<u>**From Prism to Pyramid**</u>

Chapter 1: Dreams Come True

It was a hot afternoon in the Palo Alto office as Brad stumbled through the open floor plan of his dream employer, Prism. However, to state that Brad was the more fortunate of the two parties of the employee, employer relationship would be an astounding falsehood. Brad was not the type of employee that merely clocked in and out while collecting his generous salary… no… he was the guy who never seemed to leave the office. In fact, the salary meant about as much to Brad as the origin of the coffee the in-house office barista asked him to choose between every day: he probably wouldn't even notice the difference. What drove Brad was Prism's mission: "to decentralize the world, one transaction at a time". An early "fuckin' nerd" as his highschool bully classified him as, Brad had been exploring cryptography and blockchain technology since before Satoshi was even a household name. He saw the rise of Prism as CEO and founder Lloyd Gladstone released innovation after innovation in making crypto convenient and accessible for everyone. In fact, because of Lloyd's visionary ideas, Prism became the number-one wallet in the world, the strongest Bitcoin miner on the planet, and the processor of the largest amount of Lightning Network transactions. Brad dreamed of being a part of this shining digital revolution since highschool and now he finally had the chance to.

It was probably because of this that Brad, after about 9 months, was promoted three times going from Database Engineer to Local Database Manager to Global Systems Administrator. And it was as Brad walked out of HR in an absolute rush of narcissism and god-like confidence with the promotion offer, that his life was changed forever… he was just too stupid to know it yet.

With the new promotion came a relocation to the plush Cuban office only inhabited by the most senior executives within the company. The colors of the large office shone like the sunset on the small island as Brad walked into the basement server room to start to wrap his head around database systems he had never seen before. All seemed normal until Brad was sitting in his office and a small pink note slipped under the crack of his door. Taken aback, he went to the hallway only to find nobody in sight. The note had four words: username: Lloydg@prism.com, password: PASSWORD!. Brad found this comical and hung the note up on his wall.

A few weeks later, what can only be described as a miracle happened… Brad took a day off as the company celebrated the annual April 5th birthday of Nakamoto. But, after 9 shots of Don Julio at the local Cuban cabana bar, Brad was still Brad. And as the alcohol burned in his throat, the guilt of the break from "creating a decentralized future" weighed heavy on him. Stumbling into a cab, our drunken protagonist fumbled for his key card into Prism headquarters and told the driver it was urgent he got back to work.

As the door swung open to his office and the large 4k monitor flashed to life… Brad's determination quickly was subdued as the pink note fell onto his keyboard from the wall on which it was hung. Brad laughing said "ahh why not give it a try" and logged-in to the account on a Virtual Machine. As the expected "password expired" message was instead replaced with

"login successful", Brad drunkenly slurred "no freaking way" and proceeded to pass out on his mechanical keyboard.

Chapter 2: A Rude Awakening

5:00 am. That's when the automatic alarm Brad had set the night prior came blaring to life. Waking up to what he had done the night before was far worse than any drunken text Brad had sent to an old ex in his college years. No… this was far, far worse. Brad woke up staring at files he should not see. However, Brad kept looking. Whether it was because he was still drunk from the night before or because of fundamental curiosity that got him thus far in his career, stray pieces of information began to click in Brad's mind.

The documents detailed the release of the new "Prism Coin" at the next company wide event, annoyingly named the "Prism Party". There, users would be encouraged via a social media platform Prism had partnered with named "Cambrook" to convert their Bitcoin into the new currency. This would supply the company with enough cash flow as they liquidated the traded crypto, to slowly drain the balances from the Prism user wallets. Not only this, but as a

main processor of Lightning Network transactions, the company would be implementing a hidden fee on all payment processes.

Additionally, due to Prism's control of the mining power, there were mentions of a new program called "learn to thrive" where a machine learning algorithm would slowly add partially empty blocks and when finally "leaked" to the Bitcoin community, Prism would begin to short the currency. The whole plan was set to last about a year before CEO Lloyd Gladstone boarded the next private jet where he had already arranged asylum with the El Salvadoran government years back in exchange for orchestrating the Bitcoin Beach donation.

To put it simply: Prism was shorting Bitcoin, pumping an alternative solution, and then robbing everyone who used their wallet system.

It would be like if the largest cattle rancher in the world poisoned all his cows and then bet that the beef market would suffer because of it. Well… the cattle rancher in this case would also be telling everyone to invest in a brand new vegan beef creation that ultimately would fail and he'd steal all their money.

You know what… maybe an offshoot metaphor regarding cows and farming is not the best comparison to high tech crypto. Oh well, guess not all explanations can be *utterly* amazing.

Chapter 3: Day Dreams

But how did Prism do all of this without being caught by the SEC? Of course as such a large company with massive funds under management there was bound to be regulation. Financial reports, cash on hand requirements to guarantee liquidity, and even audits of subsidiary companies were all part of the routine. How do you take a bank of cash, drain it, launder it, and then run away unnoticed?

Well… that's where Gary Shienbeck came into the picture. A trained CPA that had years of experience working at Under Armor, most notably implementing what those in the industry

call "Big Bath". Big Bath is a Big Four auditor's worst nightmare. The key: ship orders faster than key retail outlet customers ordered them and force them to take the inventory sooner. This means that you can have revenue prematurely added to the income statement and falsely inflate sales for a given quarter.

Now you may be asking yourself what the hell a man who spent the majority of his life selling subpar athletic wear is going to do for the largest crypto tech company in the world. Honestly, nobody really knew, but god dammit did Gary impress.

As far as auditors were concerned, transaction volume and amounts needed to be consistent. It's fundamentally the same thing they looked for in inventory flows, except instead of having to convince stubborn store owners, all Gary had to do was order a variety of transactions between anonymous wallets that he himself controlled under fake shell corporations that the company had been paying for "R&D expenses" every year. Gary had been keeping this little scheme up for almost three years now: pay a little R&D, increase transaction volume with fake transactions from and between a web of shell companies, and raise the reported "transaction volume" significantly to make it look like higher consistent growth for Prism. Auditors did not bat an eye as long as the growth looked natural and consistent. At first this was done to raise share price when fundraising and make numbers look better but now it was the perfect set up for something much larger...

These fake transactions have been increasing little by little every year. In fact, if they were to stop it would signal a massive shock to investors and auditors alike. But, do you remember that company Facebook that was founded by the down bad dude who got dumped? Well, they increased their R&D expenses by 500% in four years between 2015 and 2019 all in an effort to release a VR system that realistically had about the same level of graphics as a Playstation 2. That and a buzzword filled rebranding as Meta, allowed the company to expensively reinvent itself.

As far as Gary was concerned they had changed the game. Since R&D expenses are not capitalized until the software goes into Beta, everything before then could hit the income statement with no real connections to assets except a vague connection to a narrative of creating a new innovative technology which in this case was the Prism Coin. The new coin was rumored to have smart contract abilities far more advanced than anything to ever hit the market and such advancements of course took a lot of research.

So, Gary went to work creating the similar narrative. He slowly decreased the fake transactions just enough for the idiots at the Bloomberg News Group to start noticing. Lloyd, the same week started crying in a press conference stating that the old technology they had implemented was becoming obsolete. Stocks plummeted and Gary went even further. He stopped the large fake transaction volume altogether. Ask your average crypto gigachad on the street and

he'd say Prism was a thing of the past. But then something magical happened… Prism Coin was announced and it was going to change the game. It also was going to take a massive spike in R&D to implement so quickly… in fact so much that the company was going to liquidate a variety of its assets to begin building new research facilities overseas and pay a lot of money to

3rd party start-ups that were "leaders in the space". Most of these expenses were inflated and the cash funneled through a variety of separate entities Lloyd's five year old son was listed as owning. But don't worry, almost none of Lloyd's kids shared his last name so they couldn't be traced back. In fact, the young kids only knew him as the guy that "mommy got her rent check from".

      Additionally, if an auditor asked to see one of these facilities (which they rarely did), they would rent out a nice looking office and hire actors, an old trick Gary learned from Barry Minkow back in the 80s. Others were shown a beautiful film documenting the building and opening of the large facilities. In another life Gary really should have been a director because sometimes it seemed he even believed he inhabited the fake worlds he would spin up for the next ignorant business professional that walked through the door.

      As for having to prove liquidity, that was far easier… the auditors only asked for proof once every year end and luckily enough for Gary, Prism still had plenty of friends at Sequoia and a16z that were dying to get a piece of the yet to be released Prism Coin.

      In fact, they were so excited that all Prism needed was a five slide pitch deck that looked something like this:

- **Slide 1:** *Problem:* Current cryptocurrencies lack functionality to scale
- **Slide 2:** *Solution:* The Prism Coin
- **Slide 3:** *Market Size:* *place absurdly big number that was found on Wikipedia here along with a reference link to a website called www.reallyrelaiblemarketestimates.com*
- **Slide 4:** *Our Ask:* *Convertible note asking for the liquidity difference to make up the lost funds, that will directly dilute the shares of the employee option pool*
- **Slide 5**: Picture of Paul Graham and Peter Theil giving a thumbs up.

As for diligence at these firms… its California fundraising… all the VCs needed was proof Prism was incorporated in Delaware in order to get some fat tax breaks.

Chapter 4: A Nightmare Realized

      As Brad scrolled through page after page of the well thought out plans, the bright colors of the office building at which he worked at all hours of the day seemed to dull into the background. The office furniture and plants scattered around his floor seemed far less like a natural accommodation and more like exhibits in a theme park that Brad had bought a season pass to. The plastic nature of it all made him sick as he sat nauseous from his hangover. What could he do but watch the world burn around him?

      But Brad didn't see the world like that. Despite it all, Brad still believed in consensus… in the power of group decided truth. So, he called up a reporter at the Guardian. The old journalist friend of his named Edward was not the bright eyed- optimist that Brad was but he knew he'd report the truth. Edward, despite his lung cancer diagnosis about two years back, still smoked about a pack a day and as Brad gave him the flash drive of documents, he took a long

drag and grinned. Promising an anonymous whistleblower status to Brad, Edward posted the first article of a week-long expose the next day.

      The days flew by as this shocking news dropped and unlike Bitcoin's praise for its anonymous creator, readers demanded Brad come forward while at the same time threatening his life. There was a lot of money riding on crypto and a lie believed by everyone is no longer really a lie is it?

      The Prism Party went on as planned and the speculation around Prism Coin faced no stifle in value as celebrities like Matt Damon, Tom Cruise, and Floyd Maywhether pounced across the stage, happy to sell speculation like a new title at the box office. What these individuals had to do with crypto or whether they even knew how it worked, was yet to be seen.

      The world of Bitcoin supporters, despite Brad's hopes, were blinded as if supporting a religion who continually sent out the collection plate in exchange for moral cleansing. However, this misled group was beyond saving.

      It was because of this, that Brad approached Lloyd after the Prism Party and told him he knew everything and that he was the source of the Guardian leak. However, Brad didn't just tell him this in confession, but praised the young CEO for the brilliance of it all, admitting defeat in

the process. But like the Trojan horse entering Troy, Brad had more than just praise to give as he begged to join Lloyd's new mission. Honored by Brad's acknowledgement and being desperately lonely despite his mountainous success, Lloyd allowed Brad to join as one of the select few given access to the plot to defraud millions of decentralized investors.

After about nine months, Brad had gotten close to Lloyd. So close, he was the best man at his 4th wedding and the two often dreamed about what they were going to do with their newly anticipated wealth. This closeness allowed Brad to get key information essential to his plan, however the emotional ties made what he was plotting much, much harder. But not impossible.

It was the 11th month of the year-long plan before seeking asylum in El Salvador. On the abnormally cloudy day in Cuba, Brad launched what may have been the greatest thing he had ever built: a smart contract system available to Tor browser users that allowed hits to be made for high networth individuals by betting on life expectancy. The application aptly named "the $5 wrench attack online" buzzed to life as hits were placed on celebrities and dictators alike. Number one on the list though was Lloyd Gladstone with the cash payout coming straight from Brad's own wallet.

Within 5 days, Lloyd was found dead in his penthouse condo. A murder made to be an appearent suicide, he died a sad and lonely genius who took one too many pain killers. However, as Lloyd was choking on big pharma's gift to the poor, Brad was getting rich by taking complete control over the fraudulent scheme he had tried so hard to stop just a year before.

And our friend Gary? Well, every scheme needs a man to take the fall. Unfortunately for Gary he was locked out of all the accounts by Brad and immediately reported for embezzling the VC raise months prior that Brad could not quite figure out how to steal without investors noticing. He had expected Gary to snitch but to his surprise, he kept his mouth shut and said "I

respect the hustle". Last anyone heard, Gary was up-charging cigarettes to inmates and providing consulting to cartels with informants inside the big house.

Chapter 5: Rest in Peace

Lloyd's funeral was the type of event that made you suddenly understand the weight of life and all its ignorance. The large event was held about three weeks after the apparent suicide and by then the entire fraud as well as Lloyd's involvement in it was uncovered by all the major news outlets.

However, even in creating the large scheme that was Prism, Lloyd had ultimately won. Friends, family, and celebrities alike filled a telecasted old church that acted in stark contrast to the clean modern offices that the tech billionaire inhabited throughout his life. Candle light memorials suddenly materialized around the country to honor what only could be described as a tech visionary.

He had helped scammed everyone that used Prism out of millions of dollars and yet nobody seemed to care. *But why should they?*

Markets put their hopes in false prophets all the time. Everyone from Steve Jobs to Phil Knight can fill stadiums with consumers ready to buy both products and the promise of a better world. But whether their innovations truly result in a net betterment of the human condition is up for debate. From the children in the sweatshop in Vietnam to the poor kid in the US being bullied because he couldn't quite afford the new generation of iPhone or Dunks, there are always people left behind in a revolution. It just happens that this time those who were left behind were those who had bought-in first rather than last.

Plus, let's even compare to the forever disgraced Sam Bankman-Fried or Adam Neumann, which in all honesty is the crowd Lloyd deserved to be laid to rest with. Was their largest sin the fact they lied? The first iPhone demo wasn't even functional and god knows half the companies coming out of the valley lie their asses off in VC meeting after VC meeting in order to get their precious Series-A round. What put SBF and Neumann in the disgraced category had nothing to do with the damage they had done in the eyes of the public. It was just that their innovations were not making enough money to offset the bad press.

These were the thoughts of Brad as he sat in the back pew. Dressed in the fitting all black suit, Lloyd's mother came to sit next to him. She gave him a hug not knowing he was responsible for her son's death as well as the fraud. The typical pleasantries were exchanged with the almost cliche "sorry for your loss" on the tip of Brad's tongue. However, as the service came to a close and catering staff placed the large trays of food upon tables resembling the one from the last supper, Lloyd's mother asked "what was he like". This question of course caught Brad off guard as it seemed like a type of sentence that should've been asked by him rather than the dead man's own mother.

What Brad answered that day mattered very little. What did matter was the realization of

why the world put faith in Prism Coin and not the thousands of other shitcoins that were created throughout the 2000s. The reason why out of everyone in the world, the most developed nation

on the planet chose Lloyd Gladstone to lead the crypto revolution was simply that he was the most selfish and alone.

What made people trust Lloyd was that he was so far removed from everyone in his life. His whole reputation was reliant on the distant image those dreamed up about him. Even his own mother had no idea about what actually made the man behind the camera play his perfect part in what can only be described as a Shakespearean tragedy.

Many people had wealth or the superior ability to persuade those around them but not many were as skilled as Lloyd as leaning into the ideal image everyone wanted him to become. Like Satoshi or Vitalik, Lloyd painted the image of being someone all knowing… someone who had come from a technical expertise who's contributions beyond just Prism carried a weight too heavy to be disputed. This (as well as the amounting wealth he had acquired and was born into from a long line of real estate moguls) made Prism become the global phenomena it had. Controlling mining power, having the largest share of transactions run through their exchange… It was all to do with the fact that although everyone begs for decentralization, an all knowing leader like Lloyd still could convince his followers that he knew what was best.

And if Lloyd suddenly rose from his casket and wanted to create one more groundbreaking company, like Adam Neumann, he would be welcomed with open arms with rich former Stanford students begging to spend daddy's money somewhere. Unfortunately for Lloyd, this was not the case. He was laid to rest in the same ground as people far less recognized. We all reach the same end, it's just that Lloyds had to come sooner than expected.

Chapter 6: Sleep Cycles

As Lloyd's casket sunk into the ground, Brad thought he would feel something. However, the feeling of regret or guilt failed to wash over him. The only thing that gave him a break from the numbness within his mind was watching his bank account slowly drain as Brad redistributed his fraudulent earnings to those in need around the world. For the first time in possibly forever, wealth was truly redistributed.

Of course, after a while, Brad was discovered but by then he was halfway to El Salvador. As a country with no extradition, he laid low for a bit eating tacos on a beach somewhere and asking people online to pay for his beer over the Lightning Network. Though he felt like the savior for a couple months, the earnings he had distributed to those less fortunate were soon centralized within another corporate villain yet again. Nobody seemed to care nor be surprised.

However, part of the rather spontaneous thoughts that ran through Brad's mind were who the hell left that note under his door all those months ago with the password to Lloyd's account. Would whoever it was be proud of what Brad did? Probably not. But in the end, who the fuck cares. As Anya Rand once said "I swear by my life and my love of it that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine".

Maybe this very statement was the point of Brad's actions the whole time: to escape a world view controlled by someone other than himself. He had grown up in a environment where

chaos was regular and simply wanted to find order. He didn't want power but just wanted to find a way to make the chaos make sense.

Believing that cryptocurrency was the solution to the problems of the world inherently gave hope and a possibility of true consensus. But when hopes and dreams reach their inevitable reality check, one can only continue on by conjuring another pointless belief or face the sad truth head on. Brad chose the latter. He had killed the man who had promoted a better world while also destroying it. He had found a solution that even in brevity created a more just world. How could he be blamed for crossing moral lines to escape the illusion he as well as the rest of the world was under.

But again… where does this crumbled reality leave us. With nothing to believe in or no better future to hope for, what does the point of life become? Brad seemed to come to the conclusion that maybe there was none and that's the hardest part about it.

Despite this, last anyone heard, he was at yet another start-up with promises of making the world a better place. What that really means has yet to be determined.

o