

## Chapter 4: A rose by any other name

That evening after supper, TomJones, started reading the Song Yet Song novel. Chapter 1 starts

“the code”

“On a grey morning in March 1850, a colored slave named Liz Spocot dreamed of the future....<sup>1</sup>“

The flow and drama within the novel rapidly draw TomJones into the story. Almost three hours later that he “comes up for air.”

“Sandi, have you read a Song Yet Song or any James McBride?” asks TomJones.

“I have read two of his novels, Miracle at St. Anna and Song Yet Song,” replies Mattie. McBride had a tendency to assign mystical allusions through the two novels I read. You will find the cadence of the stories a great change from the legal and crime mysteries you normally read.”

The discussion continues for another fifteen - twenty minutes before they call it a night.

Sometime in the early morning close to four AM, TomJones has a moment of wakefulness. “Did I miss something?”

Over a morning yogurt bowl with blueberries and pecans TomJones resumes last nights discussion with Sandi. He opens with, “Early this morning my subconscious popped the thought into my mind that I may have missed a message that Stacy or more likely Frank was attempting to pass through the Song Yet Sung.”

“The first chapter is title ‘the code’. The the novel introduces Liz a slave on the run in Eastern Maryland coastal plains. She is dreaming of a fearful future reflecting the chaos of modern urban living for Blacks. Then it launches into dialogue about listening for the communication code.

“My intuition Stacy or Frank was using this novel to communicate or store information.”

“TomJones you are just reading too much into a coincidence of their disappearance and the transfer of their condo furnishings,” cautions Sandi.

“Heh Sandi Stacy and Frank were a young couple. The are both college graduates who were well aware that they should not ‘screw around with Type 1 diabetes’. I would not expect them to fly-off somewhere without arranging for pharmaceutical support. I don’t want to upset MadukaBankole family but this does not sound right.

“Using a book like the novel, the album, or the coffee table books would be a good way to ‘store or hide’ something in plan site.

“Now if either of them decided to use a book to ‘store or hide’ they could have inserted some type of media into the physical body of the book. Or they somehow embedded their information text of the book itself and some device like a encoding/decoding Ouija board, planchette, Enigma machine, three letter code sheets Field Codes, or ASCII randomization. Finally, they might have used some type of invisible ink.

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1 McBride, James, Song Yet Sung, Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd, London, 2009

“The problem with this approach is that it would basically be a one-time collection of information like a time capsule. Then the question becomes if they knew or suspected that they were in trouble or needed to hide the information, why didn’t they go to the authorities or relatives for help.

“No, I do not want to see anything sinister in the encode/decode of information. It is probably unwanted private nudie pictures that are best kept in a ‘Safe Folder’ on ones cell phone.”

A moment later after catching his breath, TomJones continues, “Sandi, I don’t plan to burn much more of my time just to find embarrassing pictures.

“I don’t have x-ray or ultrasonic probe gear. But I do have a Zircon MultiScanner HD800 for finding studs, wiring, and metal. The scanner uses changes in magnetic field to identify hidden objects and features. That may help identify any metallurgical embedded information or hidden features. It is sensitive enough to find small metal objects if they are not deep in the wall or ground.

“I will give it a try later this morning after coffee call at Claude’s.”

Shortly after breakfast, Sandi and TomJones head to Claude’s for a morning cup of coffee and social conversation among the ‘usual suspects’. Returning from coffee Sandi goes to her office to pursue her ancestry search support with a national registry. TomJones changes into athletic clothing and prepares to start his typical stationary cycle ride. He starts a music session with the Milan station he typically plays. He mounts the stationary cycle and sets-up for his hour ride. His goal is longterm 18 miles of distance in an hour. But recovering from a thigh injury the distance target for today is 17 miles. He dials-sets his wight and age. He then adjusts the riding stress level to 12. He will finish the last three minutes with a stress level of 15. That should hold his actual heart rate just above the age-limit suggested by the manufacturer. Then he fires-up the cycle.

As he cycles he reads the Song Yet Sung for the next thirty minutes. Moving past the thirty minute mark, he continues cycling at the 12 stress level, quits reading, and takes a drink of water. That level or exertion continues until 57 minutes into the rider. At that point the stress level is increased to 18 to simulate finishing going uphill. That bit of extra stress drives his heart rate just beyond the suggested max rate. Finishing the hour ride just above the ‘suggested max’ TomJones remains seat on the cycle. As time passes he monitors the drop in his heart rate during the cool-off period. Ending the two minute period of cooling-off he notes that his heart rate has drifted down some 48 beats per minute. Then he dismounts and records that day’s ride heart rate drop over the two minute cool-off.

Following a shower and dressing TomJones once again returns to the Song Yet Sung quest. At his workspace/office he loads a fresh 9V battery into the Zircon scanner. Upon turning the scanner on and setting it to Metal Scan, the display panel lights a light blue background and displays “METAL”. Laying the scanner directly on the front cover of the novel he begins a slow sweep left to right, drops about half an inch and sweeps back to the left. Both sweeps produce no response from the scanner. He repeats this right/left scan with drops about seventeen times with no response.

He then flips to novel and starts the same process on the back cover. On the tenth swiipe to the right the scanner begins to acquire an object near the book spine region . The display begins to throw two pairs of flashing lines. On the next drop and swiipe it adds two more lines to both pairs. Then on the next swiipe to the right the indicator light shows a hit and there are six lines in each pairing plus a high pitch tone signaling a hit on something metallic. Using the scanner and slow sweeping TomJones locates the metallic object as beginning about three inches above the bottom. The signal begins to flutter to off at about two inches above the bottom. Sweeping from left to right he locates the start of the signal about two inches in from the book spine. That signal dies about one and a half inch from the book spine.

“Okay so now we have something,” muses TomJones. “And what is it. Its time to turn-on the audio.” Doing soas he proceeds.

First he removes the cover from the novel. “Removing the novel’s jacket. Measuring in from the bottom of the back cover about two inches. Then I will measure in from the spine one and a half inch.”

He then measures from the bottom two inches and from the book spine one and a half inch. He places a light pencil mark at that location.

“I am opening the back cover and intend to locate the object for gaining a general measurement and idea of orientation.”

After reporting he then opens the back and scans the back inside. The scanner flashes and then pops the indicator light just as it did on the closed back cover.

Using the inside cover, a draftsman pencil laid in the crotch of scanner magnetic sensor, TomJones slowly draws the generalized shape of an ‘I-beam cross-section shape’. Once the I-beam shape was completed, TomJones measures the edges.

“I find the length to be half an inch running parallel with the spine and five/eighths width running in general parallel to the bottom of the novel.”

With a Micro-Tec fine needle probe into a holder TomJones begins ‘feeling and probing just under the spine tape run. Moving from the light pencil mark he first made on the back cover he proceeds along and just under the tape.

“I am using Micro-Tec fine needle probe to level under the spine tape from my earlier pencil mark along the under edge of the spine tape. There feels like there is something just under the tape here. I will need to cut the tape to see the object.

“I am using an exacto knife and thin blade to slice the tape while I hold the tape with the fine needle probe.

“Here it comes. It appears to be a double sided tape which is sticking to the just cut tape and holding what appears to be a micro-SD card. The tape and SD were in a cavity. The cavity appears to have been carved from the back cover. The SD card is dusty but appears to be serviceable.”

TomJones the micro-SD card in a SD adapter then placing it in a USB 3.1 card reader. Not wishing to contaminate his systems and network he detaches an isolated desktop that he uses as a LinuxCNC simulator. If something unwanted migrates or jumps from the micro-SD card, he can rebuild an exact image of the LinuxCNC simulator from a Clonezilla image he made at the first of the month. He cautiously turns-on the LinuxCNC simulator desktop. As the desktop comes alive he log-in Then he inserts the card reader. He watches the mounting of the micro-SD card. Once the micro-SD card is mounted, Tom Jones attempts to read its properties and contents.

Continuing with the audio report, TomJones observes “The micro-SD card is a Sandisk Ultra 256GB. Reading its property via Ubuntu 16.04 Nautilus there is one very large file in it named ‘210203\_dahlonga.rar’. It appears to be an archive file containing at least one file compressed with the RAR compression algorithm. The archive file and its packing list are not readable under my archive manager because its access is password protected.

“Using conjecture I am assuming that the 210203 is February 3, 2021. ‘dahlaongega’ may refer to Dahlongega, GA. Dahlongega, GA is North of Atlanta in the mountains. It is home of the Georgia gold rush of the early 1800’s as the site for the Mountain Phase of US Army Ranger training. I am not familiar enough with Stacy or Frank to know what link if any they might have with that town. Nor am I familiar enough with Stacy and Frank to be knowledgeable about how technically savvy they are to guess their level of password protection or the contents encryption that might have been used.

At this point TomJones creates a backup working image copy of the micro-SD card so as not to destroy the contents. He then begins a brief, futile effort to work around or to unlock the archive file.

“I am calling time on my efforts to unlock the archive file. Someone else with a bit more power and knowledge will need to assist.

Returning to the novel TomJones weighs and records the displayed reading, “Note that upon re-weighing the novel with its jacket, it now falls well in the mean of the bell curve at 20.639 ounces.

“Recommend handing-off to local authorities for further investigation as they may deem appropriate.

“My plan is

1> to cease further work on this venture, transcribe this audio with recommendation, and present the micro-SD card to AminuBalaji for relay to MadukaBankole for his disposition.

2> to continue reading the novel since it now seems to be just a novel with an empty cared hole near its spine.”

Before beginning the transcription, TomJones creates

Shortly after transcribing the audio narration of the micro-SD discovery TomJones call AminuBalaji.

Recognizing the incoming call AminuBalaji answers with “Prince TomJones what’s going on?”

“AminuBalaji, I may have stopped a bit early in my first effort. Anyway after reading a couple hours in the Song Yet Sung last night, a thought stuck in my subconscious that may be I was missing something. After sleeping on it, I became more convinced. Anyhow a little more work and the usage of a magnetic scanner helped to locate a cavity in the cover that was holding a micro-SD card. It seems to be holding a large file.

“It is time to have the authorities take look to see what they think. I have it and a transcript of my audio report of its discovery packed. You can send one around to pick it up this afternoon. Or I can drop it by the warehouse tomorrow morning.

“It will be MadukaBankole decision to take it and my report to the local authorities.

“TomJnoes, we are busy this afternoon. Why not meet me for coffee at Caffetteria Turandot? I will call MadukaBankole after we hang-up here to see if he wants to talk to you briefly then. Thank you for your extra effort.”

“Caffetteria Turandot tomorrow around 0830 hr is fine with me. See you then.”

Next morning TomJones meets AminuBalaji at Caffetteria Turandot.

“MadukaBankole will be with us shortly.” greets AminuBalaji. The two old friends continue in conversation until MadukaBankole can take a short break. TomJones hands the micro-SD card and a copy of the audio transcription to MadukaBankole .

“Prince TomJones, thank you for taking the extra step.

“It was my duty,” responds TomJones. “The micro-SD card contains one large file. The file is an RAR archive file like a ZIP file. But it is password protected. So I can not access it.

“I do not know what is on the micro-SD card because I was not able to read it. But may be the local authorities my see value on continuing to evaluate it. I am just sorry that it did not provide an answer.”

“Thank you again. Please keep that copy of the Song Yet Sung as a toke of appreciation of your kindness.”

“I must return to work. But I will pass this package to the authorities.”

“Please advise AminuBalaji if the authorities are able to unlock the contents of the card.”

As MadukaBankole returns to work, TomJones restarts his conversation with AminuBalaji, “Sorry I could not be more helpful with the micro-SD card. Even if I was able to unlock the card’s contents just trying to look at 160GB would have required lots of computer time and luck.”

“MadukaBankole understands. He and his wife are returning to Nigeria to visit the old village. He was summoned to join our villages Council of Elders. It is an honorary title that has a long history in our culture of community support.”

