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### The Plan

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MIKE COLLINS

## The Plan

I have been working on the plan for a long time. It all started during my senior year in high school. I was just sitting around with some of my friends when one of them put an idea into my head. A simple conversation that had no depth or importance other than laying the groundwork that would eventually dictate my life. Other than an agreeing nod, I do not believe I spoke a single word. However, from a little spark of interest erupted an inferno of obsession. Everyday, week after week, I ran the idea through my mind. Every once in a while I would add or delete parts to the thought, but always kept the end result clear. So, when the time was right I started on the beginning phase of the plan. I gathered information and made contacts that would enable me to position myself in the most favorable way. I was a devoutly focused upon my mission, ignoring the potential pitfalls of my ignorance. I was a fool to think that I would be capable of pulling this act off with out getting sidetracked. Everything was going fine, but eventually I became distracted with the rigors of life and lost motivation. The plan had fallen back into my mind, behind all the other schemes that were to never come to reality.

Then, lady luck bestowed her grace in my direction as I came across an old friend from my past. We traded stories of what we had accomplished since our last meeting from years ago, and I discovered that he was working for a highly desirable employer that offered very generous benefits. My attention was immediately thrust upon him. I asked question after question pertaining to these benefits, and how one would be able to secure employment. It was in this direct line of examination that my old friend divulged his knowledge of a position that was available. The old plan, the perfect

plan, the plan that would not be lost; came flooding back into the forefront of my mind's eye. I now had an insider that could help restart the plan back into motion. My objective was now clear again, and it was shortly thereafter that I was being offered a job at my comrade's workplace.

Once inside I immediately put myself to task. If I were to make my dream a reality, then I needed to get to work as soon as possible. This place was huge, so I needed to concentrate in only one area. In between the duties of my job I would test and probe the various departments. I needed to select a department that best suited my needs. It took some time, but once I had selected my target it was just a matter of waiting until I gained access into the area. With the proper clearance, I put the plan into full gear.

To pull this off I needed to keep focused. I was too close to screw up this time. So, I surrounded myself with the best possible tools, information, and professionals in the business. I was uncompromising in my efforts to get the desired results. I put off friends and family and kept a fast pace. I missed parties, travel opportunities, and for over two years put everything else second to the mission. I was on a collision course with burnout, but I had to press on.

My wife and child suffered from my selfish desires. I kept telling myself that if I did this right and made it through, that they would benefit the most. I stayed up late working on the plan. There were far too many nights my wife fell asleep alone in an empty bed. My child cried as he tugged on my arm begging me to play, only to be shooed away. These are times I cannot have back, but hopefully they will forgive me.

The time crept by. All I had to do was stay low, and keep from getting too much notice and just stay the course. Day after day, night after night

for over two years I worked the plan. Then suddenly, I found myself realizing my payday was almost at hand. I was so close that my employer started to notice changes in my work habits. He had made comments about how I seemed distracted and uncaring. This is exactly what I wanted to avoid, but the prize was just around the corner. It was calling me, it was begging me to come get it, and it was so close. How could I possibly stay focused on my menial job? If I were able to make this happen, then I would never have to deal with such fools again. My prize would ensure my freedom.

Finally, the time came to make it happen. It was a Thursday night when the last part of the job would be done. I had armed myself in preparation for every possible scenario and situation that could deter me from my objective. I had never been more ready for anything my whole life. I looked to the left and to the right as my heart was pounding with excitement. Slowly I approached my target as to not arouse attention. I tried to act natural as I made my approach. I was only a couple of steps away when I was finally noticed. She looked up from a paper she was reading and whispered . . .

So, now I stand before the public's eye. These people are going to pass judgment on me, yet they do not know what I went through. Was all that scheming and planning worth it? I traded all those long hours of working on the plan for lost time with my loved ones. My son is looking at me from across the room as I stand in line behind the others. What is going through his head? I did this for you son. Please forgive my selfishness.

They start the proceeding, and one by one the others are called out. The crowd cheers as each one passes. My heart starts to pound, as I get closer. The dark gown I am wearing brings to mind the grim reaper and is a symbolic death knell for my immature past. Another, than another is called

until finally, it is my turn. They call my name, and as I step out into the bright lights an inescapable grin scrolls across my face. My heart is pounding like a thousand African drums, but all I want to do is look into the face of my loved ones. One step, two step, three step, then there it is clutched in the hands of the senior gentleman, my prize. He offers me a firm handshake and a congratulatory gesture and finally I grasp the end result of years of planning.

Will the prize change my life? Am I better than those who did not have the same plan? I do not think so. I feel better about myself for seeing my plan through. Do I have any regrets for taking so long? I have a beautiful and healthy family. So, I think my timing is perfect. The plan that has been burning in the back of my mind for many years is now reduced to a few smoldering embers, but these embers will be the kindling for my new plan.