy stood  
79 there in the unpleasant silence. Finally, Zach leaned forward and  
80 started writing on a yellow note pad.

81 "Should I come in early tomorrow morning? That way, the both of  
82 us can go up on the roof before the sun gets too high."

83 "Yeah, that sounds good." Zach kept writing.

84 Still feeling awkward about what he had said about Eric's music  
85 Troy tried to change the subject. "So, you are in to war games?"

86 "Huh?" Zach looked up from the yellow pad. "What?"

87 "War games, I see you have an air force piece." Troy pointed at the  
88 metal airplane. "My Mom schooled me about the white religious men  
89 that play that game. Troy was careful not to use the word 'Christian'.

90 "I don't know anything about any sort of war games. I found this  
91 up under the solar panel rack the morning Eric fell off the roof. It must  
92 have dropped out of his pocket. Probably, one of the twins."

93 "I doubt it. Eric was a pacifist; he didn't even allow his boys to play  
94 with toy guns."

95 "No one else was up on the roof under the test rack. Unless its  
96 yours."

97 "Its not mine! Sequoia would never allow an adult war game at the  
98 ranch. She freaked out when she found Halo War on my Xbox.

99 "War game, what are you talking about?" Zach picked the plane  
100 up off his desk. "This is just a toy."

101 "Its not a toy. Take a closer look at that plane and you will see  
102 bombs, missiles and a lot of armament on it."

103 Zach scrutinized the dull gold metal. The tragic day that he found  
104 the plane on the roof he hadn't noticed the fine detail. "If this is a  
105 piece to some expensive war game then they didn't pay much  
106 attention to the decal on the tail. Shouldn't it be USAF for United  
107 States Air Force?"

108 "Not necessarily. Different decals represent different countries. The  
109 UPAF could stand for United Polish Air Force."

110 "There's no United Polish Air Force," quipped Zach.

111 I know, I was using it as an example. But for sure that war piece  
112 was not Eric's." Troy was confident with his reply.

113 "Maybe Eric was holding it for a friend?"

114 "I don't think so? Eric despised the type of men that would sit  
115 around moving war pieces around a map to see who can ultimately  
116 rule the world. We debated about the NWO often.

117 "The what?" Zach knew better. He should have never asked.

118 "The New World Order!"

119 "Yeah, okay." Zack looked away.

120 "Crypto Currency and code Panda vaccinations are on their  
121 agenda. I have some internet articles if you want to read up about the  
122 NWO. Very few people believe that a New World Order exists!"

123 "Well maybe, after I solve the world's energy problem."

124 *Ring Ring. . .* "Mr. Slenski it's your wife on line two."

125 Zach was thankful for the desk phone intercom interruption; he  
126 snapped up the handset. "Sally, hold on for a minute. I need to set a  
127 time to meet up with an employee?" Zack put his hand over the  
128 mouthpiece. "Troy, I'll be here at seven sharp."

129 "Sounds good, see you in the morning. I'll print you off those NWO  
130 articles."

131 Zach waited for Troy to leave and then uncovered the mouthpiece.  
132 "Thanks, you just saved me from a conspiracy theory rant."

133 "You must be talking to Troy. That's what happens when you're  
134 raised by a flower child with a trust fund."

135 "How do you know about Troy's mom?"

136 "All I know is that Sequoia runs a horse sanctuary that her hippy  
137 parents left to her."

138 "I didn't even know that."

139 "I found out that tidbit at Eric's funeral."

140 "Oh. . ." There was quiet reflection pause over the phone.

141 Sally broke the silence. "Pastor Tom said we should have a date  
142 night. Can we meet at the fish house?"

143 Troy reappeared in the doorway. "Don't hang up! I might be few  
144 minutes late. I have to feed the horses in the morning. Tomorrow  
145 Sequoia has yoga and meditation."

146 "Not a problem. I'll wait until you get here to go up on the roof."  
147 Zach moved his hand away from the mouthpiece. "Sally, I'll meet you  
148 at Sully's Fish House in forty minutes."

149 After he hung up Zach put a pen to a yellow notepad and wrote:  
150 **Why is Pastor Tom telling Sally to have a date night?** Then he  
151 looked at his to do list and mumbled to himself. "I can do this tonight."  
152 Out in the warehouse Zach followed the blaring music to the silver and  
153 red boombox setting on the top of the receiving desk. He traced the  
154 cord down behind the green counter and pulled the plug. A peaceful  
155 silence settled into the warehouse.

156 "Hey, what's going on?" yelled out a voice from a distance.  
157 Footsteps could be heard rapidly slapping concrete from between the  
158 parts bins. "Oh, it's you Mr. Slenski," the scruffy warehouseman said  
159 as he rounded the steel rack.

160 "This was Eric's stereo. I'm going to return it to his wife."

161 "Yeah, but he doesn't need it now. He blew the speakers out on  
162 mine so technically he owed me."

163 Zach coiled the cord and tucked it through the handle.

164 The warehouseman stayed his distance, hoping that the marijuana  
165 scent didn't drift. "I'll bring in my own stereo in tomorrow."

166 "Don't be bringing in any stereo equipment right now." Zach  
167 grabbed the handle and picked up the boombox. "There are some new  
168 safety guidelines for insurance reasons that we have to implement.  
169 The loud music was listed as a potential safety hazard and Troy said it  
170 is a distraction."

171 "Wow man that's not right! Like what would Troy know? He lives  
172 with his mom and is probably still sucking tit. Man if I don't have my  
173 music I'll have to take my skills someplace else. It's the music or me!"

174 "I'll take that as your resignation. Come in tomorrow at noon and  
175 I'll have your severance package ready."

176 "Hey, I was going to quit anyway! Like man it's been a slippery  
177 slope since you changed the name to Son Source. And like man; that  
178 new safety guideline about drug testing is for you uptight Christian  
179 bigots." At the employee door the stoned warehouseman turned and  
180 gave Zach the finger. Zach hurried across the warehouse floor and  
181 locked the steel door.

182 Back in his office he taped the jet airplane to the boombox and  
183 observed the security camera monitor covering the employee parking  
184 lot. His white Prius was the only car left in the lot. He glanced at his  
185 watch. *Crap, I'm going to be late.* Zach grabbed the red and silver  
186 boombox by the handle. As he locked the employee door he looked up  
187 at the security camera at the top of the wall. *I bet that there's still a*  
188 *recording of the night Eric fell.*

189 Traffic at fifteen minutes past five was four fold of what traffic  
190 would have been before five. The Prius was running low on a battery  
191 charge so the air conditioner was off. Zach wasn't as hot as Sally who  
192 had been waiting alone in the restaurant; the parking lot was full.  
193 Finally there was a car backing out of a spot.

194 A blast of air conditioned air that was mixed with the smell of fish  
195 hit Zach in the face when he yanked open the restaurant door. He  
196 followed the hostess and noted the almost empty wine carafe. "You're  
197 more than thirty minutes late!" Sally finished the wine in her glass.

198 "Traffic was terrible." Zach slipped into the booth. "While I was  
199 rounding up some of Eric's things an employee confronted me about  
200 the new random drug testing policy."

201 "Someone worried about being randomly drug tested could be  
202 business liability." Sally refilled her wine glass.

203 "Probably so. That someone is no longer working for Son Source."

204 "You just fired an employee?"

205            "I didn't fire anybody. I accepted a resignation of a warehouseman  
206 that missed a lot of work and was always defiant. Steve was a  
207 problem! He's gone and it's one less thing I have to deal with!"

208            Sally liked it when Zach was assertive. "I hope I'm not too big a  
209 problem to deal with tonight." She pushed her foot up under Zach's  
210 pant leg.

211            Zach smiled. "What's this date thing all about?"

212            "It's something Pastor Tom suggested to revitalize our marriage."

213            "I didn't think our marriage, needed to be revitalized."

214            "Our sex life could use some help," Sally replied as she rubbed her  
215 now bare foot on Zach's leg.

216            "How does Pastor Tom know about our love life?"

217            "Well, besides being a dynamic preacher he also has a degree in  
218 marriage counseling." Sally finished off the wine in her glass.

219            "I didn't know that." Zach picked up the menu. "Well, I guess he's  
220 right, we don't get out enough."

221            "That's because you work too much." Sally picked up her menu.  
222 "What are you going to have?"

223            "I always like the Fish and Chips here. . . But since this is a date."  
224 Zach flipped to the back page of the menu. "I might get a steak."

225            "I'm going to have the Halibut Special that the waiter suggested  
226 while I was waiting." Sally laid the menu on the edge of the table.

227            Zach was still looking at his menu when the waiter approached.  
228 "Have you decided yet?" The young male waiter winked at Sally and  
229 had his pen ready to take their order.

230            "I'm going to have the Halibut Special with rice and light  
231 vinaigrette on my salad," Sally gave a flirtatious wink back at the  
232 college aged waiter.

233            "And you sir." The young man turned toward Zach.

234            "I'll just have the Fish and Chips." Zach handed the menu to the  
235 waiter. "I'd like a beer also."

236            "Yes, sir. We have Coors on tap and two new bottled IPA's from  
237 Oregon."

238            "A light beer on tap will be fine." Zach looked back at Sally and  
239 smiled.

240 Sally filled her wineglass with the last of the wine from the carafe.

241 "I thought you were going to have steak?"

242 "I was, but thirty six dollars for a Sirloin cut is out of line."

243 "Zach you should get what you want. Let's call the waiter back."

244 "Sally, the Fish and Chips will be fine. If it's not too late I need to  
245 stop by Eric's house and drop off his portable stereo."

246 "Do you think that is wise since the insurance people have been  
247 asking all those questions?"

248 The waiter brought back Zach's beer and set it down. "Thanks."  
249 Zach looked back at Sally. "Why wouldn't it be wise to return Eric's  
250 stuff? Returning his boombox will make for a safer working  
251 environment. Not having music blaring in the warehouse is something  
252 the insurance people should like."

253 "Safer work environment?" Sally leaned over the table and  
254 whispered, "You're right Zach. We're in enough trouble for not having  
255 a railing around the roof."

256 "I know," Zach took a drink from frosted beer mug. "I don't  
257 understand how Eric landed head first on the walkway. The accident  
258 might be recorded on the parking lot security camera."

259 "Zack we can't change what happened. I think you should let the  
260 lawyers take back Eric's things. They said no interaction with Cindy. "

261 "Yeah right. And have them charge us four hundred dollars to  
262 deliver a stereo and a toy plane."

263 The timing of the waiter with their salads prevented an argument.  
264 Whenever Eric's accident or Cindy and the twins were discussed  
265 tension was high. Zach changed subjects to how tinted glass was  
266 going to solve the fracturing of the quad panels. Sally kept returning  
267 to the new learned fact about the loud distracting music from Eric's  
268 boombox. She hinted that it could have been the blaring music that  
269 contributed to Eric's falling off the roof. Zach lost his appetite! \*

270 Sally kept pushing the issue. When she told Zach that she was  
271 going to contact the lawyers with this new information Zach went off.  
272 "You self centered heartless bitch." Zach pushed the plate of Fish and  
273 Chips to the side and glared at Sally. "Cindy is pregnant. Plus she has



274 those twin boys to raise. You would go to the lawyers to see if they  
275 can retract the little amount of insurance money she should get.”

276 “Zach, it’s not about the insurance money that Cindy might get!  
277 We need to protect ourselves to make sure she can’t sue us in a civil  
278 court.”

279 “Cindy is not going to sue us.” Zach wiped at his mouth with the  
280 green cloth napkin.

281 “How do you know that? Everyone sues everyone these days.”

282 “Cindy won’t sue us!” Zach tossed the cloth napkin on to his plate.  
283 “Sally, sometimes you just have to put your trust into people. Isn’t  
284 that the Christian thing to do?”

285 Sally sat quiet for a moment and then finally looked at Zach. “I  
286 guess you’re right. Pastor Tom would say to put your trust in the Lord.  
287 But, just to be safe I’m going to call the lawyers.”

288 “Do whatever you think is right!” Zach slid out of the booth and  
289 stood at the edge of the table. “I’m going to go drop the stuff off. I’ll  
290 see you at home.” Zach stormed out of the restaurant!

291 The recently placed **For Sale** sign in the front yard stood out like a  
292 billboard. Zach stood on his toes and looked through the arched door  
293 window and then pushed the doorbell again. There was no movement  
294 or noise from behind the locked door; he strolled through the grass to  
295 the backyard. The new wooden swing set refreshed his memory back a  
296 month when Eric took off early to assemble it. With the boombox in  
297 hand he returned to the Prius, opened the rear hatch and placed the  
298 stuff out of site.

299 Back at his home any semblance of a date night was over. Sally  
300 was on the phone organizing a fundraiser for the soccer team’s trip to  
301 state. Kendra was sleeping over at Chelsea’s and Ben was sprawled  
302 out on the couch watching TV. Zach went through his mail, put out  
303 the garbage and then grabbed the newspaper and headed upstairs.

304 The next morning Zach was up and gone before anyone else, he  
305 had an extra stop to make. It felt odd not to hear music blaring as he  
306 entered through the locked back door. He knocked on the observation  
307 window of the pressurized cleanroom. Troy glanced up and then came

308 out the door. There was a rushing wind sound as the room equalized.

309 "You must have got stuck in traffic?"

310 "No, I had to stop by the employment office to post a warehouse  
311 position."

312 "Oh, why's that?" Troy pulled the paper dust mask off and over his  
313 head.

314 "Charlie resigned last night."

315 "I thought something was up. He was still hanging around when I  
316 left," Troy offered his suspicions.

317 "Yeah, I think I even smelled marijuana on him."

318 "You probably did. You do know that he was selling Cannabis  
319 from the parking lot. That's why he was always the last one to leave."

320 "What?" Zach's mouth dropped.

321 "Yeah, I thought you knew that." Troy immediately realized that he  
322 was offering information that Zach was clueless about. This wasn't the  
323 time to get into a discussion about the benefits of hemp or CBD oil.  
324 "I'll grab a tinted panel and meet you up on the roof."

325 At the top of the wooden stairs Zach pushed up on the hatch door.  
326 It was a golden Texan sunrise. The sun was low over the horizon,  
327 elongating dark shadows far into the west. There was a feeling of  
328 briskness in the air. Zach walked over to the new wooden railing and  
329 pushed and pulled, it felt sturdy. Directly below the chalk outline of  
330 where Eric had hit the concrete walk was already fading. *I should have*  
331 *had a safety railing installed years ago.*

332 "Can you grab these tinted panels?" Troy yelled from the roof  
333 hatch.

334 "Yeah, don't step out with both hands full!" Zach rushed toward the  
335 hatch. "You should have brought up one panel up at a time."

336 "Yeah I know. But we don't want the sun to get too high in the sky.  
337 It's going to be a perfect day for testing." Troy disappeared out of site.

338 Zach leaned the two panels against the wood railing, making sure  
339 they were turned to the north so not to generate power. He had one of  
340 the old panels off the test rack when Troy reappeared at the hatch.  
341 Zach walked over and handed one old panel to Troy. "Be careful going  
342 down the stairs!"

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“I’ll put this in the lab, grab a watt meter and be right back.”

With a feeling of confidence as Zach mounted the tinted panel onto the test rack. All the years of research, all the testing and all the broken dreams were finally going to be validated. Something as simple as blocking harmful UV rays was going to move solar to a competitive energy source like oil.

Troy returned and hooked up the red and black wattmeter wires to the back of the panel. He thought of himself like Thomas Edison’s assistant testing all the filaments in the first light bulbs and how it must have felt to observe that first tungsten filament that didn’t burn out. The wattmeter displayed barely ten watts of power. “Should I switch on the tracking switch?”

“Yeah, I’m clear up here.” The tracking motor hummed and turned so that the panels were positioned ninety degrees to the sun. The first few minutes were critical. If there was a thermal problem the thin silicon cells give off a snapping noise. Five minutes of silent listening turned into twenty. The wattmeter showed significant and continual gain. The most important test would be at solar noon.

Finally, Troy broke the silence. “I’ll go disassemble the old panels and do a visual.”

“I need you to do ship outs first. Being short a warehouseman we can’t afford to let orders backup.”

“Okay, I’ll work the shipping orders first, Troy replied in a dispirited tone.” Ever since Eric had fallen off the roof Troy had been working R&D full time. Without further education after home schooling he didn’t have many opportunities in the skilled labor force. The technical work also substituted for never having a father around to do man stuff in a garage or shop. Never experiencing a male’s presence, except for Sequoia’s occasional boyfriends was why he never got married. Troy was a Momma’s boy.