

MEGA

Motivation Gurus

And the Moment of Truth



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Truth Behind The Curtain Productions

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Benjamin Allen has worked in both the non-profit and corporate worlds until going into full-time writing and public speaking. In the non-profit world Benjamin utilized his skills in grief counseling for the terminally ill and their caregivers. In the corporate world he was the Director of Training for a sales company. He has delivered keynotes to thousands of people on topics relating to grief, personal growth and conscious business and is the author of his non-fiction journey through grief, Out of the Ashes. He has also written two novels, Under the Sun and The Leveler. Benjamin can be found at www.BenjaminScottAllen.com or www.truthbehindthecurtain.com/blog

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Frank's Boys - Name It and Claim It

I know what you're thinking. What's a nice girl like me doing in a room full of ego-driven, sociopathic Mega Motivational Gurus with \$4000 suits, gold plated zippers that never stay up and million dollar smiles that don't fool me one bit? Believe me, if Franklin S. Walcott hadn't died and left me this envelope and one 'last' request, I wouldn't be within a million hundred miles of these guys. You may not have heard of Frank Walcott. Most people these days haven't, but I'm sure you've heard of these guys gathered here today. Frank called them his 'boys'. He brought each one of them into the business of motivational speaking.

The last time I saw Frank he asked me to unseal this envelope when the time was right and read it to them. What could I do? I couldn't say no. Besides, I didn't know he was going to die and leave me to plan his wake as well.

Maybe it's Frank's last will and testament. I don't know.

I swore off working with any of Frank's 'boys' a long time ago. My mama used to say, "Never say never." I don't know about you, but the only thing I hate more than mama being right is me being wrong. And the older I get the more and more that seems to happen. In this case, she was right again. I'm back in the room with my former meal tickets. It was about two years ago that I decided I'd rather go hungry than to be anywhere near these bozos and Frank knew it.

Yes sir, the only reason I'm here is Frank's dead and this damn envelope.

Oh, and maybe there is one other reason I'm here. I'm here to warn you. If you hear one of these guys is in some amphitheater near you, RUN LIKE HELL! I think there should be a law for Mega Motivational Gurus like they have with pedophiles that says those sick little creatures can't get within 300 yards of children. We need a law that says guys like these can't get within 300 yards of a wallet. Credit cards make them salivate. Their eyes glaze over and they start spouting nonsensical jargon about how they will make you millions, and will change your life. It'll change your life, all right, but the only ones that will make millions will be them! These guys are like casinos. They aren't really in the business to make you rich, or entertain you, or make your life better. They are in the business of making themselves rich, entertained and *their* lives better - pure and simple.

I'm not proud of what I've done. I hate to say it, but I was a part of this veil of tears for so many for way too long and it breaks my heart.

Frank knew what he was doing when he asked me to assemble these guys for his wake. He knew the letter would get them here. As I sit in this anteroom with five of the top Motivational Gurus in America, I think about my last conversation with Frank. You see, Frank was like a father to me. Frank was different from the Motivational Gurus he spawned. There was always a showman in Frank and he was certainly no saint, but Frank never went where these guys have gone.

This room is cold. Most anterooms are a bit on the chilly side so when the performers head off to the stage they're pumped and ready to go. But this is a wake. I want to be warm. It's hard enough to be waiting to go onto the stage with these five Mega Motivational Gurus, not for another show, I mean seminar, on how to make millions, but to listen to them eulogize the man that started it all for them...and me. I doubt that only a handful of people out there knew Frank, or even cared who Frank was. The thousands of people out there want to see the Traveling Circus of Star Gurus.

I really could use a little warmth right now. I miss Frank. If I could see him just one more time I'd wrap my arms around him and tell him that I love him for all he did for me. Then I'd strangle that bastard for setting me up like this. But in the end I would forgive him. I always forgave him. I wonder how we're going to get these five massive egos through the door. The lure of a podium will help.

Allow me to introduce these shining stars. My lawyer made me change their names. The only thing these tightwads spend money on besides themselves are lawyers, and lots of them. And the only thing they love suing besides each other is someone like me. So when I told my dear high heeled, tough as nails and just as sharp lawyer that I was going to write down everything, and I mean everything, she said, "Don't use their real names or I'll be a very busy woman for many years to come and you will be more broke than you are now."

So, I've decided to do what most indigenous cultures do. I've decided to name them for what they represent. You know, like someone being named 'Flying Eagle' or 'Running Bear'. I've thought long and hard how best to describe this band of Mega Motivational Gurus. It took me at least three seconds each, but I was able come up with the long version of their name and a short little nickname. Here you go. We've got 'Never Saw a Skirt I Wouldn't Like to Get Under' (Skirt), 'Never Passed a Mirror that Didn't Make Me Look Absolutely Adorable' (MirrorMan), 'You'll Buy Every Training Program I've Ripped Off and Put My Name On Won't You, Yes Or Yes' (YesOrYes), 'Never Saw a Watch, Car or Plane that was Too Expensive For Me, Me, Me' (MeMe), 'Who Here Wants to Be a Millionaire, Take Everything They Can From Family and Friends to Invest in My Money Pit And Be Just As Shallow as Me' (WhoHere), and of course, 'My Houses are Bigger Than Yours, My Girlfriends are Prettier Than Yours Will Ever Be, and I'm Not Getting Beat Up In High School Anymore' (Wannabe). Now if you've been around this Motivational Guru industry for more than a nanosecond you can probably figure out who I'm talking about. But who wants to stand up in court and say 'Hey, I'm so and so. That's me she's talking about. I can prove it.' My lawyer's dream come true.

Excuse me for a minute. I see Skirt approaching on my starboard side.

"Yes, Skirt?"

"Mary, can I talk to you for a minute?"

"Sure."

Skirt puts his arm around my back and I'm ushered away from the others. They all act like they're continuing to talk to each other in little groups, but believe me, one eye is on Skirt and I as we move just a few feet away from the herd.

"What can I do for you, Skirt?"

"Well, I'm a little concerned about the order of the eulogies, Mary."

I know pretty much where this is going. Skirt's not a very tall man. He stands about five foot seven. The fact that I'm five foot nine and look down at him has always been a point of minor irritation for him. Skirt's a photo hound. He loves having his picture taken with anything that moves, especially women, but its always irked him because he's not this towering inferno that can overtake people with his sheer presence. He has to play extra hard with his mind games to maintain his small, over exaggerated fiefdom.

"What is it about the order that concerns you, Skirt?"

"Well, Mary, it's that I'm scheduled to go behind MeMe."

MeMe is the richest of the bunch. MeMe's got two of every toy imaginable. Rumor has it that MeMe has inventors working around the clock just on new toys because he's bored now with the ones he's got. And one thing MeMe hates is being bored. But MeMe stands about five ten.

Skirt's bristles usually rise up the back of his hairy neck to his rapidly balding head when he stands next to someone about six feet. I guess he doesn't like people looking down on his bald spot. So I was a bit confused.

"Skirt, what's the problem with MeMe going before you?"

"Well, it's not just MeMe, Mary. There's also MirrorMan. I'm not so sure we should start off with MirrorMan."

I can feel the eyes of the others burning a hole in the back of my nice new black silk dress, but there is no way I'm about to turn around. On the Nature channel they say it's best not to make any sudden moves around wild animals.

"Mary, I know you were close to Frank. He was such a great man. He just gave and gave and gave. Do you realize just how many hundreds of men and women in the motivational field he's helped?"

"Skirt, you know he gave me my first job coordinating one of his events almost thirty years ago."

Skirt's eyes light up. Either the cocaine is kicking in or he's just found the way in. 'Found the way in' is a term in Mega Motivational Guru Land lingo that says they found your weak spot and they can now squeeze the ever-loving life out of you to get whatever they want, and there's a strong chance you won't even know what hit you.

"Yes, of course! I remember that event, Mary! It was in St. Louis. I was there, do you remember?"

It's not the cocaine. "Yes, Skirt. As a matter of fact I'll never forget it."

"What an event that was! We were rolling out Frank's second series, 'Keys to True Abundance'. Boy, that was a great series, wasn't it? We were just hitting our stride back then. And you were terrific. I don't know how you were able to pull it off. Over three thousand people! I believe we sold upwards of fifteen hundred packages that night."

One thing these guys can do is count. They count butts and sales (what I like to call B and S for short). Holidays don't count. Wives don't count. Children don't count. Just butts in the seats and sales in the hand count.

"Mary, we never could have done it without you. I knew right then and there that you had a gift with putting huge events together. That's why I've hired you so many times to put my seminars together. I can always count on you."

Remember, when they count, it's only B and S that really counts. Never forget to read between the lines. Frank taught me that earlier on and I never forgot it. I hope you don't forget it either. Whenever you deal with one of these guys always look behind the curtain and you'll see the Wizard of Odd, a normal run of the mill narcissist pulling the levers of their money machines. There's no real power behind their illusion of power. True, money is power, and they do have this power to take money from people, which I'll get into later, but do you really think these guys still have all the money they've fleeced through the years? Yes sir, behind the curtain of every one of these Mega Motivational Gurus is a scared little boy terrified that you will find out that they have no real power and little knowledge, just a lot of tricks up their sleeves.

"We're a good team, aren't we, Mary?"

"You know, Skirt, I'm still waiting for the rest of my money for Miami."

Skirt looks genuinely shocked. I'm genuinely not.

"You mean you haven't been paid?" he asks with great amazement that looks oh so real. "I'm so sorry. We have a new accountant and it must have just slipped through the cracks."

Skirt's got more cracks in his 'organization' than the San Andreas Fault. There were many times over the many years that I've been putting 'training seminars' together for Skirt that I have actually contemplated hiring some guy name Guido to bust his kneecaps just so I could pay my bills and get my children clothes. Although Skirt's not alone. The other Mega Motivational Gurus are just as bad about paying their bills. And God help you if you ever want a refund. They'd rather sell their first born to the devil and throw in the family dog for good measure than give anyone their money back for being 'disappointed' that what was promised wasn't delivered. And believe me, there have been a LOT of disappointed people left with broken promises and empty bank accounts.

"I'll get on that right away. You did such a great job for us in Miami and if anybody should be paid first it should be you. I'll make a call."

"Is your phone on?"

"What?"

"You said you'd make a call. Call."

Skirt flashes his bright baby blues and his pearly white smile. He does that when he needs time to think. He puts his hand on my shoulder (an old technique that only works on newbies, and believe me, I'm no newbie).

"This is Saturday."

"It's been two years."

"That's horrible. I won't be able to do anything till Monday. But first thing Monday I'll get right on it."

I can assure you that I won't be waiting by the phone on Monday...unless I'm waiting for a callback from Guido.

Skirt doesn't miss a beat.

"Yes, sir. I remember that cold night in St. Louis."

Actually it was summer, but the weather doesn't count either - just B and S.

"I had been working with Frank over ten years at the time. Man, those were the days. And that's my point, Mary. I don't think MeMe and MirrorMan should go on before me. After all, I was one of the first of Frank's students. Surely I was before everyone in this room. Even YesOrYes came after me."

"Really, isn't YesOrYes several years older than you?"

Skirt does his trademark laugh. "Many years older. He's about ten years older than me. But I started young with Frank. Do you realize that I was only twenty-three when I first met Frank?"

"No I did not, Skirt." I hope he doesn't pick up on my facetious irritation. It's just I've endure this story every time we've talked about Frank in the last thirty years. It's just not funny anymore as to how the conversation, any conversation, always seems to end up about him. Plus, I'm getting tired of all the eyes in the room burning a hole in the back of my lovely dress. I paid way more than I can afford at the moment for this little number and to tell you the truth, if this wasn't Frank's wake I would have just picked up a clearance piece at Marshalls or something. 'Life's too short for shopping', is my motto, but I promised myself that I'd go the distance for Frank the very first time we ever met. Besides, I really do look good in this dress. Black is sexy, don't you think?

"Yes, Mary, my dear. I knew Frank from the very beginning. What exactly was the criteria you had when you arranged the speakers?"

"Skirt, this may sound a little strange, but I just decided to go with MirrorMan first and MeMe second because MirrorMan's the tallest and MeMe's the richest. Silly, huh?"

Before Skirt can pull his jaw off the floor I'm outta here. As I go back to my seat I pretend not to notice the rest of these guys pretending not to look while they're in their pretend conversations with each other. These guys have a real gift at pretending.

In actuality, it was Frank who chose the order. Frank was always in control. That's why I don't think his death was an accident. Frank never did anything by accident.

Frank's Girl in a Boy's World

I purposely have the envelope in my lap, just for fun, a little tease for the boys. I catch each one of them glancing at the envelope like it's a Christmas present. Don't you just hate waiting for Christmas? My mother used to let us open one present each on Christmas Eve because we couldn't wait. But these guys would hang their mothers by the thumbs over a crocodile pit with bacon on their toes if it would get them into this envelope sooner. I'm sure that they would even lower her into the pit if they could get whatever was inside just for themselves.

Frank specifically said that we couldn't open the envelope until after the wake and the glowing eulogies were done. Kind of like one of those religious soup kitchens for homeless people where you have to hear the sermon before you eat. For a Mega Motivational Guru to have to wait for anything is absolute torture. They're always hungry and immediate gratification just isn't fast enough.

The thought that Frank brought them into the business, set them up and set them on their merry way to bask in the glow of their own humongous egos, sends chills down my spine. I'm blown away at the nerve of these five mostly middle aged men. I can tell that they think this envelope has the keys to the kingdom and F.S. Walcott is about to hand it over to one of them, just one, not all.

In Mega Motivational Guru Land (believe me it's a world of its own) the only thing they share are their ex-wives, multiple girlfriends and the stage if their cut is big enough. Each one of these guys thinks they're going to be the one to get the jewels contained in this envelope written by one of the greats giants of the 'Think and Grow Fat' generation. Being fat in the early 1900's was a good thing. It meant you were rich and could eat your way to heaven on earth on the backs of skinny people with no money. Boy, have times changed! Have you ever seen those old timey pictures where the sexy women were big and fluffy? As a woman pushing my 50's I sure wish those days would come back. I'd like the world to see me as sexy as I feel, know what I mean? Anyway, not only am I getting way off track, I'm getting ahead of myself.

Where was I? Oh, yeah.

BEWARE! I've seen them collect millions from people, good people, kind people, trusting people, real people with real needs that get swept up in the hype of these 'saviors with the golden touch'. Those good people desperately want these guys to lead them to the promised land of financial independence. Most of the people in their audiences are people like you and me. We just want to make a decent living, stop punching the clock and have our own business, be the captain of our own ship. Sure, some are lured by the flashy sports cars and private jet planes that these guys parade around to prove their success. But oddly enough, the greedy ones with sticky fingers aren't usually the ones that fall the hardest. I guess like attracts like and greed's like Velcro. The greedy ones learn how to tear through people's lives without a thought of the damage they are doing. It's the working women or men that have a conscience and have no desire

to drain friends and family's life savings, along with their own, that fall the hardest. These are truly good people that get swept up in the promises and don't see what these Mega Motivational Gurus are actually about. These good people have spent all their money getting trained in how to rip off other people and they realize that they don't have the heart for it. Or better put, they don't have the heartlessness for it. But then it's too late, because the guy they trusted and gave their money to show them the way to make money apparently can. These Mega Motivational Gurus have got no qualms about taking someone's last dollar.

Have you heard that joke about using Motivational Gurus for lab experiments instead of rats? Well, actually the joke is about using lawyers, but I like using the Motivational Gurus. There are three reasons why researchers are using Motivational Gurus instead of rats: One, there's more Motivational Gurus than rats. Two, there's less public outcry. And, three, there just some things rats won't do.

Not all motivational speakers are like these guys. Actually, most of your regular motivational speakers are caring people that have a sincere message and truly want to help the people that hire them. I've planned events for some of those people, but they aren't the mega draws, even though their hearts are in the right place. I believe that at one point in time these Mega Motivational Gurus could have been just like that. Then the money started rolling in, and money to these guys is like drinking saltwater, the more they drink the thirstier they become. And then they started to believe their own crap. They started masking their innate low self-esteem by measuring their worth in shiny objects. Then the party was on; and the plebs in the rows and rows of chairs in their larger and larger halls became their own personal ATM machines.

Have you ever heard the story of when John D. Rockefeller died? At the time he was the richest man in the world. A reporter asked one of his trustees, "How much did Mr. Rockefeller leave behind?" Without missing a beat the trustee answered, "All of it." I don't think these guys have figured that out yet. Either that or they're still looking for a loophole.

Do you know how painful it was to be the one filling those chairs for these guys? At first I really thought I was helping people. I was an innocent young kid and Frank really was helping people, giving them hope. But as the years went by the business of Mega Motivational seminars and trainings starting changing. It got darker, hungrier, willing to devour anything or anyone that had a credit card or could write a check. It started to feel worse and worse for me. As it slowly changed into the monster it is today I felt it. I felt it changing me and I didn't like what it was changing me into. But I was caught up in paying the bills, making a living and a life for my kids. Not a day goes by that I'm not paying another kind of bill. I see these guys on TV and my heart goes out to every hopeful heart in the audience that just wants to better their life, feed their kids and be financially free. I have to live with what I've done, and to this day it hurts.

That's enough of that. I don't like being serious for too long. When I was a kid my daddy used to tell us a joke right after we got a woopin', as he so affectionately called it. The jokes were never funny, but when you've got a sore butt and big man standing over you still holding a belt, you'd laugh too. Beats cryin'. That's how I learned that you could either laugh or you could cry, even at being the event planner for these Mega Motivational Gurus.

It's not like I woke up one morning as a child, after a good woopin' and a bad joke, and said to myself, "Mary Margaret, I'm going to grow up and work for sociopathic egomaniacs someday. And if I'm really lucky, I'm going to go out there in this big, wide world and do the grunt work of planning and filling amphitheater seats for some millionaires so they can become billionaires."

What really happened was I woke up one morning at the age of 21, just out of college and without any prospects for a career. What do you do with a BA in Psychology from St. Louis' finest college, Washington University? Now Washington University has been around since 1854, and it's a great school, but you would think someone there would have mentioned that a BA in Psychology was about as useful in starting a career as a degree in Icelandic Literature is from the University of Cairo. I went from company to company looking, begging for work. It was spring. Everything was blooming but my career options. That is until I met F.S. Walcott, the one and only.

F.S. to his adoring fans, Frank to his friends and Mr. Walcott to me at the time was at the local diner across from campus. The same diner that I worked my way through college night after night, plus weekends, the same diner I still held on to for dear life, and leftovers.

I was not in the best of moods. I had just spent another day getting grilled in four different interviews. Being able to balance four plates and a glass of water from counter to table impressed the interrogator, I mean interviewer, more than my Summa Cum Laude degree in Psychology. And unfortunately, neither skill got me any of the jobs.

Mr. Walcott was alone in the corner booth. His wavy black hair was combed straight back. Even though he was sitting down I could see he was pretty tall. He had big hands and his size eleven and a half foot was sticking into the aisle. You know what they say about a man with big hands and big feet? That's right. Big gloves and big shoes. Being a seasoned waitress I could tell he was eying me up. No doubt Frank had an eye for women and I, in my brief twenty-one years of living had an eye for men who had an eye for women. But Frank wasn't looking at me that way. I guess that's why my guard was down, and to be honest, a little disappointed because I kinda liked to be eyed that way. There's nothing like a little ego boost especially in my time of economic depression, know what I mean?

After I just put down the plates two tables over, he caught my eye with a lift of his hand and a strange way of raising his left eyebrow. The hand was not condescending nor demanding and the eyebrow thing made me smile.

"Excuse me," he said, "May I please have some more coffee?"

The closer I got the more I tried to place the face. I knew I had seen him before. While I was pouring the coffee it dawned on me. This was the guy on all the posters around town - F.S. Walcott, Motivational Speaker Extraordinaire, Author of Keys to True Abundance.

I was focused on hitting his coffee cup without pouring it over the edge or splattering it on his expensive tie when I said, "You're the guy on all the posters, aren't you?"

"That I am. And you're the girl that looks like she's had a hard day."

Coffee cup full, I looked up at his rather warm smile. "Does it show that much?"

"Probably not to most, but I can see it. What's up?"

"I just graduated last month and I've been on four interviews today and not one bite. Being a waitress isn't all it's cracked up to be. I thought after I got out of school I'd make a career move, you know what I mean?"

"Thoughts are powerful. What did you get your degree in?"

"Psychology."

Only two of his four slices of toast had grape jelly and all the packets were empty. "Do you need any more jelly?"

"I'd love more jelly, thanks."

When I got back from getting the jelly out from the kitchen, he said, "I'm looking for someone to help me put together an event here in St. Louis. I'm here on an advance trip before

my seminar. There's been a few glitches. Turns out the event planner flaked out on me and the venue I thought we had we don't."

"What about all those posters? It says it's going to be at The Marquee."

"It appears that The Marquee is double booked and I'm in a real pickle. Can you help?"

"Can you pay?"

Frank laughed. I liked Frank's laugh. It was real, from the belly, and his eyes seemed to glow when he laughed. "I like your style. Can you deliver a venue and get people there in three weeks?"

I had no idea how. Didn't know who. All I knew was when. "In three weeks?"

"Three weeks. And if this works out, there may be a permanent position available."

"I'd have to quit my job here."

"And the downside is?"

"Good point, but if I leave I'll be replaced in a manner of seconds, if not sooner. And if it doesn't work out I'll be without any job at all."

"Life is a risk. But real living is worth the risk."

I was sitting there holding tiny little packets of jelly, not really knowing that I was at one of the major crossroads of my life. Those kinds of moments usually just sneak up on you, don't they? I looked at him rather skeptically, "Why me?"

"Why not you? I've been watching how you operate. You're a stickler for detail. You can multitask with style and grace. Even when you're not having a good day you're good with the customers. By that I mean you care that they are taken care of and you treat people with respect. I like that. Plus, you can balance four plates and a glass of water from the counter to table without missing a beat. I'm impressed. And then to top it off, you've got a degree in psychology, a real plus for this business. Are you up for it?"

Who would have thought that balancing four plates and a psychology degree actually did get me a job, and a career?

"I'm in. When do I start?"

"Right now."

"I want to finish my shift. I'm not going to leave anybody high and dry."

"I wouldn't want it any other way. Finish your shift, but start the job right now."

"How?"

"Start believing. Don't think about finding a room and filling the chairs. Believe the room is already there and the place is packed. From this moment on, believe."

That was the start of my working with F.S. (Frank) Walcott. And to this day I believe he was the most complex, tortured soul and incredible human being I've ever met. And I also believe he was the one that opened me to a life lived full of risks teetering between heaven and hell. God, I miss that man. Because at this moment, sitting in the anteroom with these Mega Motivational Gurus is pure hell. Like I said earlier, if Frank wasn't dead already I'd strangle him right here and now for getting me into this mess.

Uh oh, here it comes. Wannabe sits down next to me. I swear if his black silk shirt -that cost him more than my youngest child's tuition - was any tighter the buttons would pop off and hit somebody in the eye. There's something a bit odd about a man that has muscles bulging off of every bone in his body. Wannabe's middle name has got to be Overcompensation. He dyes his hair way too black and it looks like one of those plastic wigs those Elvis impersonators use on Halloween in Vegas. It's kinda a mix between a bouffant and a poodle. I challenge any hurricane to move one follicle out of place. It's just not going to happen.

Why a forty-three year old man felt the need for a facelift is a mystery to me and it's unfortunate that the wake is so close to the surgery. Maybe the overdone make-up job will fool the people on the back row at least. I guess the nose job he had at thirty-one, just before he hit the big time, was a sign of things to come. Appearance is everything to Wannabe, and I mean EVERYTHING. And he must appear to have the best, be the best and screw the best. He pumps iron twice a day, has a personal trainer he travels with, and constantly drinks those God awful muscle shakes. I swear he would mainline the stuff if it didn't clog his bulging veins. Unfortunately, the muscle Wannabe can't make bigger with exercise is...yes, you got it. And it's a shame. From what I've heard it's the one muscle that needs it the most.

The others are still stirring around the room and it looks like its hard work being nice to each other. However, it's a well-known fact that WhoHere and Skirt haven't talked to each other in over five years. They got into a real estate business together for many years and made lots of money. When any of these guys hit it big it always gets worse. That's when things fall apart. Rumor has it that they made millions and Skirt wanted more, but they were just a shade close to breaking the law when WhoHere pulled out. Not that WhoHere had any qualms about fleecing the flock. It's just that WhoHere thinks he doesn't look good in orange jumpsuits, especially the kind that says 'prison' on the back.

WhoHere is tall and thin with thick white hair and a smile toothpaste commercial execs would drool over. He's everything Skirt isn't, but thinks he is. WhoHere came from modest means. He never could get his business off the ground till he met the wheeler and dealer, Skirt.

It was Skirt that made WhoHere rich. Skirt's a natural. He can easily get both women in bed and men to sign the dotted line on his next make-a-million scheme. For years I don't know how he's done it. To me he's not that good looking. I guess the women like the power he supposedly has. And the men like the power he supposedly promises. The reason Skirt is always hustling is because he's always broke. Skirt can make money. He just can't keep money. Whatever money he made on his real estate deals went to fancy cars, trips to exotic places with lots of women and a few of his wives, and of course, alimony to the four ex-wives that got smart.

WhoHere has had a couple of marriages and a few flings, but in this crowd he's considered a monk on a mission. He loves to parade his philanthropic good deeds across the stage. Actually all of them love to play that 'I care' card to work the heartstrings of people like you who actually have a heart. BEWARE. But WhoHere does it best. However, once I asked him to actually put his own money into helping a non-profit organization I support and I swear I thought I was going to have to perform CPR. His face literally turned blue. I think his bank account actually blocked the oxygen from getting to this head. Before he passed out and I would have to get out the electric paddles to start what heart he's got left, I just said never mind. It just wasn't worth it. Normal color began to return to his face.

WhoHere also likes to boast that while Skirt has blown through his millions he still has his. I can see why. I doubt he was boasting all that loud during his divorces, but these guys have a way of hiding money anyway. They hide most everything else so hiding money is just a part of doing business.

Speaking of hiding, Wannabe is doing his best to get my attention and if I could crawl under one of these cushions right now or stick my fingers in my ears and go 'la, la, la, la', I certainly would.

Excuse me for a moment. I'll get back to letting you in more on how these guys operate. We've got about an hour before the eulogies begin and I can get out of this God forsaken room. It won't be a moment too soon, let me tell you.

"Mary. Mary."

"Oh, sorry, Wannabe, I was a million miles away."

"Thinking of Frank?"

"Yea. I miss him."

"Me, too."

I know for a fact that Frank hadn't heard from Wannabe in over four years, and that was just a Christmas form letter asking people to buy his latest greatest product. Frank was on his way down and Wannabe was on his way up. When a Mega Motivational Guru falls, he falls alone. Anyone who loses his power (i.e. fame, fortune, or God forbid, both) is like a pariah to those where power is everything and lack of power is the greatest failure of all.

"Yeah, I bet you do, Wannabe. Frank mentioned you a lot of times during my visits."

"He did?"

"Yeah. You know I made it a point to get to San Francisco to see Frank at least once a month for the last two years of his life."

"Really? What did he say about me?"

I swear to God I want to lunge at him right now, rip out his heart and stuff it down his slimy little throat. What did he say about me??? You got to be kidding. Frank lived in a hellhole for the last years of his life and all Wannabe can say was what did he say about ME?

"Well, you're not the only thing we talked about and I can't remember anything right now."

"No, no. I understand. It was sad to get the word about his death. To tell you the truth I was a little surprised to be asked to do one of the eulogies."

"Why?" I innocently ask.

"Well, Frank and I had a falling out several years back."

I know the story. Frank went into great detail. "Really? What happened?"

"We had a problem over money."

No kidding. Wannabe took Frank for over half a million dollars.

"So it wasn't resolved?" I ask with great restraint.

"Frank never mentioned it to you?"

"Not in detail."

That's actually true. Frank never told me the exact offshore account Wannabe used. He only mentioned the money he lost, the empty US bank account Wannabe showed him the last time they talked and how he learned about the new jet Wannabe had just purchased while claiming to be broke.

I'm still a bit worried about one of those buttons popping off and putting my eye out. And I'm doing my best to not look at the facelift scars protruding from the thick cake of flesh toned make-up, but boy is it hard.

"Mary, it was just a tragic misunderstanding. There's no reason to get into it now. Frank was like a father to me. He was a father to us all. And he was an icon in the motivational industry. I just want to give him the best send off I can. I want my words to truly convey the gift this man was to us all."

I know for a fact that Wannabe was in a nowhere job and going in the same direction with his life when he met Frank. Just like I was. Frank had a knack for picking up strays and giving them a chance to build a whole new life.

Frank had the ability to see talent.

"Mary...Mary."

I wish he would go away. I've got more juice to tell you and to warn you about.

"Yes?"

"This envelope in your lap. This is what Frank left for us?"

"Yes, Wannabe, this is the one."

"Why do we have to wait till after all the eulogies are done? We're all here right now and we've got the time. Why can't we read it now?"

"I don't know. Frank's specific instructions were for us to gather afterwards. I guess he didn't want to influence the service."

I haven't had a guy look at my lap this much since prom night. And that guy threw up on me.

"Hmm, do you know what 's in it?"

"I haven't got a clue, Wannabe. He gave it to me on our last visit, sealed just the way it is today."

Wannabe rubs his chin. I can't figure out if it is a gesture made usually when someone is thinking or it just itches from the chin implant.

"Strange. So it was on your last visit? The coroner said it was an accidental death. I wonder if he knew he was going to die. Did he seem different on that visit than any of the others?"

It's a question I've asked myself a thousand times.

Frank and I met on the last weekend of every month. The trip from LA to San Francisco is just a puddle jumper and I liked getting away. I didn't spend the whole weekend with Frank. That would have been too painful, especially in the last year of his life. I would spend a 'me' day on Saturday and Frank and I would have brunch around 2:30 on Sunday, that's if he came to in time. I don't think he ever went to sleep and woke up in that last year. It seemed like he only passed out and came to. He passed out more and more and came to less and less. I think the coroner got it wrong about it being an accidental death. Like I said earlier, Frank never did anything that wasn't intentional, but I don't know what got into him. The change was drastic and sudden. One visit was light and fun. The next month, just about a year ago, he was drunk, and he remained that way till the day he died. Strange. It wasn't the Frank I knew and loved, but it was still the Frank I love.

I remember those early years when Frank had all his 'boys' working for F.S. Walcott's 'Keys to True Abundance Extravaganza'. It was a three-day seminar filled with inspirational speeches, choirs and all sorts of hoopla, with his 'boys' as headliners interspersed throughout those action-packed, high octane days.

This was before the rebellion. Frank trusted them. That was his second mistake. His first mistake was thinking they were trustworthy. I had my doubts from the get-go. They weren't like Frank. He cared about the message and about the people. The seeds in Frank's 'boys' were sown long before they got to Frank, but Frank always wanted to believe the best in people. It was one of his blind spots.

Boys Will Be Boys

Frank's message to the hundreds of thousands of people he spoke to was about the power of thought and that this power could bring good into the world and into each individual life that believed. Frank grew up in Religious Science. Sounds like an oxymoron, doesn't it? It's also called Science of the Mind and he devoured everything he could read about it growing up. He

also loved the New Thought Business Gurus like Napoleon Hill, Wallace Wattles (the guy that wrote The Science of Getting Rich, catchy title, huh?), and his favorite New Thought thinker, William Walker Atkinson, author of Frank's favorite book, Thought Vibration or the Law of Attraction in the Thought World. Atkinson wrote it in 1906. See, this 'think it' stuff has been around a long, long time. And it sure ain't no secret. Over the years it's been repackaged and sold to the highest bidder, and sometimes the lowest snake oil trader.

But Frank truly lived by this belief. He practiced what he preached. He believed with all his heart that people are basically good, that you reap what you sow, that you attract everything in your life through your thinking, and then your actions. Yeah, Frank believed with all his heart. And I think that's what broke it.

Back in the eighties his 'boys' traveled with him in his "Keys to True Abundance Extravaganza" Traveling Circus. The Traveling Circus is what I called it. Because, boy, was it a circus, three rings and all. Plus this circus had a big elephant in the room that nobody ever wanted to talk about.

Skirt would usually go first. That must be why he's so irritated at not being the first to eulogize Frank at the wake. Now I didn't name Skirt's whole name 'Never Saw a Skirt I Wouldn't like to Get Under' for no reason. Some of these Mega Motivational Gurus live for Money, Fame and Glory. Skirt's is Money, Fame and Horny. Skirt wanted to begin in those days because he could work the crowd and then work the women one on one after he was done. He first wanted to use his silver tongue to wow them. After that he wanted to use his silver tongue for other purposes. I'm referring to milking these smitten young ladies out of every dime they have. And just where was your mind going?

I remember a time I was at one of Skirt's birthday parties (his favorite time of the year). It was in the late '90s and for some unknown reason my therapist and I still can't figure out why I was still planning his events. Maybe it was so I could afford therapy. Anyway, I was sitting in this room and I looked around. I counted six women there he had either married or lived with, some at the same time. The rest of the women I assumed he either tried to sleep with or was still trying to sleep with. At one time that would have included me.

It was back in the late '80's, close to the end of the Traveling Circus that Skirt first hit on me. He was a real charmer - smooth talker, made me laugh, and we had a wellspring of intelligent conversations. He lavished attention on me and laughed at my jokes (that should have been my first clue). He made me feel like a real lady, like a queen for a day, and a day was about all it lasted. He used lines like 'I feel we have this deep heart connection.' And, 'it's electric when we get together. Do you feel that physical attraction, too?' And get this one, 'you've been with your husband for over ten years. Sex can get stale after ten years, can't it?' First off, how would he know about being with someone for ten years? Ten months was his longest marriage and ten days was his record for being with one woman from what I've heard. As for a 'heart connection', I think you're supposed to have one before you're able to connect. And the electricity was probably static electricity from the carpet.

At his birthday party all the 'former' wives and girlfriends compared notes and the same worn out lines he used on me were the same ones he used on them. They all just laughed. I was just relieved. I can't believe that they all took Skirt in stride and made a joke of it. Like I said, Skirt's a real charmer, and a real Teflon Don Juan.

The second budding Mega Motivational Guru to hit the stage at the 'Keys to True Abundance' was MirrorMan, 'Never Passed a Mirror that Didn't Make Me Look Absolutely Adorable'. Chiseled jaw, striking thick eyebrows, piercing brown eyes, lips that could melt any

woman's heart. He had the whole package. Too bad he stood about five foot six, but the elevator shoes helped. Frank put him on stage second because after the silver tongue charmer, Skirt, buttered the crowd up MirrorMan would give them the bread to spread it on. MirrorMan has always been a 'man's man'. Skirt would swoon the women and MirrorMan would convince the men. MirrorMan would go on (and sometimes on and on and on) about how he grew up in abject poverty, penniless from his first breath. I'm sure if he could get away with it he would have gone into great detail about how he didn't even have the money to pay for his mother's breast milk and had to go out and sell papers on the street at two and a half weeks old. Some of his stories about his cruel and painful upbringing were just about that absurd. I think MirrorMan liked to make people cry at his tragic upbringing so he could see his own reflection in the tears streaming from their faces. Actually, his whole shtick was, and still is, to convince the audience that if he can come from nothing and make millions, they can too. This is a common shtick, but nobody can milk it like MirrorMan. Like I said earlier, BEWARE! The fact is MirrorMan grew up in a middle class family to an accountant father and a stay at home mom in Trenton, New Jersey. But is that going to sell you on his 'if I can go from rags to riches you too can make millions just like me' spiel? Of course not.

I remember the day Frank found out MirrorMan's tragic past was a lie. The truth devastated Frank. It was right after the rebellion. Let me tell you. These guys know how to go for the jugular.

After MirrorMan was finished, up to the stage came WhoHere. Who else was better to go after Skirt and MirrorMan than 'Who Here Wants to Be a Millionaire, Take Everything They Can From Family and Friends to Invest in My Money Pit And Be Just As Shallow As Me'? Back then WhoHere still had black hair and he had yet to go to the depths of deception he has sunk to today. But like I said, the seeds of these guys sociopathic behavior was there long before Frank, especially in WhoHere.

WhoHere had all the makings of flimflam man. You know, flimflam man is another phrase for con man, which actually means confidence man. They get your confidence and then get the rest before the 'mark' can figure out he's been had. Even in the early days WhoHere could convince an audience that he could take them to the promised land of milk and honey... and lots and lots of money. By the time he was through he would have convinced even the most seasoned skeptics that he was Moses of the Moola. Confidence men sound good, look good, make you feel good, but you know the old adage that is quickly forgotten in these kinds of seminars, "if it looks too good to be true, it is." BEWARE!

His favorite trick was to say, "Who here wants to be rich? Raise your hand." Back then he boasted to Frank and the 'boys' that he could calculate in an instant with that question, and how quickly they raised their hand, just how much he was going to make, and from whom. Frank didn't laugh as easily as the 'boys' did when WhoHere made this proclamation. Frank's laugh was more an uncomfortable one. I think Frank knew even then that something was in the air; that something was shifting in the motivational seminar business. I could see it in Frank's face and the way he once spoke to me about WhoHere being the one that troubled him most.

WhoHere sure troubled me the most. After the rebellion WhoHere went into real estate like I said earlier. Real estate proclaimed to be the next best, latest and greatest, get rich without lifting a finger way to become a couch potato millionaire. That's when he convinced Skirt that the gold wasn't in the land. The gold was in the selling of the illusion that there is land. Real estate was king and WhoHere was its prince. Skirt, ever the sieve for somebody else's hard earned savings, said, "I'm in," with a smile I might add.

These two went on a dog and pony show around the country for years flimflamin' their way to riches. They were on the cover of Real Estate Magazine as the two most influential entrepreneurs in the 1990s. On the cover they stood next to each other each having a hand on their latest book, Soul Traders. The big joke behind the motivational speaker scene was it was a perfect name for their book. They had traded their souls a long time ago. But get this. The whole premise of the book was that making money is a spiritual quest and when you are right in thought and deed and aligned with God, then you will be blessed with riches beyond your wildest imagination. Imagination all right.

Besides, religious people are easy marks because religious people trust religious people, according to WhoHere. These guys will pull every trick in the book to get your money and one of the easiest ways is to play on your honest to God beliefs that mean the world to you. They use God just like they use you. BEWARE!

And another thing, I don't know about you but when I see some business with a fish on its advertisement I run. I figure if they need to tell me they're religious then they probably aren't.

I think it was WhoHere's idea to go the God angle. He got religion about the time the Moral Majority bought the Republican Party. You remember. When Ronald Reagan sold the Party to the highest bidder and Jerry Falwell bought it by delivering the most votes. WhoHere saw the writing on the wall and could do the math: God + Country = Money. WhoHere got real religious and patriotic all of a sudden, and by sheer coincidence, richer than the Devil.

Skirt went along for the ride. The money was good and going God brought in even more money, but for Skirt there's nothing better than a Sunday-go-to-meetin', God-fearing, Mary Kay distributor with a boob job and platinum hair that matched her platinum credit card, to bring on a Hallelujah. Skirt was in heaven.

But all good things must come to an end. Skirt and WhoHere had a fallin' out. Word on the street was that WhoHere had actually fallen in love with one of those platinum beauties. It turns out that Skirt didn't pay much attention to the forty-carat diamond engagement ring WhoHere had planted on this adorable young twenty-three year old southern belle. Skirt wasn't seriously interested. She didn't have enough money for that. But she was a challenge. Skirt loves a challenge. It's part of the game. She was just another notch on his bedpost.

WhoHere turned his back one day and when he turned around this lovely young lady was in the wrong hotel room at exactly the wrong time. It wasn't so much the infidelity. Mega Motivational Gurus see infidelity simply as collateral damage in the world of the lifestyle of the rich and gluttonous. They tend to trade women in the same way kids in the 50s traded baseball cards. WhoHere didn't even take it personally.

But WhoHere decided that was the last thing he was going to share with Skirt. Skirt was dragging him down. Some of the people started to see through Skirt and that made Skirt a wealth hazard for WhoHere. Apparently, a church going man may be taken for his money and still not see the Mega Motivational Guru turn real estate wiz as unholy or even unscrupulous, but you cross the line when you take his wife and/or his daughter. Skirt just couldn't keep his hand in the cookie jar and out from under the bed sheets. WhoHere had to let him go.

WhoHere went solo. He had just about milked the sacred cow of sanctity dry anyway. He had keep moving. By the way, BEWARE! That's what these guys do. It's kinda like a farmer who rotates his crops. Till the soil in one place too long and nothing will grow. These Mega Motivational Gurus know when to get the hell out of there. They usually move on for either of two reasons. One, they depleted the reservoir of people they can con. Or two, the heat is on. In this case, WhoHere was dealing with both.

But it looks like WhoHere has gone from the frying pan into the fire. Word is he's pretty close to meeting his Maker. That's right. The IRS, the FBI. And the SEC. That means he could lose his A-S-S. And if the god WhoHere used to tout is really real, WhoHere could be Bernie Madoff's new boyfriend some day soon.

It appears that he just went a step too far on his last real estate deal. He took all the money from his wife's inheritance, his sister and brother-in-law, his wife's twin brother and every friend and/or acquaintance he could con claiming he had an 'incredible' deal on a housing development outside of Las Vegas. Unfortunately, I have a friend who was one of those acquaintances he took and it's a heartbreaker. He had pictures, charts, projections...everything anyone would want in order to invest. He even took her around the land and neighborhood that was going up, but it wasn't 'his' neighborhood. I guess he just borrowed it for a day. I wonder if he just picked it out of the phonebook. According to Annie, my friend, this looked so up and up. Needless to say it was down and down. She told me that he's taken everything, hidden it away somewhere, and nobody can get a straight answer. That's where the FBI comes in. Annie said that she's working with the FBI even as we speak.

Excuse me for a minute. MeMe is pacing next to my chair like a four year old trying not to pee in his pants. It's pathetic. He's gained a little weight since the good old days. Never thought MeMe would end up with a little potbelly and round cheeks, but I guess those six course meals have got to go somewhere.

What man do you know wears four rings the size of a spare tire? With those skinny arms I doubt he could lift his hands above his head with all that jewelry. And apparently the only thing MeMe doesn't have is an exercise machine. Probably because they don't come with a mirror and exercise looks too much like work.

"Yes, MeMe?"

"I'm sorry to bother you, Mary. I can tell you want to be alone."

He's right. I want to be alone with you! I want to tell you everything.

Remember how I told you about MeMe being the richest and the most bored of the bunch? And how he's got every toy imaginable? Well this entire time he's been playing with the newest iPad, or in his case, the latest MePad. His MePad can do everything but hold his attention over 43 seconds, but that's still a record.

"It's all right. What do you need?"

"Mary, this is taking forever. Why do we have to wait so long?"

"Well, the announcement of the service says 1 o'clock. It would appear to be in good taste to start the service then."

"Yes, yes, of course. But you asked us to be here at 12."

Why Frank put their arrival an hour before time is more of a mystery to me than to MeMe. I think Frank wanted me to suffer. Or maybe Frank just wanted to remind me that he was luckier than I was at this moment. Either way, Frank owes me.

"Why are we here so early?" MeMe whines.

"I just wanted to make sure the service would run smoothly."

"You said you had an envelope from Frank. I just assumed we would be opening it before the service."

If I could turn this whiney little creature over my knee and paddle the hell out of him I'd forgive Frank and call it even, but corporal punishment has been banned in not only the schools, but for Mega Motivational Gurus as well. I can understand the schools. Pity about the gurus.

"Sorry about the miscommunication."

MeMe ignores my obvious insincerity.

"I'm sorry, Mary, but I have to leave right after my presentation."

"You mean eulogy?"

"Yes, eulogy."

"Well I'm sorry, too, MeMe. You will simply have to miss whatever Frank has left for you in the envelope."

MeMe's ears perk up and he slightly opens his eyes wider. After years of experience with MeMe and his ears and eye opener routine, I just want to throw up. The first thirteen hundred or so times it was manageable, but the last three or four thousand times it's spewable. I look for the nearest wastepaper basket, but I think I'll be able to hold it just one more time.

So, after the ear and eye thing he clears his throat. Maybe I should tell him to go to the specialist. They have doctors for that, you know.

"Is it Frank's will?" he asks ever so subtly.

About as subtle as a big, fat man wearing a balaclava and holding a gun asking you to open the register and give you all your money. If only there was a law that these Mega Motivational Gurus had to wear balaclavas on stage so we could spot just exactly what they're up to, then it would make my job a lot easier. If you only get one word out of our time together it would be...that's right - BEWARE.

"I have no idea what's in the envelope, MeMe. It could be a will. It could be his last grocery list."

"Come on, Mary. You knew Frank better than anyone. You certainly have some idea."

"I've got a lot of ideas. None of them really matter. What matters is that I want to respect Frank's final wishes. It's the least I can do."

And this is true. It is the least I can do and that's all I plan on doing with these guys. They're like vacuum cleaners with a perpetual 'on' button that sucks up everything in its path. They're your best friend if they can get something from you, but once they drain you dry of every dime you've got you never see them again.

Poor Frank. He saw them. He finally saw through them. And he never saw them again. Why on earth did he specifically ask these guys to give his eulogy, especially after what they did to him? If it were me, before I died I would have taken out a restraining order to keep them from being within 900 feet from my *dead* body.

And if this envelope is a will, I hope he leaves them the mounds of debt Frank died in. I hope it's a letter from his creditors saying they are responsible for every single dime, and they are. They left Frank destitute. I blame them. Frank died broken and alone because...

"Mary," MeMe says while studying his MePad. "I think I can rearrange my schedule and stay after my presentation."

"Eulogy."

He doesn't even look up.

"Yes, of course."

Maybe his reflection off his MePad has him so enamored he just can't help himself.

"Do you have any idea how long the others are going to go?"

"Going to go? Go where?"

Like I'm on some field trip and they all have to go to the bathroom. Maybe I should ask them to all pick a buddy before they 'go'.

MeMe finally tears his eyes away from his MePad. "You know what I mean. I mean speak. How long do you think their speeches will be?"

"Their *EULOGIES* will be the same as yours, MeMe. Everyone has ten minutes. The original instructions I sent everyone still apply."

"You know these guys. They could go on forever. Do you have some signal that tells them to stop...like maybe some music starting or something?"

"Oh for Heaven's sake, MeMe, this isn't the Academy Awards. Nor is it one of your stage shows."

MeMe smiles, maybe it's a genuine smile, but I'm just not sure. It's so hard to tell with these guys.

"You mean seminars."

"Whatever. How about when ten minutes is up I'll walk up to the first speaker and if he doesn't stop I'll pull out a gun and put a bullet through his head? That ought to ensure the others will stay on time."

"Am I the first speaker?"

"Second."

"Good."

I've had enough. "MeMe, may I get back to my thoughts now? I really need some 'me' time."

He doesn't get it, but then again, he never will.

Looking into his MePad ever so intently he walks away without saying goodbye.

Closure is not one of his strong suits, unless it's closing for money.

As a matter of fact, it's *all* in the close. No matter who it is or which seminar you attend, BEWARE OF THE CLOSE.

The Boys Go Berserk

YesOrYes was the best closer on the planet, according to Frank. Even before the rebellion YesOrYes had the 'gift' as Frank called it.

Closing is everything. I guess that's the same in every business whether it's selling cars, toasters or \$20,000 training programs that are 'now for a short time only and if you buy it in the next two minutes a mere \$497'. Remember, BEWARE.

The name of the game these days is volume. These Mega Motivational Gurus have figured out that the numbers game is now based on how many they sell, not how expensive they can make it before it doesn't sell. At one time people were willing to go into massive debt thinking that these guys had the answer, and unfortunately some unfortunates still do find themselves stretched beyond their means. Back in the old days, however, many were willing to put a second mortgage on the house. That's when banks used to actually give second mortgages. They were willing to spend their retirement/life savings. Again, that's when people used to have retirement/life savings.

However, in these economic times only the few, the blessed, the less fortunate are buying \$20,000 week-long training programs. These guys have figured out that they will have to make their big money on people who don't have much money, but these desperate men and women are willing to put down \$497. The real killing is when they upsell. BEWARE! They're not selling you a \$497 package. They just want to get you in the system. Then they reel you in with promises of the 'next' program will give you the keys to the kingdom and they will show you all their secrets. The only secret they have is that their true motivation is not \$497. It's everything you've got. And the only problem is they aren't really showing you how to make money.

If you've ever gone on this merry-go-round you already know what you get is either how to scam friends and family, or prey on the more disadvantaged than you. They teach you that it's a dog eat dog world (which by the way it isn't!) and they are the big dog that just ate you (which by the way they just did). And now you need to go out and take a bite on a smaller dog. Personally, I like dogs and they play together a lot better than these guys and their 'formulas' for getting to the top. Top of what? And at what cost?

Have you ever noticed that closers never tell you the hidden cost of what you're buying? Ever see a bank commercial tell you how much their fees are? There's one bank commercial I saw recently that said, "We've got your back." More like "We've got your balls." Ever see a car commercial tell you just how much that 'tax, title and license' actually cost or that the base price doesn't include air-conditioning, navigational system or anything they actually show you in the advertisement? You want tires with that? Plus a spare? It'll cost ya.

The drug companies *have* to tell you the side affects by law. I actually saw a commercial for an anti-depressant that said one of the potential side affects may be depression. What is this world coming to?

Actually, I wish all Guru closers had to tell you the real hidden costs. It would put these charlatans out of business. Can you imagine if they had to say, *"Buy my \$20,000 training program. You can spend a day with me, well actually, two and a half hours plus a couple of really snazzy videos of me, while I actually give you zero information on how to make money. What I will tell you is that you're a loser if you don't buy more of my programs because to become a millionaire you need to think like a millionaire and spend like a millionaire and if you don't buy my programs you will never be a millionaire like me. I will use every technique of manipulation to get you to spend, spend, spend on me, me, me. I will show you how you, too, can manipulate people, mainly your family and friends, into investing in ventures that are either a long shot or non-existent. Then you will get to experience just how terrible it feels to not only be taken for everything you've got but feel the absolute horror of hurting the people you love the most all because you trusted me. Yes, I will bankrupt you, never ever give your money back on my money back guarantee and then disappear before you even know what hit you."*

Yes, sir. In this day and age I think there ought to be a law that closers, especially these guys, have to tell you the real story, the high price of their hidden costs.

But back in Frank's day, what you saw was what you got. Frank was one of the best closers around because he believed in giving people what he promised. He believed in telling them what they were going to get and delivering it. No hidden costs. Frank was the best, and unfortunately, he taught YesOrYes everything he knew.

That's why YesOrYes was the last of the 'Keys to True Abundance Extravaganza' speakers. He looked like the neighbor next door. The guy was plain looking, pretty non-descript. His thinning hair, medium build and slender hands always seemed to take backstage to his lack of a chin. I never really could look at the guy without thinking, I bet he saves a lot on razors not having a chin.

YesOrYes looked like he could be trusted. He didn't look like the kind of guy that would pick your pocket on the street. YesOrYes didn't have to. He could pick your pocket from the stage. He looked so honest, sincere and thoughtful. He looked like he'd just popped out of a Norman Rockwell painting in a plain brown suit, wearing an immaculate, crisp white shirt. I'd buy a used car from YesOrYes. In fact, that what he was doing when Frank found him - selling used cars.

I've given YesOrYes the long name of 'You'll Buy Every Training Program I've Ripped Off and Put My Name On Won't You, Yes or Yes'. But in the olden days when they were all under the tutelage of Frank he hadn't ripped off any training programs yet. After the rebellion, though, I swear you could see where YesOrYes had used whiteout to cover Frank's name and 'Keys to True Abundance Training Program' and put his name and title of his 'groundbreaking' new program on the paper.

I said to Frank, "You've got to sue him! That little thief can't get away with this!"

Besides, these guys sue each other all the time. They steal from each other, sue each other and then have each other on their programs, taking hefty cuts of everything sold at the back of the room. It's unbelievable.

Frank refused to sue. Back in the golden days, YesOrYes was probably Frank's favorite. YesOrYes was the sincerest of the bunch, which doesn't exactly warrant being the poster child of authenticity, but he really did seem to care. He was more like Frank in that way. You felt he meant what he said and that he wanted the best for people, just like Frank, but I began to wonder if it was all an act from the beginning.

Frank worked hard, studied even harder because he truly believed that he could actually help every person that asked him for help. Frank was one of those people that made you feel good about yourself. Every person that came in contact with Frank walked away better for it. He didn't even have to try. It just came from who he was and people sensed that.

I think that YesOrYes, and all of them for that matter, never could emulate the depths of Frank. They never studied and read as much as Frank. They sure never worked as hard as Frank. And they sure as hell never cared as much as Frank.

I don't think YesOrYes ever had an original thought. That's probably why ghostwriters have written all of his twenty-seven 'bestsellers'. In fact, not one of these Mega Motivational Gurus has ever written a damn thing. I'd be surprised if they've even read any of their 'bestsellers'. And by the way, the reason they have 'bestsellers' is because they buy their own books jacking up the sales so they can claim to be these great experts that have sold thousands and thousands of books. Yeah, to themselves! Then, they use the herd mentality to start the stampede to the back of the room for books they didn't write. It's disgusting. BEWARE!

Frank wrote every word in his books, every word of his trainings, and every word out of his mouth came from the heart. Frank was the real deal. These guys knew they weren't the real deal. And somewhere around the mid-90's they smelled money, big money, the golden calf. Then came the rebellion.

It was 1995. Frank was in his heyday. The traveling circus of 'Keys to True Abundance Extravaganza' had been around for about ten or twelve years and it was catching on. As an events planner I was in heaven. When I booked a hall I just knew the people would come. Easy peezy.

Frank was always generous. And his 'boys' were making good money, not great money, but then again, Frank didn't make millions upon millions either.

I remember the day of the rebellion well. The day the music died, as they say.

WhoHere was in one of his moods. Skirt was happy as could be chasing skirts. This time it was a redhead he brought backstage. YesOrYes was doing his usual close, but something was missing. No real pizzazz, no zing. MirrorMan was standing next to me offstage, but I doubt he knew I was even there. MeMe was giving Wannabe some financial advice. Frank had to literally 'shoo' MeMe because he was talking a bit too loud. No surprise there.

YesOrYes exited the stage and came directly over to the rest of us. I knew something was up. They never hung around at the close of a seminar anymore. That feeling of camaraderie of the early days was long gone.

WhoHere approached Frank, "Frank, can we have a moment?"

"Sure. Let's go over there."

WhoHere cleared his throat. "I mean all of us."

It was then Frank noticed that all eyes were on him. "No problem. Let's talk here."

Skirt had already arranged to meet the redhead later and she was walking out the door.

WhoHere looked at me and said to Frank, "Alone."

"She stays. She's part of the team."

"What team?" asked WhoHere. "This is your show. We're just the side acts and we don't have a say in anything. I think it's time things changed."

"Is it about the money? I think I've been fair in how we split...."

MeMe jumped in, "It's about the money, Frank, but not just how we split it up. It's how we make it. We feel we're leaving money on the table."

Wannabe felt the need to pile on. "Yeah, we can be making a lot more, Frank."

MirrorMan wasn't pleased at all that Wannabe was jumping in, so MirrorMan jumped in. "Frank, you're old school. And we all appreciate everything you've done for us. We would never have gotten this far without you. But like Wannabe said, there's more to be made."

Frank leaned against the post knowing he'd been here before. "How?"

YesOrYes said, "We could have some of our people in the audience run to the back of the room at my close to order the trainings and books. This would get the herd mentality going and more people would buy."

"That's called a 'shill' or 'plant'," Frank said. "That's what con men use to trick people. Are you suggesting we trick people into buying my products?"

"And that's another thing," YesOrYes defiantly stated, "Why are they your products? We've been selling this stuff and it's only got your name on it."

Frank unfortunately began to sound like a parent telling the child to wash his hands before dinner. And these kids were in their late twenties!

"Well, YesOrYes, it's because I have put in the long hours of research, I've worked on this system for over 25 years, and I actually wrote the training. Exactly whose name do you think should be on it?"

MeMe just couldn't help himself. "That's part of the problem, Frank. It is your research, your system, and your training. But times have changed. There are new ways to sell out there. We're behind the times and like it's been said, we're leaving money on the table. We could make a hell of a lot more."

"Like how, MeMe?" Frank asked.

"We're not using the right words. We could be using more powerful phrases and techniques to get into their subconscious and get them to buy easier."

"You're talking about Neuro-linguistic programming again," Frank said in frustration.

"NLP works, Frank," MeMe responded.

"I'm sure it does, but like I've said to you before. It's how it's used and when."

"It's just old fashioned selling techniques in a new package, Frank," MeMe countered.

"I know. But from the stage the power of suggestion can be misused. I know a lot of people use NLP for good use, but there is a line that can be crossed."

The only line these guys care to cross is the dotted line. Get the sucker to sign on the dotted line. I knew this before, but on this day, the day of the rebellion nothing could have been clearer. Still, Frank stood his ground.

"So, you want to manipulate the audience with pressure words and underhanded suggestions that go into the subconscious?" Frank asked.

YesOrYes stepped out of the shadows of the side stage. "Aren't we trying to reach their subconscious all the time anyway to help them?"

Frank's voice became stronger, firmer, definitely more irritated. "No. We're not trying to reach their subconscious. We're trying to help them reach their *own* subconscious. There's a difference, YesOrYes. And as for helping them. Is that what you boys are really talking about here? Do you really want to help them or is it about making money?"

"What's the difference?" asked Wannabe.

WhoHere wanted to slap Wannabe upside the head, but who wouldn't? To this day I still want to just walk up to Wannabe and slap him upside the head for no apparent reason other than he's Wannabe.

Frank never pointed both barrels at Wannabe. I think he took pity on him, like having a child with part of his brain missing. Frank gently and slowly said, "The difference between helping someone and making money is those are two completely different things, Wannabe. Sometimes the greatest help we can give someone is for that person to say 'this isn't right for me'. We help them bring out of their own subconscious the power of choice and asked them to follow their own intuition, to follow their heart. I've been doing this before you were born and..."

WhoHere jumped in. "Don't give us this before you were born speech again, Frank. It just so happens that I wasn't born yesterday. Not only is NLP effective in persuasion, and really Frank, that's what were talking about here is persuading someone to buy our product, or as you call it, *your* product. Whether it's a training program or a toothpaste, it's all persuasion. But what I was going to say is that not only is NLP effective, but there are other things we can use to up our sales."

YesOrYes jumps in at this point. "Frank, we need to change the way we close. There are ways to make these people believe that they've just got to have it. You know you're soft on the close and I feel like you're holding us back. We could up the pressure. Use scarcity. You know scarcity works, Frank. Let's make them feel like they're going to lose out if they don't buy right now and then only put a few of the packages in the back. Tell them only three more people can get in the training; tell them that they can make thousands by working less and less, you know, more money less work; tell them there's..."

Wannabe's excitement over comes him. "Tell them there a secret formula for getting rich and you're going to show 'em. We could say this secret formula's regular cost is \$10,000 but if they buy today we'll slash it to \$5,000. That's works, Frank. That really works!"

Everyone stops and all eyes are on Wannabe. If looks could kill Wannabe would not be with us today.

While YesOrYes takes a breath in to launch some more great ideas, Frank sees his chance. He calmly begins. "Let me get this straight. You want to get into these people's subconscious, convince them the buy some pie in the sky system that you know doesn't work without real work, which really isn't a special deal or cheap, and then what? What happens when they want their money back?"

WhoHere answered, "We deliver a product. If it doesn't work it's not our fault. They won't have a case to get their money back. Besides, who or what's to say the training doesn't work?"

Frank responded, "Oh, I don't know. How about common sense damnit?"

Frank only swears when he's really mad. They all have been around Frank long enough to know he's mad, really mad. I've seen them try to take Frank on one on one and not get very far. This is the first time this pack of wolves was in sync and smelled blood.

Frank's ears get really red when he's mad, too. Frank, red ears and all, unyieldingly said, "What you're saying is promise them the moon and in the end just moon 'em. You can't promise something you can't deliver. Guys, we're dealing with their thoughts, their minds, and not just their minds but their hearts as well. The mind is a powerful tool. It creates, it believes, it trusts and most importantly, it's vulnerable. And so is the heart. These people are at their most susceptible state. They desperately want to better their lives. They need answers and they look to us for those answers. We just can't prey on their vulnerability."

"Yes we can. And we should," says WhoHere. "We can use that vulnerability to our advantage, and to theirs. We can show them how to have the life they've always dreamed of. That vulnerability is a good thing. That means they are willing to take the leap to riches. We have to break them down before we build them up. This isn't just about making more money, Frank. This is about helping them see they can have the lifestyle they really want."

Everyone was willing to let the dust settle for a few seconds, even Frank.

Frank looked intensely at the ground with his trademark hand under his chin, and they took it as a good sign. Frank was thinking, but not what they were thinking.

"A lifestyle they really want," Frank repeated softly. "Guys, we're not in the business of selling lifestyles. After all these years do you think that's what we're doing?"

Skirt the Courageous, mustered up just enough of that courage to speak. "That's exactly what we're doing. We're making money by selling lifestyles, Frank. That's what people want. They want the wealthy lifestyle. "

I've never seen Frank look so disappointed, so sad in all my life. He softly shook his head. His voice subdued. "No, Skirt, we're not in the business of selling lifestyles. We're not even in the business of making money. We're in the business of making lives. Good money comes from doing good work."

WhoHere matched Frank's subdued voice. "Money is money, Frank."

WhoHere may have matched Frank's voice, but he could never match Frank's heart. And at that point, Frank's heart broke.

I miss that man. Not just because he's dead. I miss our monthly visits, as painful as they were, but I mostly miss the man that was left that day in the wake of the rebellion. Frank never recovered from their mutiny. He wasn't willing to compromise. Frank's life was based on giving, not taking. Times change, but Frank didn't.

They went off to make their millions. Some, like I said, in real estate, some still on the motivational speaker circuit. YesOrYes came up with this brilliant idea to get other people to write a series of books, he'd put his name on it and maybe have a ghostwriter write a chapter in it for him, and then take most of the money.

But it was Wannabe who gets the Scam La Creme De La Creme Award. Wannabe went to Hollywood. He wanted to make a movie called 'Mega Money Makin'. That wasn't the title, but if I told you the real title, my lawyer would either have a heart attack or go shopping online for a brand new Mercedes. I love her to death, but my guess it would be the latter.

Anyway, Mega Money Makin' had all these Mega Motivational Gurus in it telling the inside scoop on how you, too, could be a millionaire like them if you only got your thinker on straight and b-e-l-i-e-v-e-d...and coincidentally, bought their trainings. They didn't know it was going to be such a big hit and felt they didn't get their proper cut. According the Laws of Mega Guru Land, a proper cut is more than whatever they got. They all sued. But they had to take a ticket and get in back of the line because investors were in the courthouse queue first to get their money back, and then there were a couple people that actually worked on the film that didn't get their money either trying to sue. Wannabe felt he wanted to invest in lawyers more than invest in the people who got him mega rich. Not one lawsuit won. Wannabe walked away with everything. You think this would have upset these guys, but nooooo. This impressed the other Mega Motivational Gurus and elevated Wannabe's status even more. Apparently, these guys now measure success by how many sales you have and how many lawsuits you win.

After 'Mega Money Makin' Wannabe decided to start a Mega Money Internet TV Network. After all, he had all this extra footage from the 'stars' from the movie. And since Wannabe had won all the lawsuits and the dust had settled, the Mega Motivational Gurus once again coalesced back together into a cohesive money making strategy of 'you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours'. Remember their philosophy, never kill the golden calf or take less than ten percent of any sales in the back of the room of your fellow Guru. BEWARE!

So, they agreed to be a part of the Internet TV network. They weren't going to give any money. No way! But they'd lend their million dollar smiles to the project. They were a lot smarter than the investors, who by the way walked away with millions of dollars worth of losses. Wannabe walked away with worthless footage of Mega Motivational Gurus and, yes, that's right, the investor's millions.

It blows me away how these guys operate. Personally, I think they're all sociopaths. I've seen what they do to people, to themselves...and to each other! It's unbelievable. I don't use the word sociopath lightly. Do you know the characteristics of a sociopath? Well if you don't, you need to. Like I said earlier, I'm here to warn you. BEWARE!

Sociopaths can be funny, clever conversationalists that are quite likable. They gain your trust and ream you a new one without one shred of guilt and remorse. They have an inability to truly empathize and their emotional depth is as shallow as the ozone layer over Antarctica.

Would it surprise you to find out that a definition of a sociopath says that they are manipulative and deceitful? Hope you're sitting down for that one. Sociopaths don't have anything near a conscience. There's simply not enough room for a conscience to co-exist along with their grandiosity and egomania. I've seen some of these Mega Motivational Gurus take the last dime off a man and not even bat an eye.

Excuse me. Mark just walked into the room. He's my assistant.

"Yes, Mark?"

"Everything's ready."

"Good. Fifteen minutes and we can get this thing over with. How many people are out there?"

"The theatre is full, maybe several thousand."

Frank hadn't had a couple of thousand at any of his events for a long time. Pity it was his wake.

Mark continues, "Mary, WhoHere has been giving me an ear full about the seating arrangements. He's seated next to Skirt."

"I know. Frank specifically put that in his instructions. He wanted them to sit next to each other."

"Why?"

"My guess is since they haven't talked to each other for over five years they would be forced to at least put on their plastic smiles for the crowd."

"Frank must have had a mischievous side. Well, if you need anything, let me know."

"Do you have a morphine drip handy?"

"Is it going to be that bad?"

"Honey, it's been that bad for a long time. Thanks for all your help. Come get us when it's time."

The Moment of Truth

Where was I? Oh yeah, after the rebellion I told Frank I was finished. After what they did to him I was done. They knew I could deliver and it never occurred to them that I wouldn't work to set up their 'seminars'. Frank convinced me to stay with it, and the fact that my husband just lost his job and our second child was on the way.

It's funny how life works. I never felt comfortable working with any of them after that. But I wasn't the one selling bogus programs to susceptible people. I wasn't holding a gun to their heads. I wasn't making millions of people who couldn't afford these things spend thousands of dollars on trainings. I didn't make them sign a second mortgage or use their retirement savings. I was just trying to make a living, feed my family and do my job. That's what I told myself until the day I saw Frank for the first time in a long time several years ago. We had drifted apart and I'd heard rumors that I hoped weren't true.

I was putting on the normal dog and pony show for Skirt. Long gone were the days that Skirt wanted to bed me. Being the legal age, with two kids and stretch marks gave me immunity from his advances. Skirt's motto is if you can't afford plastic surgery, then you can't afford me.

As I was getting the program PR ready for the show in Miami I noticed a slot for F.S. Walcott, the pioneer and author of Keys to True Abundance. Needless to say, I was shocked.

I called Frank on the phone. "Hey, Frank."

"Mary? Is that you?"

"Yeah. How've you been, big guy?"

"It's been such a long time."

"Yeah. I've been incredibly busy. Hey, I see you're on the program with Skirt."

"Surprised?"

Hell yeah I was surprised. More surprised than when I walked in on my ex-husband and the baby sitter, but that's another story.

"A little. What are you doing, Frank?"

"Times have been rough. All my money is gone."

"I'm sorry to hear that, Frank."

"It's all right. Skirt came to see me about a month ago. He said he wanted to help. I'm only going to do it a couple of times. I need a break."

I couldn't judge Frank for working with Skirt. I was doing the same thing for the same reason. But I knew damn well that Skirt wasn't trying to help Frank. The last scandal Skirt got into was a shady real estate deal that hit the papers about six months before. Skirt needed a little reputation repair. He needed some high visibility with reputable people. BEWARE!

That's what these guys do. They love to get their pictures with people like Nelson Mandela, Oprah or any athlete that hasn't been caught taking steroids. It's kinda the reverse of guilt by association. People tend to think that Nelson Mandela wouldn't be standing next to Skirt if Skirt was a dishonest crook.

I doubt Nelson Mandela would even know who Skirt was. And I'm sure if he did he wouldn't be standing next to him. Frank knew better. I guess under the circumstance Frank wasn't able to do better.

Until I saw Frank up on stage next to Skirt I didn't realize that I wasn't able to do better either. The audience couldn't tell that Frank's smile wasn't real, but I could. I was waiting for Frank when he exited stage right. I looked into his sad eyes and saw mine. We knew.

Frank and I hugged, tears streaming down both our cheeks. We both knew just how far off track we'd gone.

The beautiful man that helped me get in this business was the same beautiful man that helped me get out of this business. I was done. He cancelled the remaining three shows with Skirt, and so did I.

That's when I started seeing Frank the last Sunday of every month in San Francisco in his little one room apartment on the edge of the Tenderloin. At first there was a lot of laughter. We'd talk about the good old days as people his age tend to do, but he was also interested in my new career choice. I'm a funeral director. Go figure.

We'd talk about the mind and how it works. Frank was always the student.

But about a year into our monthly visits something drastically changed. I mean drastically. Frank's drinking went from bad to worse. He couldn't concentrate. The conversations became dark, distant and morose. It was like he turned into another person overnight. I asked him what was going on, but he wouldn't tell me.

Month after month he became even more distant. But I had made a promise to myself that I wasn't going to abandon my friend, no matter what.

It was during the last visit that he gave me the manila folder. Looking back, I'm not surprised it was our last visit, but at the time I thought I would be back the next month.

Out of the blue he said, "I want to write a book about my life and the abuses of the 'motivational industry'. I want to set things right."

I thought that would be a good thing. He needed a purpose. I asked him, "What would you say?"

Frank took another sip of his scotch. "The truth."

"You care to be a little more specific?"

"I think I'd call it The Truth Behind the Curtain."

"Why?"

Frank emptied the scotch from the glass. "Dorothy followed the yellow brick road all the way to Oz and behind the curtain stood just a man. The great Wizard was nothing but a man pretending to have the power Dorothy and her companions already had."

Frank stared at his empty glass. I stared at the sadness of an empty man.

His eyes looked at the melting ice cube. "But the book I'd write is more than that. It'd be about what's behind the curtain in the subconscious, the manipulation, and how these guys get into the psyche of their audience and take the most precious gift a human being has."

"And what is that, Frank?"

"Conscious choice. That's what's really being done behind the curtain, Mary. The audience thinks they have choice, but these guys get behind the curtain, make them believe they have to have what they are selling, and then they rob them blind. "

Frank attempts a smile, but he can only muster a sad grin. "What would you write, Mary, if it was you?"

"I have no intention of writing anything, Frank. It's not my style. I'm not about to sit in front of a computer and pound a bunch of keys trying to put complete sentences together. Besides, you're the one that's going to write a book."

"No. I said I wanted to write a book, but it doesn't necessarily have to be me."

Frank got up, with some difficulty, to what I thought was to pour another drink. He wove across the tiny room to the cluttered little desk that sat by his only window. On top of the pile was a large manila envelope. He carried it back to the worn out couch and after sitting down next to me said, "Here."

I took the sealed folder and looked at it. "Here what?"

"Hold this for me."

"For how long?"

"Till the right time."

"Listen, Obi One Kenobi, I'm not really into this cryptic stuff. What's in it and for how long?"

"Please, Mary, I just want you to hold this until I need it. I can't tell you what's in it."

I studied the folder for a few seconds. It wasn't thick enough to be a book and it felt like there was a smaller envelope inside it. "First, is there anything in here that's illegal?"

"No."

"Second, is there anything in here that is going to get me killed?"

"Heavens no."

"And how long do you want me to hold on to this?"

"Just till next month. Bring it back next month and you can open it then, okay?"

He took another sip. I looked at the manila folder a little closer.

"Okay, but you promise we open it next month?"

"Yes, I promise you can open it next month."

It was the last Friday night of the month when I got the call. The police said it was the only number he had in the apartment. They asked if I was a relative. I don't know why, but I said yes.

Frank had died that day. The assumption was that he was drunk, fell down hitting his head on the sharp edge of the coffee table and died alone in his one room apartment.

That's their story. My story is Frank couldn't live anymore in a world that preyed on the helpless. He tried one more time to get back into the game, but the game had changed. He couldn't live in such a world and with himself. On Friday morning, Franklin S. Walcott died of a broken heart.

I cancelled my trip to San Francisco, went to my suitcase and pulled out the manila envelope. Inside were the instructions for his wake, down to the last detail. And the last detail was that after the wake I was to unseal the letter-sized envelope that I'm holding right now and read it to his 'boys'.

Hang on. Here comes Mark. It must be time; time for the boys to eulogize the man who made them. I wonder if they'll ever get around to talking about Frank or even tell the truth of how truly great Frank actually was. I doubt it. I think it's going to be more like that old joke

about the man going on and on about himself at a dinner party. He stops and says to the other person, "Well that's enough about me. Tell me, what do you think about me."

Excuse me for a moment. I need to address the boys.

"Gentlemen, you all know the order of speakers. Again, please limit your remarks to ten minutes. MeMe has suggested that if any of you do go over that I put a gun to your head and say, 'Shut the hell up'. And if you don't, a bullet will commence to glide through your thick skull. But I hope it doesn't come to that."

MeMe tries to look indignant. "I never said such a thing!"

Ignoring MeMe is one of the perks of not having to work with these bozos ever again, not to mention that it's just plain fun to watch how annoyed he gets at being ignored.

I continue, "And please, do not sell any of your materials at the back of the room. This is, after all, a wake."

WhoHere says, "That's a bit crass, Mary."

"Good. I was hoping someone would notice. Shall we go?"

Geez, it's like herding cats to get them anywhere! I'm so glad I don't work with these guys anymore.

I don't think one of them stays under twenty minutes in admiring their own eloquence. Each tries to outdo the one before in how close they were to Frank. Everyone wants to grab Frank's mantle. The irony is that by the end of Frank's life he had no mantle to grab, but reality never gets in the way of an illusionist's trick to win over an audience.

These eulogies are excruciating. I'm so glad we're at the last one. The last time I had to endure this much pain they gave me an epidural and I got to go home with a baby, and not this horrendous headache.

Thank God we're back in the anteroom. I think I'm going to be sick. One last request and I'm out of here.

I pull out the envelope. All of their eyes are on it like it was a 38D cup. I think about opening it slowly just to torture them, but being in this room is torture enough for me. As a mother I learned long ago to never give your child a punishment that punishes you more.

I unseal the letter quickly. Three separate pages. The first page is in Frank's handwriting.

Gentlemen,

I want to thank you all for coming today. I'm sure your eulogies were true to form and I appreciate your time. I'm sure you remember the day we all went our separate ways. It was a sad day for me. As a matter of fact, I thought for many years after our last group conversation that it would be the saddest day of my life, but I was wrong.

Remember when I said this was a business of making lives, not money? I still believe this to be true. But it never occurred to me that it's more than having the power to make life better for someone. I found out later how we also have the power to destroy.

A few years ago, I was asked by Skirt to join in being a part of his seminars. I agreed. After the first seminar I found out that it was not for me and I cancelled the rest of the tour with Skirt. About a year later I received this letter in the mail.

I turn to the next page.

Dear Mr. Walcott,

I'm writing you today because I have nowhere else to turn. My husband, David, and I attended the seminar that you gave with Mr. Skirt a little over a year ago. He had just been laid off from his job. We always wanted to start our own business and we thought this would be a good opportunity to go for our dream. Plus, I've read all your books and I always wanted to meet you.

We weren't all that impressed with the way things were run. It felt like there was a lot of pressure. We really didn't have the money to take the trainings Mr. Skirt said we needed. But we needed to do something.

We put down everything we had. We even maxed out our three credit cards. David and I attended the subsequent training, and then another one, always thinking that we would be shown how to make money, pay back our debt and live our dream.

In my gut I knew it wasn't right, but David believed it would work. I wish I had listened to my gut.

I've photocopied the letter David left me.

I'm shaking as I look at the words below.

Dear Lizzy,

I'm so sorry. I never wanted it to end like this, but I have no choice. I can't take this anymore. I can't take the calls from the creditors. I can't bear the thought of losing the house. I can't face my dad to tell him that I can't pay him back for the loan. And most importantly, I can't face you any longer. I hate seeing what this is doing to you. What I have done to you. When you wake up in the middle of the night and go sit in the dark downstairs I sit on the stairs watching you. When I hear you cry it rips my heart to shreds. I can't even go and hold you. I feel so ashamed, so helpless. What can I say? How can I make this right? I've ruined us. Every time I look in the mirror I no longer see a man. Now all I see is a failure, a fool. You were right. We never should have trusted them. Our dream has turned into a nightmare.

The only thing left for me to do, the only thing that will provide for you and our children, is for me to leave you my life insurance. It's all I have left of any worth. It's enough to pay our debts and give you what you will need to take care of Jonathan and Jessica.

You mustn't let anyone see this letter. And please never to tell Jonathan and Jessica that I couldn't take another day like this.

Even now I know it's a risk writing this letter, but I couldn't leave you without saying goodbye. I need to tell you how much I love you, how much I will miss you. And how sorry I am for what I've done to you. Please forgive me.

***With all my love for all of eternity,
David***

I can barely keep reading, but Lizzy has more.

I trusted you, Mr. Walcott. I thought if you endorsed it, then it must be okay. We called Mr. Skirt's organization over and over begging to be released from the contract. When we finally got a hold of somebody, they refused. They made us feel like losers because we couldn't make it work. We did the best we could. We worked as hard as we could for our dream, but all is lost.

Do you know what my real dream was, Mr. Walcott? It wasn't the dream of starting our own business. I dreamed of sharing the rest of my life with my dear David. I dreamed of holding

his hand at our children's graduations. I dreamed of making us hot chocolate in the winter and snuggling by the fire, hearing him laugh, looking into his beautiful smiling eyes as he held our first grandchild. I dreamed of waking up next to him every morning, feeling the touch of his lips. If only I had known he was on the stairs listening to me cry. I wasn't crying for me, Mr. Walcott. I was crying for him. I couldn't bear to watch day in and day out what this was doing to him, but I had no idea.

Now I live every day thinking of what I could have done different. I have to live knowing I will never have the chance to tell him that the money didn't matter, that the only dream that really mattered to me was loving him and our children. I have to live knowing I will never have the chance to tell him that he was my dream.

What do you live with, Mr. Walcott? I trusted you. I believed in you. I thought you were an honest man.

I write this to you because I want you to know that what you say and what you do matters. Our children and I are left with nothing but a mound of debt. Mr. Skirt's organization took our home the day David died. The bank is coming tomorrow to take our house.

I couldn't take the insurance money. The insurance policy didn't pay for suicide. Mr. Walcott. It would have been dishonest not to tell them the truth and we aren't that kind of people. We are the kind of people that trust and believe the best in others. We are the kind of people that used to dream dreams. Mr. Walcott, my husband is gone, my dream is gone. I will have to live with that.

What do you live with, Mr. Walcott?

*Sincerely,
Elizabeth Ann Williams*

Frank continues.

To answer Mrs. Williams' question, this is what I live with, and not very well. Gentlemen, look at what we have done. Think about what you are doing. When you take people's money, giving nothing in return, you are stealing their dreams, destroying their lives. These are good people you are manipulating when you're up on stage. Think of the consequences of your actions. Think of the lives you hold in your hands.

I can only ask you to follow your heart.

I have realized two things in this past year of my life. One is that a heart does not beat alone and every beat of a heart touches every other heart on this planet in one way or another.

The second lesson is that the greatest lie is a half-truth.

I learned these lessons too late. For you, gentlemen, there is still time. This is your moment of truth. Will you change your ways, live the whole truth and be about the business of making lives? Please.

**With all my heart,
Frank**

I can't speak another word. I'm numb. I don't want to look up from the letter, as if I could. I just want to be alone. I feel so ashamed. I'm so sorry. I'm so, so sorry for what I've done. I stood next to these guys, just like Frank.

I don't even look up when MeMe says, "That was dumb to tell the insurance company about the letter."

My head jerks up in reflex action. I'm shocked.

My jaw drops to the floor when YesOrYes says, "Yeah, that was pretty selfish of her. What about the kids?"

Skirt stands up. He holds out his hands like he's trying to stop an oncoming train. "I just want you all to know that my organization would have gladly returned the money if we had know about the circumstances."

"Of course, Skirt," chimes MirrorMan. "We all know that. Obviously the guy was unbalanced to begin with."

A few seconds of silence follows. Needless to say, I can't speak at this moment. And that's a good thing.

Wannabe breaks the silence. "Frank was a great man. You know something? I think we should make a movie about his life and what he's done for the world."

WhoHere says, "That's a great idea. We could all share our stories about the wonderful things he taught us and how successful we've become because of him."

MeMe asks, "Is this going to be like your last movie, Mega Money Makin'? We really didn't get a proper cut in that deal."

Wannabe answers, "We can all be producers this time. We'll take an equal share. If it's anything like Mega Money Makin' we'll all come out sitting pretty."

Skirt happily adds, "I'm in. I've got a new training coming out next year and the timing is perfect."

My disbelief and numbness is rapidly slipping into anger. I somehow find my voice. "Are you guys for real? Didn't you just hear what Frank said?"

Wannabe says, "Sure we did. We'll tell the truth about Frank. Absolutely."

MirrorMan asks, "How about we call it 'F.S. Walcott - The Man, The Mentor, The Mission'. What do you think?"

MeMe says, "I like it. It has a ring to it. I think we could do quite well with this."

Now my anger is turning to pure rage. Stay calm, Mary. Stay calm. Just stay calm. Okay. I'm calm. Now I'll speak. "MeMe, when is enough enough?"

MeMe turns to me with an odd grin. "Mary, it's never enough."

I don't know about you, but I've had enough. I've had more than enough. I'm out of here. I can't stay in this room for one more second or I'm going to go postal on these lowlifes. Let's get out of here.

That's a relief. I've never been so happy to breathe car fumes in all my life.

By the way, I think you should know that there was one other thing in the manila folder besides the letter and the instructions for the funeral. There was an insurance policy for \$500,000. Frank named the benefactor to be Elizabeth Ann Williams. I didn't know who that was, but now I do, and now I know why. Since it was an 'accidental' death Lizzy will get the money. But like I said earlier, Frank never did anything by accident.

You know what? I just realized why Frank had me bring these bozos together and read them the letter. That was no accident either. It wasn't for them. Frank knew damn well that they'd never change. And he knew damn well that I would. He knew that this would piss me off so much that I would write this to warn you. To BEWARE! And it worked!

I'm like that guy in the movie, 'Network', that screams "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore!" Aren't you?

Hey, I've got an idea. Let's make our own movie! Are you with me? Let's expose every little secret behind their sleazebag organizations and narcissistic, ways. We'll make a movie too, except we'll be honest. That'll throw 'em. How about we call it "The Truth Behind the Curtain"?

Better yet, let's start a movement! Why don't we join together and get the word out? Surely you've got a story, too, about how you've been tricked, manipulated into some scam that took you for a ride. Tell me your story. Go to www.thetruthbehindthecurtain.com and share what happened. We need to get the word out. Whether it's about these Mega Motivational Gurus or other scammers proclaiming how to make money without lifting a finger, or investing in real estate for ten dollars down and no payments till 2050, or whatever sounded like a good idea at the time, it is time to call them out. It's time to expose these people and their schemes and let the world know that for every lie that has been told there is someone willing to stand up and speak the truth.

Are you with me? Let's do it. Go to www.truthbehindthecurtain.com and join me. This is *OUR* Moment of Truth!