

CHAPTER 10

Fukushima, Texas

TOKYO BY TELEVISION, MARCH 12, 2010

Badpenny is watching Japan drown on CNN. It's one A.M. but she won't let me quit for the night just because I told the TV, "It's bullshit."

At the nuclear plant at Fukushima, north of Tokyo, three reactors are committing suicide. The CNN guys are saying that the huge earthquake and tsunami from the night before knocked out the plant's generators, the engines that pump water to keep the fuel from melting; but don't worry.

They're lying, and what's sick is, they don't even *know* they're lying.

First, the earthquake didn't take out those diesels. Second, the tsunami didn't take out those diesels. Third, you should worry.

You should worry because every nuclear plant in operation today, and the ones they want to build, all depend on this same emergency diesel engine set-up to save your behind from a nuclear meltdown. Good luck.

How do I know the Japanese reactor should have stood, but didn't; that its back-up diesels busted all by themselves? I'm not telepathic. I can't see inside the minds of distant diesel motors. I can't see into next Thursday.

All I have are files.

Badpenny's on my ass. "Well, if you know all this, why aren't you writing about it? Why aren't you calling *Newsnight*?"

Here's why: I'm about finished with *Vultures' Picnic* and I'm not going to expand the nuclear chapter, and I'm up against a deadline that I can't extend, dearest lady, because my publisher has a heart of gold. No blood, just yellow metal. And the kids have to be up for school at six forty-five A.M.

"You promised Harvey!"

The Angel. That was a low blow. The Radioactive Brick from Houston was throbbing and glowing at the end of my desk.

OK, then, *get me the fucking files!* We're in the basement office and I start throwing around huge plastic containers of old papers, screaming, "*Why the hell are all these papers out of order dammit dammit dammit!*" The answer is that I made a mess of the old files, dumping them into giant plastic tubs despite Badpenny's best efforts to sort them in case we had to pull them quickly.

Now we have to pull them quickly. It's late, now nearly two A.M., and I'm cranky and didn't need this. I'm screaming (why am I always screaming?) that I want "every fucking file or report or binder that says *RICO*," especially anything marked *EDG* or *SQ*.

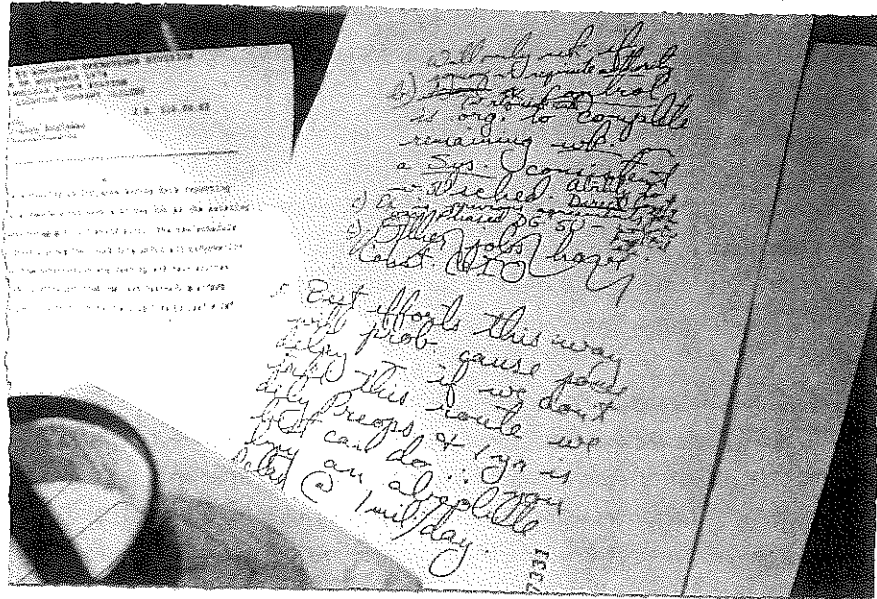
I give up. It's totally impossible. I've plopped down on the sofa and watch smoke rise from the Fukushima reactors. Sometimes there are black plumes, sometimes white, like when they're voting on a new Pope.

In twenty minutes, Badpenny organizes two two-foot stacks of papers, binders, tape transcripts, reports, and printouts, and sets them out on her desk. I inhale some asthma medicine to get through the dusty stuff. *I'll never find the evidence in this pile of crap.*

I've found it. The Notebook. Here was the handwritten log kept by a senior engineer at the nuclear plant.

Wiesel was very upset. He seemed very nervous. Very agitated. . . . In fact, the plant was riddled with problems that, no way on earth, could stand an earthquake. The team of engineers sent in to inspect found that most of these components could "completely and utterly fail" during an earthquake.

"Utterly fail during an earthquake." And here was the quake and here was the failure. The warning was in The Notebook, which I wasn't supposed to have. Good thing I kept a copy anyway, because the file cabinets went down with the building.



**WORLD TRADE CENTER TOWER 1,
FIFTY-SECOND FLOOR, NEW YORK, 1986**

I'd seen a lot of sick stuff in my career, but this was sick on a new level of sick.

Two senior nuclear plant engineers were spilling out their souls and files on our huge conference table, blowing away my government investigations team with the inside stuff about the construction of the Shoreham power station.

The meeting was secret. Very secret. Their courage could destroy their careers: No engineering firm wants to hire a snitch, even one who has saved thousands of lives. They could lose their jobs; they could lose everything. They did. That's what happens. Have a nice day.

All field engineers keep a diary. Gordon Dick, a supervisor, wasn't supposed to show his to us. I asked him to show it to us and, reluctantly, he directed me to these notes about the "SQ" tests.

SQ is nuclear-speak for "Seismic Qualification." A seismically qualified nuclear plant won't melt down if you shake it. A "seismic event" can be an earthquake or a Christmas present from Al Qaeda. You can't run a nuclear reactor in the USA or Europe or Japan without certified SQ.

This much is clear from his notebook: This nuclear plant will melt down in an earthquake. The plant dismally failed to meet the Seismic I (shaking) standards required by U.S. and international rules.

Here's what we learned: Dick's subordinate at the nuclear plant, Robert Wiesel, conducted the standard seismic review. Wiesel flunked his company. No good. Dick then ordered Wiesel to change his report to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, change it from failed to passed. Dick didn't want to make Wiesel do it, but Dick was under the gun himself, acting on direct command from corporate chiefs. From The Notebook:

Wiesel was very upset. He seemed very nervous. Very agitated. [He said,] "I believe these are bad results and I believe it's reportable," and then he took the volume of federal regulations from the shelf and went to section 50.55(e), which describes reportable deficiencies at a nuclear plant and [they] read the section together, with Wiesel pointing to the appropriate paragraphs that federal law clearly required [them and the company] to report the Category II, Seismic I deficiencies.

Wiesel then expressed his concern that he was afraid that if he [Wiesel] reported the deficiencies, he would be fired, but that if he didn't report the deficiencies, he would be breaking a federal law. . . .

The law is clear. It is a crime not to report a safety failure. I could imagine Wiesel standing there with that big, thick rule book in his hands, The Law. It must have been heavy. So was his paycheck. He weighed the choices: Break the law, possibly a jail-time crime, or keep his job.

What did Wiesel do? What would you do?

Why the hell would his company make this man walk the line? Why did they put the gun to his head, to make him conceal mortal danger? It was the money. It's always the money. Fixing the seismic problem would have cost the plant's owner half a billion dollars easy. A guy from corporate told Dick, "Bob is a good man. He'll do what's right. Don't worry about Bob."

That is, they thought Bob would save his job and career rather than rat out the company to the feds.

But I think we *should* all worry about Bob. The company he worked for, Stone & Webster Engineering, built or designed about a third of the nuclear plants in the United States.

From the fifty-second floor we could look at the Statue of Liberty. She didn't look back.

My Southern blond alligator, Lenora Stewart, barefoot under the conference table, took down the info in shorthand. Did the corporation actually file the fake report? Our whistleblower engineer said he was sure of it. But how could we find it, prove it? There were over two million pages of documents at the nuclear plant's file room at the NRC. It took Stewart four months, but she got it. I gave her a sketch of a nose, and she painted the *Mona Lisa*. (You think that's easy? You've seen a page from *The Notebook*. That's what she had to work with. If you can do better, you're hired.)

OK, so we know the U.S. nuclear industry can play Russian roulette with earthquake safety. But is that what happened in Japan?

DOWNTOWN, MANHATTAN, 2011

Badpenny says, "So, you're not going to include Fukushima in the book?"

You know I'm not. I'm not going to fight my publisher to get this into a book they think is done and they want it *now*. They paid cash money for it and I can't afford to give it back. But she wants to pretend I'm something other than a craven hack. Penny wants me to pretend to be a Prophet, a Man for All Seasons, a Napoleon of Truth.

Besides, there's no need for me to investigate the Fukushima meltdown. They have the answer already. The experts on the TV, supplied by the nuclear industry, are telling us the plant was only designed to withstand an 8.0 earthquake; but it was hit by a quake way bigger than anyone could expect, a monster 9.0 on the Richter scale. They just said that on CNN, so it must be true. And it's also true that the Easter Bunny is going to reduce unemployment and Reagan was a great president.

There was no 9.0 earthquake at the plant. Nothing close to that number.

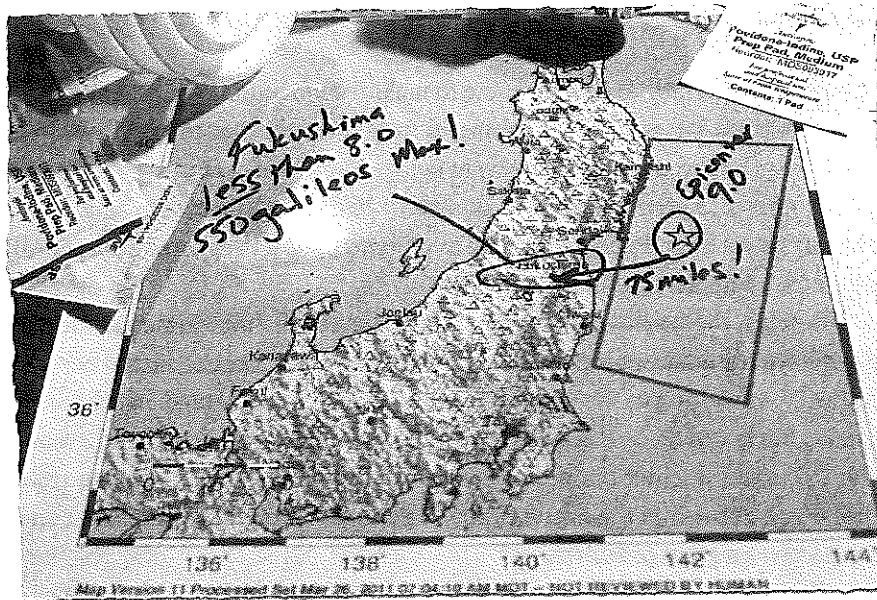
The industry story, the 9.0 fable, is a wet bag of horseshit. Sure, there was a 9.0 earthquake—a *hundred miles out in the Pacific Ocean*. The shake at the plant was only about 7.0–8.0 on the Richter scale. The Richter scale is logarithmic. That means the tremor was only about a *tenth* of the force of the 9.0 at the epicenter in the Pacific Ocean.

Something nasty was going on and I was trying hard not to investigate it.

MANHATTAN OFFICE, 2011

But I couldn't resist. Somehow, Tokyo Electric had, I suspected, played a game with the plant's Seismic Qualification and, once again, Mother Nature had given a corporation a perfect cover: an earthquake worse than their supposed SQ requirement.

Matty Pass sent me the "shake map" of Japan made by the U.S. Geological Survey, the technical photo of the quake. I stared at the station-by-station ground acceleration readings and after an hour found location "FKSH05, Lat:37," which had a maximum acceleration of "62.3241 N." From what I learned in my self-taught *Earthquakes for Idiots* crash course, that looks bad but not bad enough to shake the diesels so hard they can't operate.



But I'm a confused man at times, and maybe my cynicism is showing me felonies when I'm looking at flowers. I wait until it's morning in Colorado and work the phones until I get a live USGS seismologist, an earthquake expert, to translate this "Max Vel %g PSA" lingo for me.

But as soon as he hears I'm the press, the government man gets nervous and simply won't tell me what's going on. He suggests I call Japan. *Arigato*, jack-off.

Then I log into some nuclear expert and engineering chats on the Net and there's lots of griping about the missing seismics, photos, and details on the diesel bunkers. Like me, the industry guys smell the bullshit. I just need to find the bull.

They lead me to it. The company, Tokyo Electric, said that the earthquake hit hardest at Reactor #2, a slam of 550 gals (*galileos* measure ground movement). What a shame, because the reactor had been designed to withstand only 436 gals. According to the company and *The New York Times*, the earthquake exceeded the safety requirement by 20 percent. But I don't buy that.

I dig further into the technical papers, and get this: The plant was not supposed to be designed for a 436-gal quake. Tokyo Electric *knew* that 436 would not make it. In dusty old technical papers, the company promised government regulators they would raise the seismic protection to 600. They promised. That was five years ago.

So there you have it. If TEPCO had not played the regulators, Japan would not be suffering a slow-motion Hiroshima.

It was the Shoreham plant all over again. TEPCO toyed with the plant's Seismic Qualification. But techno-talk and complex regulations are way too mystifying for the media, which prefers the Unexpectedly Big Earthquake tale. For all we know, the Fukushima plant would have melted down if a couple of Chihuahuas had danced on the roof.

TEPCO broke the rules, muscled the regulators into silence, and cowed the press with BS. You should recognize the pattern by now:

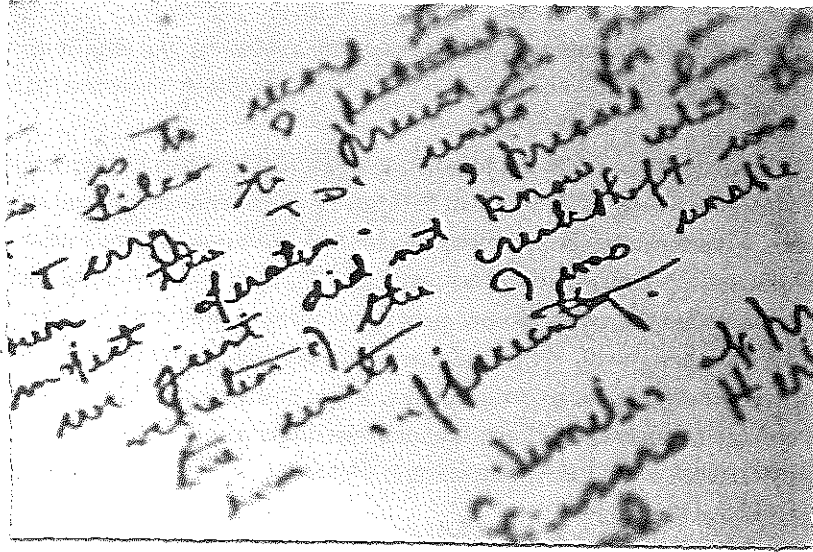
犯罪、消費電力、神秘

Hanzai, shōhi denryoku, shinpi. Crime, Power, Mystification.

SHOREHAM, LONG ISLAND

So now we know Tokyo Electric was pinching pennies on earthquake proofing the plant. Still, the emergency diesel generators should have kept Fukushima's reactor core from melting. They failed. And I suspected it was neither the earthquake nor even the tsunami that knocked them out. My suspicious mind was stoked by something else I found in my asthma-provoking files of yesteryear.

Here it is.



A page from the notebook of an Emergency Diesel Generator expert, R. D. Jacobs, hired to monitor a test for a nuclear reactor's back-up cooling system.

This is to record that on my last visit, . . . I pressed [a company executive] saying we just did not know what the axial vibration of the crankshaft was doing to the [diesel] units. I was unable to impress him sufficiently.

The diesels were “tested” by turning them on for a few minutes at low power. They worked fine. But R.D., a straight shooter, suspected problems. He wanted the motors opened and inspected. He was told by power company management to go to hell.

Suffolk County, New York, the wealthiest county in the United States, had the cash, the legal team, the experts, and the power of the privileged to question what was going on. Power companies aren't used to being questioned. When we forced the plant builder to test the three Emergency Diesel Generators in emergency conditions, one failed almost immediately (the crankshaft snapped, as R.D. predicted), then the second, then the third. We named the three diesels “Snap, Crackle, and Pop.”

So, I was not surprised to see, and it was no trick to predict, that the Japanese diesels, roughly of the same type, would go *gyoshi, makka, pop* (“snap, crackle, and pop” in Japanese).

My suspicions then took me to a darker hypothesis. In my gut, I believed that the diesels *were never* expected to work, *can't* work. Not anywhere: not in Japan, not in the United States, not in Russia, nowhere. That means every nuclear plant built or about to be built doesn't stand a chance in a power outage emergency.

Cynicism is not proof. Even if my horror-show appraisal is correct, I'd need an expert to back it up, someone from the inside willing to rat out their own industry and put their livelihood on the line.

Within three days of the quake, Badpenny got a note from the West Coast from the man I needed.

SOMEWHERE, CALIFORNIA

God bless the notes and the little fairies who tug at someone's conscience and tell them to send it. This one, from a Jonathan Sellars, came via the *Contact Greg* button at www.GregPalast.com. (Keep that address in your wallet.)

Sellars is an expert with hands-on work on nuclear plant emergency diesels. His long message contained some techno-chat about "in-line 8 cylinder engines making 450 revs, 17 inch bore and 21 inch stroke, turbocharged and inter-cooled"—Sellars seemed to know his stuff.

I called the phone number he included and asked for Mr. Sellars.

"Sellars: That's not my real name." Well, no kidding. It's not an industry that turns the other cheek. I got his true moniker and locked it away.

Apparently, "Sellars" was watching Fukushima melt and had that I-told-those-fools feeling that strikes honest engineers, which is most of them, when stuff goes bad. He had worked for General Electric, which built most of Fukushima's reactors.

The issue was the water on the diesels. He told me, "It was obvious to the entire crew of skilled millwright-mechanics and engineers that the one very large vulnerability that the system had was a flood."

He issued the warning in 1985. Fukushima was built in the 1970s so a retrofit would have cost a mint. The warning was ignored.

Sellars checked out the photos of the Fukushima plant on cryptome.org (an excellent source), and saw the diesel buildings were standing up just fine. The earthquake didn't knock them down. They simply did not have them sealed against water.

"They have them hardened against a terrorist shooting the louvers with a bazooka," he told me, "but a simple flood, that's going to trip them."

Well, there goes baloney cover #1, that a larger-than-expected tsunami "destroyed" the generators. The ones that didn't simply crack apart got wet. Like when you leave your cell phone near an open window and then a storm soaks it and it shorts out. It doesn't take a tsunami.

So big deal. The Japanese are schmucks. How could they be so dumb? Water and electricity don't mix, just like they warned you in school not to take your radio into a bathtub.

My insider worked on the diesels at a California nuke, but it's the same story almost everywhere, from Fukushima to Florida. Diesels open to water remain standard industry practice worldwide (except Germany). The engineers shrug and say, "Those are the specs." Meltdowns and cancer? That's handled by the office down the hall.

Then I threw a curveball at this expert, a question he didn't expect. I knew that all these diesels were basically designed, or even taken from, cruise ship engine rooms or old locomotives. I'm not an engineer, but I suspect a motor designed for a leisurely float to Bermuda is not fit for a life-and-death scramble. So I asked him, "They really can't work *at all*, the diesels, can they?"

That's when he introduced me to the phrase "crash start."

On a ship, he explained, you would take half an hour to warm up the bearings, and then slowly build up to "critical" crankshaft speed, and only then add the "load," the propeller. Kind of like warming up your car before putting it in gear.

That's for sailing. But in a nuclear emergency, "the diesels have to go from stationary to taking a full load in less than ten seconds." That's like jumping in my cold Honda and roaring out of the garage at 120 mph.

Worse, to avoid having to buy additional diesels, the nuclear operators turbo-charge them, revving them to 4,000 horsepower in ten seconds when they are designed for half that output.

The result: snap, crackle, pop.

I learned that, at Fukushima, at least two of the diesels failed *before* the tsunami hit. What destroyed those diesels was *turning them on*. In other words, the diesels are junk, are crap, are not capable of getting up to full power in seconds, then run continuously for days. They're decorations attached to nuclear plants so people will think these radioactive tea kettles are safe.

Just testing them can damage them. There are alternatives to snap,

crackle, pop diesels, but they can cost a billion dollars per station. And the operators have decided you're just not worth it.

Sometimes the diesels work, sometimes they don't. It's meltdown roulette.

"So, you're saying emergency diesels can't work in an emergency?"

"Actually, they're just not designed for it."

Failure is in the design, the design of the political system, the corporate system. Instead of diesels, they might as well surround the plant with tin foil and Christmas wrapping. They are decorative, there to reassure a snoozy public that all is well. Much like BP's Clean-up Theater, this is the nuclear industry's Safety Showtime.

THE REAGAN WHITE HOUSE

Well, wait. After Snap, Crackle, and Pop were exposed as worse than useless, why didn't the Nuclear Regulatory Commission check the diesels all over America?

It did. The NRC found several plants with no-damn-good diesels, especially those made by a company called Transamerica Delaval Inc. (TDI).

Then that brilliant nuclear engineer, Ronald Reagan, took over. Within the White House, as Ollie North set up the secret Iran-Contra crew, another group, led by political hyena Lyn Nofziger, secretly set up a crew to manipulate the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, although it is a quasi-judicial entity. (A White House that would give guns to the Ayatollah and Central American drug lords certainly won't have qualms about snapping diesel engines.)

Reagan's nuclear warlocks used manipulation and raw power to stymie the NRC's attempt to fix the diesel problem. Nuclear operators learned a lesson: Fixing the regulators is cheaper than fixing the problem.*

* How do I know about the White House extra-legal finagling on emergency diesels? It was uncovered by the greatest investigative journalist of the twentieth century, Ron Ridenhour of New Orleans. Ridenhour's the guy who uncovered the My Lai massacre in Vietnam, a story typically credited to Seymour Hersh. Hersh is truly brilliant and deserves credit for expanding on Ron's discovery and getting it into the U.S. press, but I've waited for years to make sure Ridenhour gets his credit.

It was my friend Ron, not me, who had the contract to write this book when, in 1996, I thought these stories needed telling. But Ron died young and I took up the pen he dropped. I apologize that I'm no Ron Ridenhour. But then, no one is.

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

In 1985, I was sitting at my desk in a basement I rented in Brooklyn, where I could work and play my drums without disturbing anyone with any authority to stop me. I began a kind of aimless and endless coffee-break romp through a few thousand pages of confidential memos sent between Stone & Webster Engineering (now Shaw) and Long Island Lighting Company (LILCO). The memos were about the building of the Shoreham nuclear plant, on which LILCO had already blown \$5 billion over eighteen years—and it still wasn't done.

Beginning in 1973, the power company's Chairman and its President swore under oath the plant was only "a year" or so from completion. Because the plant was nearly done, the government allowed the company to charge up to half a billion a year for the nearly finished plant.

Year after year, the same thing. The plant will be done in a year, the public gets charged another half billion dollars, then the plant isn't done. Repeat. For *twelve more years*. The public thought the managers of this company and its builder were real stupid.

Call me crazy but it struck me that maybe they weren't so stupid, or maybe, stupid like a fox, like a jackal, like a raven. What if "stupid" was a cover for lying, for perjury, for scamming? Could these white-haired members of the North Shore country clubs simply be well-coifed scumbag fraudsters, racketeers, just like the Mafia but with a more dangerous weapon: a nuclear plant?

Sho' nuff: The confidential memos revealed to me that completion dates were *never* just a year away. Their testimony was bullshit just to take in billions from the public.

Here's an example.

In December 1975, a power company executive testified under oath that the plant would be complete for "load fuel" by "the end of 1977."

Then I found this: a confidential memo from Stone & Webster two months earlier saying that the two companies had secretly agreed on "a Fuel Load date of 2/79 plus a five-month contingency." By my calendar, there's a two-year difference at minimum. I say "agreed," but the courtroom term is *conspired*.

significant events occurring at Shoreham during
 period pertains to a complete reschedule of the job
 schedule now demonstrates a 3 to 5 month slip. The
 being done without a given fuel load date until a
 has been gathered from construction, and
 an approach which

The con never stopped. In June 1983, Stone & Webster *still* hadn't finished building Shoreham. The Chairman of the Board personally begged for money from the government, swearing, under oath, that "the Shoreham Unit is complete as far as construction is concerned except for the diesel engines," and would load fuel in two months.

In fact, the Chairman had already received a confidential report that said they'd be lucky to complete the plant within a year.

And then we get to those emergency diesels, Snap, Crackle, and Pop, similar to the set-up that would fail in Japan. Another power company executive swore under oath, "There was no indication in any of the problems with the Shoreham diesels that the catastrophic crankshaft failure would occur."

Which was bullshit. The company already had the memo from R. D. Jacobs that he'd recorded "axial vibration of the crankshaft" in the diesels and wanted them shut down and taken apart. They hid his demands from the government.

I knew that some government officials thought I'm completely mad—and were willing to pay extra for that. So I called the Attorney General of New York and his unit chief who was in charge of bird-dogging these companies. Deputy AG Jerry Oppenheim told me that my findings sounded completely insane. I was alleging that upstanding executives of a multi-billion dollar corporation had committed perjury to suck up billions of dollars from the public. He couldn't wait to file the case.

But. *But* meaning “no money.” It’s easy to bring a case against some kid who steals a bike. Cuff ’em, impound the bike, impound the kid. Cheap. But governments simply can’t afford to enforce the laws on billion-dollar operators. That’s one way the big guys get away with it.

This case would require millions in legal fees for expert lawyers, for engineers up the wazoo, and for years of litigation against resistance from the Governor and political establishment.

But the power company executives had made a big, big mistake. Power plants are supposed to be located in places like the Coon-Ass Riviera (e.g., the Grand Gulf nuclear plant), or Waynesboro, Georgia (63 percent Black, for Southern Company’s proposed Plant Vogtle), or in The Valley (where LA Water and Power put its filthy residual-oil-burning plant, the one that gave me asthma).

LILCO, foolishly, decided to put its nuke right in between the country clubs on the North Shore. Land that should have been a golf course! Even Republicans were upset. The exceptionally wealthy county government said, “Investigate it, shut it down, whatever the cost. Just send the bill.”

It took two years to compile a million pages of evidence. In 1988, we schlepped it all to federal court in Brooklyn, where I showed a jury the documents I’m showing you here (plus several hundred more), and suggested they require the company to pay \$13 billion to its customers.

The conspirators’ lawyers pounded me for fifteen days on the witness stand. They didn’t like me. And the power company *consigliere* warned the jury that the Governor of New York had called me an astrologer! Oh my.

The jury didn’t care about the Governor’s horoscope. They unanimously voted that the power company pay \$4.3 billion. They found the company LILCO and its Chairman had violated the anti-Mafia racketeering law in a conspiracy with Stone & Webster. The nuclear plant itself, after operating just one single day, was dismantled. No one cried. Certainly not Stone & Webster, which made a billion dollars on the plant-building scam and, despite the verdict, walked away with that \$50,000 settlement payment.



I have to say that on the Liar-Liar-Pants-on-Fire scale, the power company LILCO, now out of business, was far from the worst. I have investigated dozens of nuclear operators, and in every single case, no exceptions, I found this: Fraud is as much a part of the structure of a nuclear plant as the cement and steel.

TEXAS AND TOKYO

In June 2010, Obama addressed the nation, casting hellfire and brimstone upon damnable BP. He pulled out his crying towel to weep over our national addiction to petroleum, and prescribed the energy methadone that would cure our need for an oil fix. The President laid out a vision of windmills o'er purple mountains' majesty and solar panels from sea to shining sea.

That was bullshit, of course. The money would go to nuclear power.

By the beginning of 2011, the newly Republicanized U.S. Congress, which could not bring itself to spend twenty cents to keep a million families from foreclosure, was about to lend \$56 billion to nuclear plant builders, and Obama loved it.

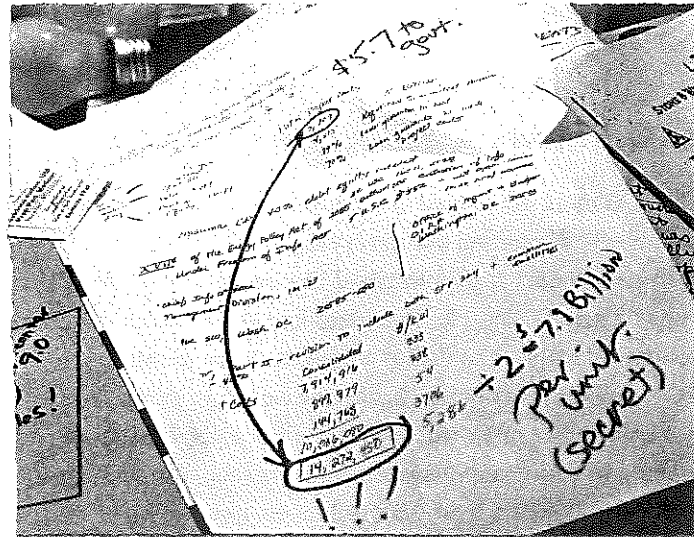
There are hundreds of power companies in the United States, but only

four were chosen to climb the U.S. Treasury's candy cane: UniStar Nuclear, Scana Corp., NRG, and Southern Company, poor Jake's employer.

How could a benevolent God allow this? I'm a cynical bastard, but this was a new level of weird. After NRG went tits up into Chapter 11 bankruptcy years back and paid me a fee for libeling me in Europe, I thought we'd seen the last of them. I also thought common sense had put a stake through the heart of nuclear power twenty years ago. Now the nuclear ghoul is rising from the crypt, come back from the dead the moment they heard the words *government guarantee*.

NRG's Chapter 11 bankruptcy, 500 percent cost overruns, and fines for nuclear safety violations hardly add up to a winning profile for a competitive loan application. What must have won the government guarantee for them, despite their creepy background, was their spectacularly low bid. They claimed they could build a new reactor for \$5.709 billion. In the economically berserk world of nuclear power, that's a bargain.

But then I broke open the Radioactive Brick. The ream of paper was another one of those fraud investigator's Valentine's Day chocolate boxes: so many sweets to gorge on, it's hard to choose. But this one stood out, this one here.*



* Several pages of the "Radioactive Brick" are at GregPalast.com/VulturesPicnic.

Note the scribble in the left margin. It says, “submitted in confidence; trade secrets or proprietary”—which suggests the writer couldn’t figure out which legal BS the companies would use to conceal it. The winning number for the Department of Energy is there, \$5.709 billion. But below, I see a different number, \$14.272 billion. That’s for two reactors. Now wait a minute: That’s \$7.1 billion for each of two reactors.

In other words, \$5.7 billion is the number they appear to have submitted in their bid, but \$7.1 billion is the companies’ own internal estimate for construction. A \$1.4 billion discrepancy. Where I grew up, we’d call that real money.

Or you could call it fraud.

When you give one number to the government and one number is kept in your pocket, secret, that’s fibbing. *Fraud* is the term we use.

Warning, warning, warning: We don’t know who wrote these numbers, except they are on the inside of the deal with NRG. So we can’t call the mystery source and say, “Hey, there are, like, \$1.4 billion out of whack. What can you tell me about that?”

And there’s probably a good explanation. There always is. I told you that.

There are a lot of other documents with a lot of other numbers that don’t match these, that don’t match each other, that don’t match the official statements, that don’t match reality.

The \$5.7 billion number was ginned up in Houston, NRG’s headquarters. The higher number, \$14 billion (\$7 billion per reactor), was calculated by the corporation that will actually build the plants: Westinghouse, you know, the old American stalwart that made refrigerators. They don’t make refrigerators anymore and the name Westinghouse was sold to Toshiba of Japan. The Japanese will actually build the reactor core. (So much for American jobs promised.)

The \$5.7 billion from Houston was used to sell this hot dog to the public and the President. They swallowed it whole, no mustard. The \$7 billion was used by the guys who will make the thing and will bill the Texans and the U.S. taxpayers for it.

So Toshiba and NRG, it appears, are in on the concealment. Who else?

It’s quite difficult to conceal a multi-billion-dollar cost overrun unless the construction company building it helps. The designated builder is Shaw Construction, the King Milling funders, Governor Jindal’s buddies from Baton Rouge who piled up the wash-away sand berm in the Gulf.

Well, sand castles aren't dangerous. But this is: Shaw's nuclear unit is none other than our diesel popping and seismic test-faking friends, Stone & Webster, which Shaw absorbed some time after the racketeering trial exposed them.

Stone & Webster as Shaw is doing all right for itself. Besides the reactors at South Texas, S&W will construct the nation's first new reactors to go up, for Southern Company, using \$3.46 billion in U.S. Treasury guarantees. They should be able to do it cheaply: Southern has a lot of unused spare parts.

And the two other nuclear stations backed by the U.S. Treasury? They're all Shaw.

And new nuclear plants in the UK? Shaw again.

And recently, Japan announced the winner of the big contract to clean up their busted plant with the busted diesels. It goes to . . . Shaw. Maybe they felt a special kinship with the company that faked earthquake tests.

Westinghouse is Toshiba, but who is Toshiba? Its big stockholder: Shaw Construction.

I know what the corporate group will say: Stone & Webster isn't Stone & Webster anymore. By becoming Shaw, the Radioactive Raven is now clean, green, and honest as the day is long. Fair enough. But, if you get caught driving drunk, you'll never get to drive a school bus for the rest of your life. Get caught faking nuclear safety tests, get a mile-long rap sheet for nuclear safety violations, and you get another nuclear license so long as you change your corporate costume—and, if you're lucky enough, or mendacious enough, a few billion dollars from the government to boot.

* * *

Given their unsavory history, NRG was unlikely, on its own, to win the sweepstakes for free money from the federal government. For the South Texas Project, NRG/Reliant/Houston has masked itself with yet another name: Nuclear Innovation North America. NINA. NINA, while led by NRG, is another consortium with all kinds of operators underneath its blankets. But the one that impressed the U.S. Department of Energy most is the operator with the best reputation in nuclear power on the planet: TEPCO, Tokyo Electric Power Company.

TEPCO will get a 20 percent piece of the South Texas Project action. I feel safer already.

In all fairness to NINA, the group did inform the Department of Energy on

September 6, 2008, that the price of the plants had risen to \$7 billion for *both* reactors. But according to the Radioactive Brick, at a meeting just one month later, Toshiba kicked up the real cost to \$12 billion. And it's not clear that NRG ever mentioned to the DOE that Toshiba was not only building the reactors, it held a 12 percent ownership slice, presumably allowing the foreign company to benefit from 12 percent of the U.S. Treasury booty.

Am I looking at another billion-dollar fraud or just something lost in translation? And does the Department of Energy know about this? Do they care? And what about David Axelrod, campaign manager for Barack Obama. What does he have to do with this? I knew him from Chicago, and that he was once under contract with Exelon, the biggest nuclear operator in America. Axelrod's dead in the middle of this, undoubtedly. But even when I say "undoubtedly," I have my doubts.

Then, as if the nightmarish info in the The Brick and the warning from "Sellers" weren't enough, I received a call and another package from a nuclear "fire suppression" specialist who worked on setting international standards to fight fires at nuclear stations. To protect his identity, let's call him, "The Fireman." The Fireman directed the tests for fire safety standards used at every reactor worldwide. But the standards issued by the International Atomic Energy Agency were based on data he did not provide. Someone had switched the real data with false data that made fires appear less dangerous, easier to control. By setting safety standards based on the faked data, the industry did not have to improve its designs, saving operators a bundle. But the public will pay the price, especially the Japanese. The fire suppression systems at Fukushima failed, worsening the disaster.

"The Fireman" sent me the faked data. His accusations are solid. Notably, he sent me the info on the compromised fire-fighting systems in July 2010, eight months before Fukushima burned.

So, now what? What do you want me to do with this? What I have here are extraordinary shards of evidence. The Geiger counter needle is jumping, but it's a long way from the appearance of fraud to the proof of it.

Jones calls from London and wants me to saddle up and get on the nuclear hunt for BBC.

But haven't I been here before, at Shoreham, with Southern Company, with Reliant/NRG? How many times can we tell the same story before the few who listen become the none who listen? What for?

Am I my Texans' keeper?

NOWHERE, LOUISIANA

In 1997, the Ku Klux Klan rode into Forest Grove, suggesting that residents welcome a nuclear fuel reprocessing plant. Or else.

"Forest Grove" is too poor to incorporate as a real town, so officially, it's invisible, just not there. And because it is legally nowhere, British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) chose it as a place to dump a nuclear-waste recycling plant.

BNFL chose this spot after the company concluded the place must be partly abandoned because the houses they saw from the highway were boarded up. But, as 40 percent of the folk there have no heat, they board up their windows in winter to keep out the cold.

I spoke to Juanita Hamilton, the non-town's seventy-seven-year-old matriarch, who was wondering how the British picked Forest Grove, out of the entire vastness of the United States, to place their hot waste plant.

The company did a scientific narrowing of the potential sites for its fuel plant, in fifteen steps (really), and at each step, the target zones got Blacker and Blacker and Blacker. Other Louisiana Delta towns had "scenic views" and "pretty churches," and therefore the cash to fight a poisonous industry.

Juanita told me, "If it was so good, why'd they come all the way from Europe to this little Black town in Claiborne Parish? Why wouldn't they keep it for themselves?"

Local folk were worried about Claiborne Pond. Since a third of the houses didn't have any plumbing, this was all they had for drinking and cooking.

Juanita told me, "Not many folk around here know a lot about uranium enrichment."

BNFL counted on that. At a community meeting, the shill for the nuclear operation held up a chunk of what the company called "uranium hexafluoride," and there was nothing to fear from this handful of dirt.

It was an impressive display. However, Forest Grove residents may be Black and poor, but they know when a magic show is jive. The township residents called a local university, and found a physicist who explained that ura-

niium hexafluoride UF6 would vaporize on contact with the humid air and, possibly, vaporize the BNFL spokeswoman as well.

GERMANY 1942; WASHINGTON, DC, 2009

Hermann Goering never visited a concentration camp.

Hitler's happiest Nazi could order the firebombing of a couple or three million people and then put on a toga to party hearty. But Heinrich Himmler paid a visit to one camp and watched a hundred Jews, women and kids too, shot in the head one by one. He nearly fainted, vomited.

We don't like to look our kill in the face. And we certainly don't like them looking back at us.

That's why civilized man invented masks and corporations.

When I look back over a life of exposing real nasty, crazy, dangerous ill-making behavior, the big question that stares in my face is: How could they do it?

How could BP honchos fail to mention that their rig blew out its cement in the Caspian, how could Stone & Webster engineers deliberately fake nuclear plant safety reports to cover over a potentially lethal dosing of radiation—then go home and read bedtime stories to their kids?

Maybe I'm giving evil jack-offs too much credit. Maybe they couldn't care less if Chief Criollo's son, or yours, gets leukemia. But I think they're more like Goering, average guys blind behind a corporate veil, unable to see the consequences of their actions. And not wanting to.

The human animal will do things behind a corporate shield we would never dream of doing if we were face-to-face with our victims. Imagine how BP and Chevron would act if Chief Criollo were a member of the Petroleum Club, or if Lord Browne had to spend the night in prison with Mirvari, or if BP big shot Tony Hayward had to live on a deepwater platform.

What marks the difference between the white sheets of the Ku Klux Klan and the Brooks Brothers suits at Southern Company? Distance and responsibility. If a hooded Klansman poisons a Black family in Forest Grove, he goes to prison and must pay the victim's damages. But if the poisoning is done by the Senior Vice President for Gulf operations of BNFL's URENCO affiliate, well, then, *hey, stuff happens*.

The guys at the top don't see that far down from the pyramid's pinnacle.

Not that they want to. The Corporate Mask provides the distance necessary to commit profitable cruelties.

From Louisiana, I called up a media flak at BNFL in London, who said no one at the company could say anything about Forest Grove. They were part of URENCO group, which was part of the LES group. Between the poor folk getting the poisoned droppings of nuclear plants and the executives planting the poisons is a complex set of corporate shells nested like Russian dolls.

The BNFL man told me, "We have nothing to do with the decisions. We just collect the dividends."

And that's the motto of BP and Shaw and the entire corporate planet: We just collect the dividends. BP told me that, so far as saving money by not having safety equipment out in Prince William Sound, it was not their responsibility, it was left to that thing called Alyeska. BP just collects the dividends. Read their note to me and see if you still like these people.*

British Petroleum and the entire tribe of multi-continental oil companies have their own masking rituals, and they're damn useful. Exxon was dumb enough, arrogant enough, to put its name on the *Valdez*, so when it hit the rocks, the villain was naked to the eyeball. Of course, the real dark lord of the spill, British Petroleum, was a clever little Raven, hiding itself behind the upbeat and local sounding corporate name, *Al-YES-ka*. BP knew Rule One for banditos: cover your face.

But in the Gulf, BP, puffed up with itself, forgot the mask, so that when the oil hit the Delta, even the President knew who to point at.

Still, who is this thing "BP"? Who will burn in Hell? The problem is, corporations have "neither bodies to be kicked nor souls to be damned." Andrew Jackson said that. The populist President tried to ban these artificial creatures from our new republic.

The sole purpose of a corporation is to limit the liability of its owners, its stockholders. Transocean Corporation, which operated the Deepwater Horizon for BP as well as the Caspian rig, provides a complete legal shield protecting the identity of its stockholders. Like me. I discovered \$600 in Transocean stock in my little IRA pension. Hey, I just collect the dividends.

In France, corporations are legally designated *société anonyme*, "anony-

* The entirety of BP's response to accusations here in my films are found in the enhanced edition or at GregPalast.com/VulturesPicnic.

mous society.” The irresponsibility of anonymity is at the degenerate core of corporatism. Rob a bank and you’ve made a personal decision. Fake the seismic tests at the nuclear plant and the decision has been made for you—by the corporation.

On the Orthodox Christmas, Nanwalek Natives perform their pre-Christian “masking ceremony.” In times past, it could get violent, scores settled, the perpetrators well hidden, like Raven painting himself black. Father Benjamin, the priest ministering to the village, said he let the pagan ritual meld into Christmas, but on one condition. At midnight, the masks must be removed or destroyed.

We’ve seen an awful lot of masks in this book, from the Mardi Gras Rex, King Milling, whose America’s Wetland is the grinning environmental mask on Shaw and its shovels, and Big Oil and its drills. And the Hamsah, the eyeball without a face.

(And there’s Lady Baba’s surgically frozen face, the mask most frightening because it can’t be removed.)

On January 2, 2006, an explosion at the Sago Mine in West Virginia killed twelve miners. John Nelson Boni, the mine’s fire-boss, and William Lee Chisolm, a dispatcher, had sent the men, whom they knew well, down to their deaths. Boni and Chisolm both committed suicide.

But not Wilbur Ross. I knew Wilbur; he helped me on the Shoreham case. Nice guy. Billionaire. Owns the Sago Mine and the International Coal Group through his vulture fund. Every time I open up *Hamptons Magazine*, he has another wife younger and blonder than the one before. After the Sago Mine exploded, it was found that communications lines that might have saved the miners, required by law, were missing. That made Wilbur feel terrible, so he went on TV and asked the American public to send donations for the dead miners’ families. He didn’t say whether to send the donations to his home in the Hamptons, or to the one in Palm Beach or to the New York condo.

* * *

In September 2009, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that corporations have the same rights as “natural” citizens. These “unnatural” citizens could donate to political campaigns (and, I assume, will soon be allowed to vote).

British Petroleum may now rent their own Congressman as long as it’s done through their BP USA unit. The Mexican Zetas gang, Baby Baba, Charles

Manson's disciples, the Taliban, the Chinese Peoples Liberation Army can now pour unlimited cash into U.S. politicians' hands so long as they first pay \$100 to incorporate in Delaware. What to do?

I don't have a gun and, being unincorporated, cannot shoot with impunity, not that bullets mean anything to these headless, heartless creatures.

All we have to protect us during this corporate crime spree is Inspector Lawn's big fat rule book. When Pig Man took a stand, he cited CFR §192.3 regarding the PHMSA MAOP for the HCA, which, if ignored, he says, "means people get blown up." And when Bob Wiesel attempted to save the population of Long Island from incineration, he pulled down the thick Nuclear Regulatory Commission code book, reciting section 50.55(e). It didn't stop the fraud but ultimately gave Wiesel's boss, Gordon Dick, the legal hammer that helped us win the case and close the plant.

Regulation, the rules they tell you to hate, are the way we apply democracy to the economy. Votes versus dollars. I think you can understand that.

Yes, I know, the government is deeply fucked up. That's the U.S. government, the UK government, and let's not even talk about the Chinese, Malaysian, and Tanzanian governments. People have been belly-aching about rules and regulations ever since Moses schlepped the first ten down from Mount Sinai.

But the Big Problem with government is that we don't have enough of it; the rules aren't tough enough to stop BP from blowing Cajuns to Kingdom Come. Or the rules are corrupted, made by politicians who are greased to make Steve Cohen's monkey jump.

If you're screaming for the "*guvmint to git off*" your back, I see your point. But you're still a loser, a cheap mark, a decoy duck, a dim, unwitting stooge for forces even more powerful than that ugly *guvmint*, a toy for powers who are shitting on you while telling you it's raining chocolate.

But then, who regulates the regulators? Well, Shaw Construction for one. Shaw is now constructing a plant that will turn plutonium from old atomic bombs into nuclear plant fuel. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission exempted Shaw's bombs-to-nukes plant from anti-terrorist security measures. A commissioner who voted for this take-a-terrorist-to-tea exemption, Jeffrey Merrifield, now works for Shaw. And the Secretary of Energy who promoted the plan, Spencer Abraham, is now Chairman of Areva USA, partner in Shaw Areva MOX Services.

Heinrich Himmler's solution to the problem of having to look into the eyes

of your kill was to industrialize the process, using gas from I.G. Farben Corporation and ovens from Siemens AG. They just took the orders.

But there's a regulator of regulators we must rely on. The Fourth Estate. Me. And Matty Pass and Badpenny. That's our job as journalists, to rip away masks. It's what we do in that cheap downtown office as the sirens scream by. And I'll get back to it as soon as I drink some courage and stop feeling sorry for myself. . . .

DOWNTOWN, NEW YORK

It's all bullshit, you know. I'm pretending that I'm doing Something Important here, all this running around the globe and snooping in files with all this Drama and demanding that you pay attention to it. Pay attention to me. It's fake, vainglorious, and a joke and I'm terrified you'll figure that out before the end of this book, and then what?

In other words, I feel like crap. God has every right to smush me under His shoe like a cigarette butt.

Badpenny orders me to call a doctor.

I dial the Reverend Thayer Greene, doctor of psychology. Dr. Greene, well into his eighties, once liberated a concentration camp, or what there was left to liberate. It turned him to God and Carl Jung.

I tell him about my failure, my failure to liberate anyone, but making a movie about it anyway, a big empty noise no one will listen to and no one should and then I'm dead.

The silence was short while he consulted—whom?—Jung or the Lord?

Then the doctor says, in a surprisingly aggressive and irrefutable voice, "YOU'RE NOT YOUR FATHER."

He asks for an address to send the bill. Immediately, I feel better.

Into the toilet bowl goes the last of a grape's golden blood . . .

. . . Trinken Sanftmut Kannibalen

Die Verzweiflung Heldenmut!

Is that Badpenny singing? Is that me?

So, God damn, Palast, spede the plough.