

Chapter 3: Is There More Than A Pretty Cover

“Sandi, that was excellent garlic olive oil basil pasta. I am going to skip the news ad start looking at the material I picked-up from Aminu this afternoon. I should be able to knock it out in an hour or so,” estimates Lionel.

“Right. I have heard that before,” enjoins Sandi, his wife. She knows him as a retired workaholic. That tendency has been exhibited over the fifty years she has known him. Coupled with his geeky behavior that tendency has proven to be financially rewarding as well.

She muses, “Who would have thought that cadet I met at Trophy Point.....”

Lionel drops the box of material from Aminu’s warehouse on his long workspace desk. This is the first time today he has been in his office. He cranks-up an old IBM desktop server running Ubuntu. The server provides several services such as driving his favorite Italian radio station from Milan, Radio Classica. It also provides xsane proof ready scanning and high speed laserjet printing among other office capability. Flipping through the KV409 switch he switches the HD monitor to his laptop driving 8TB of disk storage.

Using the laptop as a server and viewing the video on a Sony HD display he plugs his android cell phone into the USB-C. He then logs into the cell phone and watches as the cellphone icon pops under the Ubuntu desktop display. Next he invokes a Thunderbird email session. Briefly he scans the multiple email accounts he employs to sort his traffic from various senders. He makes quick work of the new incoming email traffic. Only one warrants a brief response. Then he searches the results of his spam filters to insure that no “bona fide” sender has fallen victim to his strict spam filter rules.

Now that he has Maduka approval verbally relayed by Aminu he is content to start. But before he starts, he sends an email to Aminu documenting that it is his understanding that he has received Maduka approval through a call from Aminu to pursue looking into the contents of a box acquired at the warehouse containing reading material of several types.

Lionel shuts the door to his workspace/office. He invokes the Audacity audio recording application for Ubuntu. He slips-on a Bluetooth, handsfree headset which he then activates. Using the record/play buttons he runs a couple of quick test to insure all is well with the audio recording session.

Counting down, Lionel begins his literary forensic look into the reading material:

“This is Lionel Jones. Today is December 21, 2021. I am in my Raleigh workspace/office located at 2713 Wrafton Drive, Raleigh, NC. The time is approximately 1915 hr. I have been asked by Maduka Bankole through verbal instructions from Aminu Balaji to examine various literary items contained in a box acquired from Aminu Balaji’s warehouse office this afternoon at approximately 1535 hr. The box and materials have been under my control since that time. Access has been limited to only me since then.

“The box is essentially a heavy duty box typical of those used for transporting multiple reams of copy paper in sturdy cardboard box. The box did have a lid which was secured by duct tape on two sides.

“First item pulled from the box is a copy: Various sections of Sunday The Atlanta Journal-Constitution from Sunday January 24, January 31, and February 7. It seems to be a collection with some sections missing. There is no rhyme to the collection. There are no obvious marks, clippings, or

pinholes observed. Although scattered the pages in the collection seem to have maintained their integrity.

“Next items are two copies of People magazine dated January 27 and February 1. Neither copy had any insert fliers. They seem to have been removed upon first reading. The copies and individual pages all seem to be pristine but with minor finger soiling.

“Next item is a single Sports Illustrated magazine dated January 2021. The ‘Who’s Hot, Who’s Not:’ section dogeared but not altered in any observable manner. Individual pages except as noted seemed pristine.

“First coffee table book, Images of the San Juan Islands, appears to have never been opened. The binding is very tight. Appears to have just been a ‘show piece’ for display.

“Second coffee table book, Hummingbirds, appears to be another ‘show piece’ that has not been opened very often. Everything about the book seems pristine and untouched since purchased.

“Last coffee table book, Audubon Society Birds of North America, is also a little opened ‘show piece’. It appears to be in pristine condition.

“The two volume Per Jam Anthology appears to be in pristine, unread/opened condition. Random sampling of pages did not reveal any observable evidence of usage.

“The destination wedding album, documented a wedding trip in which they participated in October 2019 shortly after their Spring 2019 graduation from UNC and NCSU. The site of the wedding was in the San Juan Islands in WA. That accounts for the previously noted coffee table book showing the collection of islands making up that region. This album showed signs of significant usage. However, there were no marks or binding breaks suggesting specific pages or content of note.

“Last literary item, Song Yet Sung by James McBride appears to have been read at least once. There as a simple, trimmed yellow post-it on page 127 start of second paragraph. That suggests that either Stacy or Frank opened the novel and may have read to that marked site. There is no marking on the yellow post-it or anywhere on the page.

“My first pass conclusion:

1> Most of the literary material contained in the box showed none to very little usage.

1.1> The Sunday editions of the Atlanta page indicated that there was significant interest in some small amount of content as evidenced by ill-regular folding sections and pages.

1.2> The album appeared to be the most “read or used” artifact. But who used the album and in what context is unknown and a matter of guessing.

1.3> The novel, Song Yet Sung, shows evidence that either Stacy or Frank touched or read the novel at least once (see yellow post-it page 127 discussed above).

2> The novel, Song Yet Sung, warrants further study. There is nothing to this point which suggests any mysterious or adverse disposition of the two primary young people.

3> The remainder of the items will be box and returned to Aminu’s office at the warehouse for delivery to Maduka for his disposition.

“My plan:

“1> Place all items in the original paper box except the Song Yet Sung novel and seal tonight.

2> Secure the Song Yet Sung novel in my office safe and develop a plan for further studying the novel. This action is based upon the earlier instructions from Maduka.

3> Transcribe this audio and attach a copy to the paper box of Item 1 above.”

Lionel re-boxes the literary material and withholds the Song Yet Sung novel for follow-up. He then transcribes his audio finding, conclusion, and plan in an email to Aminu and copies Maduka. Completing that task he locks the paper box and the novel in his workspace/office for the night.

The next morning after coffee at Claudes' with the brew crew he drops the box of literary material at Aminu office warehouse without seeing Aminu. He continues to the Durleigh Road Library where he checks-out both available copies of the novel Song Yet Sung. He asks the librarian to reserve the three copies that the main county library have available. Just before noon he checks-out those three copies from the main library.

After lunch Lionel begins to evaluate the five library versions of a Song Yet Sung and the single copy of the novel from last night's examination of various literary items from Stacy's and Frank's condo. As with last night's effort, Lionel employs his handsfree headset and the Audacity recording application on his Ubuntu driven Dell Laptop.

"This is Lionel again. Today is December 22, 2021. I am once again working in my Raleigh workspace/office. The time is approximately 1345 hr. I have received no further instructions from Aminu or Maduka. So I am working to the last set of instructions to continue examination.

"My plan is to start with a detailed look through what I will call the S-F copy (for Stacy-Frank) of Sung Yet Sung. On the cover of that book a post-it will be placed with the text S-F and today's date with my initials. The other five copies will be similarly labeled 1-R, 2-R, 1-M, 2-M and 3-M to distinguish the novel's source.

"The front, back, and spine will be photographed using my digital Nikon S70 SLR. Then the S-F copy will be weighed in using digital reloading power dispensing scales. Each page of the S-F will be touched and examined under light using a 10x table magnifier lens. The library copies will go through the same process, except I will skip the page-by-page touching and magnifying inspection unless a rationale is discovered for doing so.

"Let's begin.

"Novel labeled 'S_F'"

"Photograph Front Jacket, Back Jacket, Spine Jacket. Remove jacket

"Photograph Front Cover, Back Cover, Spine Cover. Note minor damage Top, Bottom Spine typical of usage. Also found what may have been water/coffee damage 'smaller than a dime' on back cover near publisher's mark on spine.

"Digital readout on scale: 20.649 oz

"Begin page inspection,

"Open front cover. Nothing noteworthy.

"First blank page. Nothing noteworthy.

"Flip to inside of blank page. Nothing noteworthy.

"Title page. Nothing noteworthy.

"Flip to copyright page. Nothing noteworthy.

"Dedication page. Nothing noteworthy.

"Flip to back of dedication page. Nothing noteworthy.

"Page 1. Nothing noteworthy.

.....

"Page 367. Nothing noteworthy

"Page 368. Nothing noteworthy

"Final blank page. Nothing noteworthy.

"Flip to inside of final blank page. Nothing noteworthy.

"Inside back cover. Nothing noteworthy."

"Novel labeled 'R-1'"

"Photograph Front Jacket, Back Jacket, Spine Jacket. Remove jacket

“Photograph Front Cover, Back Cover, Spine Cover. Nothing noteworthy.
“Digital readout on scale: 20.638 oz
“Begin page inspection,
.....”

“Novel labeled ‘R-2’
“Photograph Front Jacket, Back Jacket, Spine Jacket. Remove jacket
“Photograph Front Cover, Back Cover, Spine Cover. Nothing noteworthy.
“Digital readout on scale: 20.643 oz
“Begin page inspection,
.....”

“Novel labeled ‘M-1’
“Photograph Front Jacket, Back Jacket, Spine Jacket. Remove jacket
“Photograph Front Cover, Back Cover, Spine Cover. Nothing noteworthy.
“Digital readout on scale: 20.641 oz
“Begin page inspection,
.....”

“Novel labeled ‘M-2’
“Photograph Front Jacket, Back Jacket, Spine Jacket. Remove jacket
“Photograph Front Cover, Back Cover, Spine Cover. Nothing noteworthy.
“Digital readout on scale: 20.645 oz
“Begin page inspection,
.....”

“Novel labeled ‘M-3’
“Photograph Front Jacket, Back Jacket, Spine Jacket. Remove jacket
“Photograph Front Cover, Back Cover, Spine Cover. Nothing noteworthy.
“Digital readout on scale: 20.641 oz
“Begin page inspection,
.....”

“The weight as measured using the digital scale provided the

Label	Ounces
S-F	20.649
R-1	20.638
R-2	20.643
M-1	20.641
M-2	20.645
M-3	20.641
Mean	20.6416
STD	0.0026
3Stdev	0.0078”

“Based upon this small sample there is a 99.7% of all Song Yet Sung will lie 20.6416 +/- .0078. This can be restated that there is a strong possibility that the S-F novel’s weight is within the range of the general population range of 20.6338 and 20.6494 ounces. The risk of making the decision that the S-F novel’s weight is heavier than the general population is lower.”

“To a lesser probability of 80% it is possible to support the statement that the weight of S-F falls beyond the the general population of 20.63562 to 20.64758. The risk of making the wrong decision that the S-F novel’s weight is heavier than the general population is higher.”

“Cutting the statistical babble to a minimum, it appears that the S-F novels weight is on the high-side but within expectations for the population.”

“Conclusion: There does not seem to be any rationale for examining the S-F novel any further.”

Lionel mentally notes. “Write report, email to Aminu, ask for loan of book to read. If I like the book I will see if Sandi wants to read it as well.”

Soon after lunch Lionel completes transcribing the audio recording. Attaching the transcription of his findings he sends Aminu his findings to be passed to Maduka.

In his email he writes, “Aminu, I concluded the examination that Maduka of the Song Yet Sung novel. I was unable to identify anything of significance that suggests anything untold. It’s weight was within statistical expectations (99.7 %) of a general sample of that novel .

“If Maduka does not want the novel returned I would like to read it and then donate it to the county library.

“I will catch you for coffee next Saturday.”

Later that evening, Aminu replies to the earlier email, “Thank you for the conclusion and detailed report. Maduka said keep the novel as a gift from him and his family.

“The next two Saturdays are busy with load-out shipping. How about the first Saturday next month?”