

The background of the cover is a photograph of a nuclear explosion. A massive, bright orange and yellow fireball rises from the ground, forming a thick column of smoke and debris. At the top, it expands into a large, dark, billowing cloud that resembles a mushroom. In the distance, a city skyline is visible under a hazy, purple-tinged sky. The overall mood is one of destruction and danger.

The War of the Classes

living
dangerously
in utopia

Humberto
Contreras

The War of the Classes

living dangerously in utopia

Our country is in a depression, Zhengmei is a magnificent gorgeous girl and Manuel is strong and tall. They are a college student and an engineer just out of school.

There are no jobs and they are looking for a way out. They join demonstrations and protests.

An interminable kiss makes them the symbol of their movement. Their charisma elevates them to the top.

Thus ensues their heroic and tragic role in a war that takes them into perilous and utmost contrasts, from paramount luxury to hunger and back.

Their love makes them strong, their intelligence makes them proficient, and their courage makes them unstoppable.

They live many lives and die many times in the midst of a terrifying conflict.

Prequel to:

The Preponderant Factor

Books by Humberto Contreras

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The War of the Classes

The Preponderant Factor

It is all in the Mind

The Restlessness

technology & social impact

The History of the 21st Century

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To my wife Gloria, my only passionate love.

To Cleopatra, my ideal daughter.

To my sons and daughters, my unconditional love.

To my adorable grandchildren, this series.

The War of the Classes

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Martyrs of 2020

2020 - 2022

1

Manuel

Zhengmei is running towards me, I anxiously hug her. She pulls my head and instinctively open my mouth, the taste of her mouth fires up my desire. I draw her tight, spin a full turn and feel my stiffness as she presses against me.

I sense her passion and convey my love without control. I don't know for how long we cling to each other, ardently embraced and kissing furiously.

We separate and I can see that she is dressed, as always, in her short khaki pantsuit. Her lovely face is blushed and she looks incredibly desirable.

A moment later, Tony catches up with us and says, "Get a petate."

She turns towards Tony and laughingly says, "We will."

Later I will try to borrow a tent.

The gardens around the Capitol of Wyoming are right in front of me, full of tents. At least a thousand ninetyniners are lying on the grass, walking around or chatting in groups. Today there are more than usual, as one of the leaders of the movement will be here later. As always, there are more police officers than demonstrators.

Tightly embraced, we walk to join our group of recent graduates from Laramie County Community College. When we graduated, we started looking for a job with high hopes. It has been three years and just a few are lucky to be working in their family business.

At that time, we knew it was difficult to get a job, but still we were optimistic. Now our only hope is to get some attention, and maybe help from the government. That is

why we have joined the ninetyniners. Zhengmei is still studying at LCCC, where we met three years ago, next year she is going to get her business administration diploma. I'm an electrical engineer.

I ask Tony, "At what time will Judicious be here?"

"I don't know, everybody is trying to be secretive, you know that our movement is infiltrated and the police are looking for many of us."

Zhengmei adds, "Judicious is going to talk to us through a proxy. The police have road blocks around the city; she found out in time and canceled her trip."

She enjoys a sheltered position because her father is a partner in a chain of small stores that sell Chinese products all across the west. Nonetheless, even though her family is wealthy, she is very active with the movement and has the trust of our regional leaders.

I'm not convinced that the movement is going to achieve anything. In my mind its demands are too diffuse and even if the authorities wanted to help, there is no clear mandate. The only thing we do get is plenty of attention from the media.

Thus, Zhengmei is the reason I hang out with the occupy movement and that I have nothing better to do.

I'm sitting on the grass, Zhengmei is talking with Tony, when I get a call from my sister Elena, "Turn on ABC, they are showing you kissing Zhengmei."

I start the ABC app on my iPhone, and sure enough, our kiss is shown from several angles. She looks like an actress from a telenovela, and even I look good. However, I don't like what the anchorwoman is saying, "... this loving couple, whose kiss seems to be interminable, are the leaders of the protest movement in the northwest and a Cheyenne's Metropolitan Police spokesman has told us that they're planning to shift into a violent approach."

The view changes to a puppy that is being inoculated against the current outbreak of canine flu.

I get up and embrace Zhengmei, “Take a look at this,” and show her my recording of the ABC broadcast.

When the recording ends, she looks back at me, kisses my cheek and says in my ear, “It is true, I’m the leader in the northwest. I thought it was better not to tell you. However, now everybody knows.” She looks at me seriously and kisses me with more force than ever. “Let’s go to my tent,” she grabs my hand and leads me to a small blue tent at the back of the garden.

We enter the tent, Larry and Maryann are there, Zhengmei makes a sign at them and they scurry out. I look at her and she is somehow different, she smiles with a trace of arrogance, closes the tent’s zipper and without saying a word slides her pantsuit down, along with her tanga. I take off my shorts and t-shirt, I know what I have to do.

She lies on the floor and I get a marvelous view. I never tire of looking at her body, so slender and yet so provocative and now even more with her long straight jet-black hair scattered all around her. I kneel in front and bend to kiss her. She grabs my face and we kiss. She manages to place her long legs around me, her hand places me in the right place, she pulls me and I slide into her. Still silent, she starts a rhythmic motion that makes me groan. She smiles and covers my mouth.

After a few minutes, we both finish simultaneously. Then she says quietly, close to my ear, “Manuel, I love you.”

We dress and when we sit down, I take her hand, “You know that being publically identified is not good. What do we do?”

She replies nonchalantly, “Nothing, I’m sure the police have known for some time.”

“These are dangerous times, the recession of 2018 is still in full force, and many doubt it will ever end. I think you must go somewhere else. I will go with you, I don’t have any money, but we will manage.”

“No. I will stay here! At least while I can. And I’m sorry that you have been linked to me in this way.”

“I’m linked to you for sure. Don’t worry.” I smile and she kisses me, after she lets go I continue, “It is time that I take life seriously. If I cannot work and make money, the least I can do is try to change the political structure so that there is reasonable wealth distribution. I hate wasting my life just waiting for a job that I know will never be. All I have gotten from College is a huge student loan debt.”

Zhengmei smiles enigmatically. Sometimes she is a mystery. I know she loves me. But at the same time, she is quite independent and self-sufficient. Somehow, I’m not surprised that she is the leader of the northwest; I already suspected that she was high in the hierarchy.

“I’m going to have a word with Tony, I’ll be back in a few minutes.” Zhengmei opens the tent’s zipper and scurries out.

The ninetyniners movement has been going on for more than eight years. At the beginning, it was called Occupy Wall Street and it had too many main concerns. It has been diffuse and disorganized, without any formal leadership. Some say it is a modern democracy, in which nobody has authority. The movement weakened during the second term of President Obama. However, it has surged during this economic crisis. I know that now the movement is well organized, funded by a few rich people and, in the United States, is supported by at least sixty percent of the citizens. In other parts of the world, the movement is also popular but not as much as here because most governments are trying to reduce income inequality or at least they say that they are doing it. Here the corrupt governments, paid by the very rich, are doing whatever it takes to increase the gap between the super-rich and the rest of us.

Two years ago, after the victory of the Tea Party presidential candidate, the economy collapsed once again.

The new administration instituted draconian austerity measures and reduced the size of government, consequently

more than five million federal, state and local public employees lost their jobs.

That was not all, one hundred and fifty thousand troops were sent back to Afghanistan, alleging an urgent plea from Kabul to save their Government from the Taliban. Thus shattering the economy even more.

With the timeworn excuse of nuclear weapons of mass destruction, and backed by Israel with fifty thousand soldiers, Operation Payback, overtly meant to invade Iran and Pakistan, was approved by the President, alleging the War Powers Act.

Deep at night, just before the scheduled bombing of Tehran and the advance of ground troops into Iran, thousands of Iranian kamikaze drones attacked the American and Israeli camps, following radio-beacons that had been previously planted around the camps.

Once inside the camps, the drones converged on the Wi-Fi signals coming from the intelligent phones of the soldiers, causing more than ten thousand deaths. The blame fell squarely on some officers of Iranian descent deployed in Operation Payback and who mysteriously disappeared after the attack.

The drones were of Russian design, built in Iran under agreement. Cheap and deadly, with most parts 3D printed, these drones delayed the invasion and eventually stopped it.

Nevertheless, Tehran was bombed, tens of thousands of dead civilians just increased the anger and hate. In retaliation, hundreds of intelligent missiles targeted Haifa. The Israeli government fell after their population lost its sense of invulnerability. The new Government retired its troops and signed peace treaties with the Free State of Palestine, Iran and Pakistan.

American troops are still there, in a protracted, costly and useless war against the Taliban, Iran and Pakistan.

Within a year after the recession started, it officially became a depression. Banks closed their doors, regular

people lost their life savings, as FDIC guaranties were repeatedly ignored. The wealthy owners of banks and corporations received government money because they were 'too big to fail' and 'job creators.' Social Security went bankrupt and the President proudly stated that there was no more free money for takers.

My dad was laid off from his job as a teacher, although my mom still works as a nurse. My sister moved in six months ago with her little baby girl, after her husband was killed in the war in the Middle East and later she was fired from her accounting job. We all live off my mom's salary and a ruinous reverse mortgage plan that my parents signed a few months ago.

I'm frustrated all the time, except when I am with Zhengmei. I have sent resumes to thousands of places. Once I got an interview and what I got was a lie detector test, which I failed because I did not show enough support for capitalism and the rich. It is depressing, as I know that most corporations don't even bother to read your resume if you don't belong to a Republican family.

Zhengmei scurries in, "I'm going to talk to our group, please stay quiet," she smiles and takes a phone out of her pocket.

2

Zhengmei

I grab a phone, that I have never used before, out of my pocket, press some buttons and start talking. “I want to thank you for your courage and determination. We are here to celebrate nine years since our movement started at Zuccotti Park, in New York.” I hear a different voice outside, loudly repeating my words by means of the sound system.

“You have heard the news, the movement has decided to strengthen its demands and to change from an occupy movement into mass demonstrations and pacific civil resistance. We are going to occupy the streets! We are going to use the energy and anger of millions of poor and unemployed to get the attention of the government. Today we become a political force that must be taken into account. We want to change the government, and we will change the government! We will stop the institutional corruption and we will reduce inequality! It is the only way out of this crisis!” I look at Manuel; he is looking at me in awe, and I smile sadly.

“We will start next weekend with a march in many cities across this country and all over the world. Please stay in touch! You will hear more details from your local facilitators.”

Press the phone’s off button, wrap it in its metallic pouch and sigh, “We are now committed, please hug me.”

I embrace Manuel softly. He hugs me with determination, I look at him, he kisses me and languidly we divest each other of our clothes, I lie down on the sleeping bag, sense Manuel’s weight on top of me and cringe as he forces himself in. His pleasure rouses me and I start moving with unabashed passion.

After an hour or so, we dress and pulling Manuel out of the tent, I lead him to an open tent where there is some food. I take a couple of ham and cheese subs and Manuel gets two bottles of water. We sit at an empty table and eat silently.

Tony and Maryann join us, Tony says, "I think everybody knew what Judicious was going to say."

I look at him and at Maryann, and just nod.

Tony walks away to get some food. Maryann whispers, "Larry is not convinced that we should move on to demonstrations. He is afraid of the police. After the announcement he told me that he will not be part of the movement anymore and went home."

I answer, "I'm sad to hear that, but we expect that about ten percent will walk out. However, we hope that the street demonstrations will be popular and even more people will flock to them."

Manuel says quietly, "Police will be even more vigilant, we must be careful. Out in the open we are exposed to their drones and bugs. We must take this seriously."

I nod. Tony is back with some food, and shares whatever is in his plate with Maryann.

When they finish, Tony picks up the plates and bottles and goes to a garbage can.

Maryann asks me, "Are you going to use the tent?"

"No. Go and have some fun."

Maryann walks towards Tony, whispers something, he smiles and they get inside the blue tent.

"She forgot Larry quite easily."

Manuel says, "She is not very faithful to her partners."

I look at him with suspicion.

"Not me!"

I slowly shake my head, "You better!"

Manuel laughs and kisses me. "By the way, I want to play a more active role in the movement. If I'm publically labeled as one of the leaders, it is better to be involved in

whatever is going on. I don't want to be caught unaware." He whispers close to my ear.

I whisper back, "Yes, from now on you are my deputy. You must understand that there is no real leadership structure in the movement. Anyway, now you are our de-facto leader. ABC just promoted you."

I smile, quite aware that my smile conveys my enigmatic Chinese inheritance.

This is our test of fire, today is the Sunday when we must deliver a sizable demonstration, here and in hundreds of cities across America. Cheyenne is small, and a few thousand will do. However, we expect that millions will gather in our largest cities.

Manuel is now an insider and, as I predicted, very chauvinistically everybody treats him as the leader of the movement. We are also in charge of demonstrations in Seattle, Vancouver, Portland, Boise, Helena and Great Falls. We expect several hundred thousand in Seattle and Vancouver, the rest are small cities where the police forces know everybody; thereby, there will be lesser crowds. Manuel and I would like to be in Seattle, but the roads are heavily patrolled and they are looking for us.

We cannot be seen out on the streets; we know that the police would arrest us. Manuel's cousin Freddy is a policeman and he told his father, who told Manuel's father, that the police have orders to detain us as witness of acts of vandalism by the ninetyniners.

That is why we have been stuck for two weeks inside this mobile home that a member of the movement is trying to rent.

Manuel and I are enjoying our honeymoon, thanks to the police.

Tony cannot visit us, only Maryann can do it and that is because she lives in a neighboring mobile-home. She brings us food and especially new cellulars; regularly brings a few new and takes away the old ones. We

interchange them to make it more difficult for the police to track us.

I'm in big trouble with my family. My father wants to kill me because I eloped with Manuel, who is not rich or at least Chinese. I have told Manuel not to worry, if we marry then he would be rich, so my father would have to accept him. He says that my logic is weird, but that nevertheless he loves me.

Manuel's parents are extremely worried, but they think that he is doing the right thing. His sister would like to join the movement, but her baby makes that impossible.

We are sitting at the dinner table. Our phones start to show messages. On the Seattle phone. 'Tckt \$77,' Meaning in Seattle 77 thousand demonstrators are expected. Or, in the Vancouver phone 'Gt 15 wnt 20 dnts.' That 15 thousand police are present, and 20 thousand are expected.

Manuel notices that I'm tense, so he stands behind me and starts massaging my back. Soon he is stroking me all over my body, my clothes are in disarray and I am breathing heavily. He lifts and throws me on top of the couch, opens my legs and gets in. After a few minutes, I turn around without letting him get out and we continue until we finish simultaneously.

I don't know if it is because I love him so much or because we are so sexually attuned, but every time we have sex, it seems to get better.

Manuel stands up. I turn over looking at him with mirth, "Thank you. I needed that."

I get up and walk provocatively to the bathroom. I know he is watching me.

I come back and sit in his lap, he gets excited, but I pretend not to notice.

The phones have a litany of messages. The gist is that we are having many more marchers than anybody expected. Seattle exceeds a hundred thousand, Vancouver fifty thousand, Cheyenne ten thousand. The news adds to these

numbers, more than two million in Los Angeles, New York at least a million, London one and a half, Chicago a million.

The commentators are in their own heaven, as their viewers are in the hundreds of millions. This is the story of the decade.

I think aloud, "Better than anybody expected! Millions and millions all over the world, and the pundits estimate more than twenty million in the US alone."

He smiles, "Now we are in trouble, we are the ones who did it. The government must be extremely worried, and for them we are the bad guys. We have their attention." He kisses my neck, I shrivel, "We must now disband the demonstrators, before the police get carried away and there are violent reactions. Also to avoid looting and other catastrophic consequences."

I nod, as this is part of our original plan. However, the number of people on the streets is enormous and I'm afraid our words will be lost in the uproar.

I suddenly realize the enormity of what we have accomplished, "We must get away from here, the police will start searching everywhere until they find us. This city is too small to hide for long. We must go to Seattle or at least Portland, there police is less oppressive."

Manuel looks at me, "You are right, we need a private car, if we take a taxi or a bus we will be identified immediately." He seems to be thinking, then says, "My cousin Alberto has an old pickup; we have enough money to pay him to take us to Seattle. Or maybe we should just buy his truck."

"Where does he live?"

"At Renee Road, I don't know the number but I know the house. It is a walk of a little more than an hour."

"Let's do it now, while the police are busy with the marchers."

We send messages to hasten the disbandment and wait until we get the acknowledgements.

Manuel and I dress in jeans and t-shirts, different from our usual khaki short outfits. I hide my long black hair inside a cap, pack my few belongings in my backpack and Manuel does the same.

He stares at me, “You look magnificent, slim and tall. That’s not a very good disguise.

Smiling, I look at him, “You should try to look old and tired, excessive sex and bad food don’t seem to bother you. You look good!” As I hug and rub against him.

He cannot resist and pulls down my pants, I do the same for him, then bend over the table.

The quickie is very satisfying, for me at least. He is smiling and looks radiant. I’m sure that he liked it too.

We look out of the window. There is nobody in sight. I open the door and we walk north towards East Proser Road, where after five minutes we go right. We don’t dare run, so we walk for an hour along Fox Farm Road and College Drive, I notice that very few dare to be out on the streets and that traffic is extremely scarce; mainly taxis. When we turn left to take Lincoln Highway, Manuel stops and kisses me, “Look around, do you see any cops?”

I shake my head slightly. He doesn’t seem to see any either. We continue and turn right onto McCann Avenue. On the next corner, he points to a nice small blue house, which I assume is Alberto’s home.

We approach cautiously and, before Manuel can knock on the door, it opens and Alberto pulls us inside hastily, “Come in quickly, we have seen police cars around, all my neighbors are afraid. You know that police are never seen here; they are always watching the rich areas.” As soon as we are in, he closes the door.

I embrace him and kiss his wife Lucille’s cheeks and Manuel does the same, he says. “Thank you primo. How are you?”

“Not too good, you know that I lost my job six months ago. Well, on Friday they gave a layoff notice to Lucille. Now we are both unemployed. It is good that we don’t have

kids. Why are you here? Though I think I know.” He smiles.

I’m a reserved person, so I surprise myself by saying, “Lucille y Alberto, vengan con nosotros a Seattle.”

Lucille and Alberto look at each other and she speaks first, “We would like to go with you, but we have our things here.” Then after a pause, as if thinking aloud, “But we are going to lose the house and we will have to move in with my sister and she already has the burden of taking care of my parents and my two younger brothers.”

Alberto adds, “Lucille, we have few options, I say we go to Seattle with them. They need our help and they are the ones that are doing something to change this awful situation.”

I add, “Anyway, we have to wait here for a few days. Then after things calm down, we will go to Seattle. If you want to go with us, you will have the choice of staying there or coming back. I hope you don’t mind that I already invited us to stay here.”

Lucille says, “No, of course not. This is your home and we have a spare bedroom. For the babies, which we still hope to have.” She smiles sadly, looking at Alberto.

Manuel asks, “Alberto, is your truck running okay?”

“I think so, you know that it’s nine years old, but still runs well. I don’t have too much money for the trip, not even enough for gas, it is a gas-guzzler.”

“Don’t worry, we have money for expenses. We can even pay you per mile.” I explain to him.

“I’m sick of being in this situation, a couple of years ago we had great plans, then these corrupt politicians tanked the economy to please their rich bosses. I want to do something about it.” He looks angry.

Alberto’s phone vibrates on the table, he picks it up and grimaces, he seems to be hearing some bad news, “Gracias.”

“The police have cordoned the city’s poor neighborhoods. They are asking everybody in the car to

show an ID. And to make it worse, Sammy says that they are only letting through those that are going to work or have a justifiable reason. We are prisoners!”

“What about walking?”

“I don’t know, Sammy didn’t mention anything. Maybe they are not checking. Anyway, it could be possible to walk around the check points.”

I say, “I’m famished. Do you have some food? We could not bring any from our safe-house. And we didn’t have anything good.”

Lucille answers, “I will prepare something, we are still eating well. You know, for us that’s a priority.”

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Dr. Humberto Contreras is a Civil Engineer with a Masters in Structural Engineering and a Doctorate in Earthquake Engineering. As an expert in probabilistic and stochastic systems, he implemented solutions involving risk analysis and safety of Nuclear Power Plants and Nuclear Waste. He has also been a computer software consultant for major corporations. He currently writes books and lives in New England and the Riviera Maya.

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