



## Full Asylum

### A new novel by Michael Isenberg

### Synopsis

**Prologue at Pentagon Palace** “The neon sign was gone but the letters were still visible: streaks of dirt and smoke spelled *The Mall at Pentagon Palace*...Gimbel remembered when he used to shop here, before the Third Financial Crisis and the Federal Economic Sabotage Act.” The stores are bankrupt now and the mall has been converted to a giant paintball arena. Gimbel O’Hare arrives to practice. We learn that one of his coworkers, Cindy Valence is suing him, and they agreed to settle the lawsuit by fighting it out with paintballs. Watching TV during a break between matches, Gimbel sees an interview with Grant Casey, the actor who plays Jon Dunn, Secret Agent Beta Eleven. Gimbel reveals that he met Grant Casey once, who wasn’t very nice.

#### Part I The Art of Paintball War

**Chapter 1. Goodbye, Mr. Dunn** Flashback two months. Gimbel watches a Jon Dunn movie with his girlfriend Liza – that’s Gimbel’s idea of a date on a Friday night. Afterwards they walk by the pond near Gimbel’s apartment. Liza is disgusted that Jon Dunn fought with the villain of the movie over a woman. “A woman isn’t a piece of property,” she says, but Gimbel wishes women would fight over him. They skip stones on the pond, and Liza wonders whether a car could skip across like a stone.

**Chapter 2. Byte Yourself Software** Gimbel returns to work on Monday at the Byte Yourself Software Corporation. During government mandated workplace calisthenics we meet his colleagues: “Brownie” McCoy – a hippie for the Right – and Cindy Valence – a software engineer with “ones and zeros in her veins”. Gimbel proposes a cost savings idea to his boss, Beverly Dix, who rejects it. Availing himself of the company’s open door policy, Gimbel goes over Beverly’s head and e-mails his idea to the division President, Addison Reed. Addison is receptive and Gimbel celebrates with his colleagues at a bar. Gimbel fills out the government paperwork to get a hamburger, and then he and the other software engineers watch UWL Wrestling on TV. They witness the debut of a new lady wrestler. “At 6’3”, 239 pounds, UWL is proud to present the perfect combination of sweet and tangy – Cheri Tarte!”

The following day, when Cindy's computer crashes, Gimbel offends her by offering to "inspect your input port" – a line from a Jon Dunn movie. An investigation for sexual harassment follows, and Addison requires Gimbel to apologize to Cindy – on television.

**Chapter 3. Sorry** Gimbel appears on the game show *Sorry* where he apologizes to Cindy. The celebrity judges that night are Grant Casey, Cheri Tarte, and Isaac Ross. Isaac is CEO of Byte Yourself's main competitor, Consolidated Industries – which also owns the UWL. In addition to her part in the UWL, Cheri Tarte now has a role in the upcoming Jon Dunn movie *Error of the Moon*. Casey reprimands Gimbel for trying to imitate Jon Dunn. "Anyone who thinks he's Jon Dunn in real life is going to end up in an insane asylum." Cheri Tarte is more sympathetic. "He's so little n' cuddly," she says.

Embarrassed by Gimbel's appearance on *Sorry*, and under pressure from her friends, Liza breaks up with him.

Chris Molson, a lawyer with the Justice Department, meets with Attorney General and Presidential candidate Bill Peterson to discuss an investigation. Peterson gives Chris a dossier on his surveillance target – Gimbel O'Hare.

**Chapter 4. Paint Misbehavin'** Upset that Gimbel got off too easily, Beverly and Cindy conspire to make his life miserable, in a scene reminiscent of the opera *Don Giovanni*. Their first step is a lawsuit for sexual harassment. However, Cindy and Gimbel agree to settle the lawsuit in a paintball match. Gimbel continues the training he began in the prologue.

He eats Thanksgiving dinner at the house of Brownie McCoy, where Brownie tells him how capitalism saved the Pilgrims. After dinner, Brownie shows Gimbel his secret basement laboratory and provides Gimbel with a highly accurate paintball sniper's rifle.

Gimbel returns to his apartment where he encounters the CREEPS, an elite civilian military unit established to fight Economic Sabotage. They arrest Gimbel's neighbor, the immigrant Ricardo Lazuli. As a tax accountant, he is guilty of keeping revenue from the U.S. Treasury. Gimbel helps Mrs. Lazuli clean up after the CREEPS raid and calm her baby Mimi. Their American Dream has become the American Nightmare.

The day of the big paintball match arrives. Using his paintball sniper's rifle, and strategy he learned from Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, Gimbel defeats Cindy and her friends. Cindy drops her lawsuit.

## **Part II A Plethora of Betas**

**Chapter 5. The Ring Recycle** Gimbel and his friend Joe attend UWL Wrestling. The show has been hyped heavily: Cheri Tarte has climbed to the top of the women's ranks and is now going to fight a man. She clowns with Gimbel during her entrance. But the match never takes place. Instead, Cheri Tarte uses her trash talking skills to lecture the audience about recycling. As she commiserates with her fellow wrestlers afterwards, we

learn that her new role as the Recycling Chick is her punishment for pissing off Isaac Ross.

**Chapter 6. O'Hare at National Airport** On his way to Chicago for Christmas, Gimbel endures new airport security measures – which include a cavity search. The airport is shut down when a traveling engineer, suffering from the belief that he's Jon Dunn, locks himself in an airplane to defuse a bomb – which turns out to be an ordinary coffeemaker. Attorney General Peterson arrives to take command of the CREEPS operation to regain control of the airplane. Gimbel ends up driving to Chicago.

**Chapter 7. Bad Neighbors** Returning to Washington after Christmas, Gimbel finds his neighbor Mrs. Lazuli and her baby Mimi have disappeared. Chris Molson and girlfriend Lacey Briefs, another lawyer for the Justice Department, now occupy their apartment. Chris keeps Gimbel awake at night with loud music. There is another attack by an unbalanced individual who thinks he's Jon Dunn – this time at Boulder Dam. The Justice Department sends Lacey to investigate.

**Chapter 8. An Enemy of the People** Gimbel returns home from work and finds Lacey in his bed. She had a fight with Chris: he wanted to play Nazi Interrogator, she didn't. Lacey reveals that Chris hid video cameras in Gimbel's heating vents. The cameras have something to do with an investigation of Byte Yourself Software, but Lacey doesn't know the details. She tells Gimbel about her own investigation. The Justice Department thinks that someone is causing people to think they're Secret Agent Beta Eleven. The investigators are calling him – or her – the *Betamaker*. Gimbel and Lacey celebrate their new friendship with an illegal sugary beverage – Volta Cola – and then make love. Afterwards, they watch the Academy Awards, where Isaac Ross is nearly kidnapped in another Betamaker attack.

The Justice Department transfers Lacey out of Washington. To find out why, Gimbel hacks into Chris's computer – and to his consternation finds his own e-mail to Addison Reed.

**Chapter 9. Reason Expired** Suffering from lack of sleep and concern about the Justice Department, Gimbel gets it into his head that he's Jon Dunn. He follows the Attorney General to a campaign rally in New Hampshire – which Gimbel thinks is a secret meeting of supervillains. After recovering from this episode, he talks with Lacey via videophone about her investigation and realizes the Betamaker is Cheri Tarte.

### **Part III. Error of the Moon**

**Chapter 10. Southern Breeze** After Gimbel fixes a stubborn software bug, Cindy is genuinely grateful. The CREEPS – led by Chris Molson – raid Byte Yourself, looking for Gimbel. Gimbel eludes them after Brownie conceals him under the floor tiles in the computer room. Then Gimbel spends the night hiding in an abandoned department store – which is now a city for the homeless. He finds Mrs. Lazuli and Mimi there. The half-

crazed Mrs. Lazuli shares a parable about how government interference ruined the economy.

**Chapter 11. Getting Unwired** On the basis of Gimbel's e-mail, the Justice Department files charges against Byte Yourself Software for antitrust violations and conspiring to eliminate jobs. Gimbel confronts Chris Molson at a bar. Chris attacks Gimbel with a pool cue. Cheri Tarte arrives and rescues Gimbel. She explains that she is in Washington to film a car chase for *Error of the Moon*. She admits to being the Betamaker and tells Gimbel she discovered that Isaac Ross is funneling illegal contributions to the Peterson campaign. Gimbel realizes the raid on Byte Yourself, Isaac's competitor, is what Isaac got in exchange.

They return to Cheri Tarte's hotel to retrieve the evidence she collected against Ross and Peterson, but the CREEPS got to it first. Gimbel and Cheri Tarte hide out in the hotel's Grand Suite. After an intimate encounter in the shower, made comical by the difference in their heights, and a heart-to-heart talk over dinner, they make love.

Lacey returns to Washington and leads the CREEPS on a raid of the Grand Suite. Her elation at capturing the Betamaker is dampened by the discovery of Gimbel, who is again suffering from the belief he is Jon Dunn.

**Chapter 12. Full Asylum** Gimbel is admitted to the Jon Dunn ward at Walter Reed Hospital, where he participates in group therapy with similar patients. The suspects in the Betamaker attacks tell their stories.

The Byte Yourself Board of Directors meets to consider settling with the Justice Department. The CEO, Tina Lee, who is opposed to a settlement, makes a speech deploring the loss of freedom in America.

Gimbel hacks into the Walter Reed security system and unlocks the doors to the asylum, releasing the Jon Dunns. He meets up with Brownie and Cindy in a mobile lab in the parking lot of Pentagon Palace. They provide him with a change of clothes – a tuxedo was all they had that fit – and show Gimbel modifications they installed on his car.

**Chapter 13. George Washington Shows the Way** In the Attorney General's Office, Ross and Peterson interrogate Cheri Tarte. A diversion by the Jon Dunns – still in their hospital gowns – allows Gimbel to sneak into the building. He confronts Ross and Peterson – and Addison Reed, who had been working for Isaac Ross all along. Gimbel rescues Cheri Tarte by holding the Attorney General hostage – with a paintball gun. Gimbel and Cheri Tarte escape in Gimbel's car. Near the Jefferson Memorial, Gimbel is trapped between the CREEPS, who are chasing him, and the movie stunt cars, which are speeding towards him. To escape he follows the shadow of the Washington Monument, which points the way towards the Potomac River. The modified car skips across the river like a stone on a pond, allowing Gimbel and Cheri Tarte finally to elude the CREEPS.

**Epilogue. Independence Day** Cheri Tarte posts a recording of the conversation in Peterson's office on the Internet, which leads to the arrest of Ross and Peterson. Congress plans to repeal the Federal Economic Sabotage Act; Lacey heads a task force to review the cases brought under the act. Most of the charges are dropped, including those against Gimbel, Cheri Tarte, and Byte Yourself. Tina Lee intends to offer Addison's job to Beverly, but gives it to Cindy instead when she finds out about Beverly's conspiracy against Gimbel. She promotes Gimbel as well. The Lazulis return to their apartment. The American Dream is back on.

Gimbel makes a cameo appearance on UWL Wrestling. Another lady wrestler has stolen him from Cheri Tarte. The novel ends with Cheri Tarte running down the aisle to fight for her man.