

The Interpreter moved in front of Pilgrim and placed his hands on Pilgrim's shoulders as if in an act of benediction. The Lady Hope had eased gently to one side, exchanging the briefest of tender glances with the Interpreter who continued.

Interpreter *First, very quickly, my congratulations on the quality of your research. I applaud your conclusions. But we have much to learn from the events below as well as from the events that have triggered this extraordinary meeting. We must listen very carefully.*

Below them, the figure addressed as 'My Lord' was now seated at the head of the table. The words of Mammon, spoken with the same calm confidence that Pilgrim remembered from the first Vanity Fair, were clear and precise. But now there was more ice in the delivery.

Mammon *Concern is too strong a term, my friend. Let us say only that we must remain vigilant and take steps to deal with any developments that could be contrary to the interests of the enterprise. We must continue to ensure that all our regular procedures are followed to the letter in order to minimise the adverse effects of this little local difficulty. That is why you have been called together for this gathering.*

*We are talking here of the unexpected election of a 67-year old non-entity to the leadership of Her Majesty's Opposition in the United Kingdom. A figure of wry amusement and now concern to the overwhelming majority of his fellow Labour Party members of parliament. Whom we have firmly yoked to our agenda.<sup>120</sup> They are, after all, happy on board our Wealth Is Health train.*

There were ripples of applause around the table at the sound of the familiar slogan. Their leader silenced the interruption with a single, slight movement of his hand and continued.

*In five years when the next Election Fair arrives in town he will, we assume, be the same kind of memory dust as the leaders who failed to grasp the reins of the Conservative Party after the fall of the Magnificent One whom they knew as the Iron Lady.<sup>121</sup> This ageing anachronism, this crypto-Marxist relic from the last century, is no man of steel.*