

Wiped Clean

by Rolaant McKenzie



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In the 1992 American comedy-drama film *Sneakers*, students and long-time friends Martin Brice and Cosmo break into a building at their university on a snowy night in December 1969 to hack into the school's computer network to redistribute money from causes they consider evil to more noble ones they believe need more funding.

Martin leaves to bring back a pizza just before the police arrive, responding to a silent alarm resulting from Brice and Cosmo's break-in. Cosmo is arrested, and Brice becomes a fugitive.

More than 20 years later, Martin Brice, using the alias Martin Bishop, heads a group of experts who specialize in testing security systems. One day, two men professing to be NSA agents meet Martin in his office. They inform him that they know his true identity and offer to wipe his record clean if he steals a black box for them developed by an eminent mathematician.

When Bishop and his team recover the black box, they discover that it has the ability to decode all existing computer encryption systems around the world. This would allow whoever possessed it to see and control virtually anything and anyone. They hand the box over to the two supposed NSA agents.

They find out later that the two men wanting the box are really corporate thugs masquerading as government agents, and they work for his old friend Cosmo, who was able to get out of

prison early and find work with an organized crime syndicate where his hacking skills helped to manage and launder their finances.

Cosmo wants the box to infiltrate computer networks and destroy financial and ownership records to create an egalitarian society. He abducts Bishop but is unable to persuade him to join him, so he uses the box to access the FBI's computer network and connects Bishop's alias to his true identity, making the FBI aware of his location so that he can be taken into custody.

Bishop and his team later succeed in infiltrating Cosmo's office, recovering the black box, and returning to their own office. But at their office, they are surrounded by genuine NSA agents, led by a man named Abbott, who want the box so that the NSA will be able to hack into any U.S. computer system, especially those belonging to the FBI and the White House.

To ensure their silence, Abbott offers the team members what they desire. Bishop did not ask for money or any other material thing. All he wanted, and what he received, was his record wiped clean so that he could walk freely as Martin Brice again without fear that the authorities could imprison him for his transgressions decades before.

One of the key aspects of *Sneakers* was how extensive our interconnections with each other are and how detailed information gathered on individuals or organizations can be used to ruin lives and coerce or blackmail people or organizations into complying with illicit agendas. The film also illustrated the deep concern of many that governments with the ability to gather such information would use it to subjugate or destroy their lives.

The Utah Data Center (UDC), completed near Bluffdale, Utah, in 2014, is a data storage facility run by the United States

Intelligence Community (IC) designed to hold vast amounts of information. This includes extensive data on American citizens coming from phone communications, private e-mails, social media posts and connections, Internet searches, travel itineraries, financial transactions, and any computer networks where they may appear.

While critics have pointed out that all this data mining is being done by unelected government bureaucracies without warrants, the greater concern is how such information can be used to control people, such as political or corporate leaders, to do the bidding of those who manage the intelligence agencies, called by some the *deep state*. The data gathered on everyone from tools such as the UDC never goes away and can control or destroy the lives of ordinary individuals should they become a target of interest.

More than a century ago, it used to be that a person wanting to start over somewhere else with a clean slate could do so. A man from New York, for example, may have a ruined reputation that limits his standing in the community and the opportunities available to him, so he moves to Dillon, a small city in a southwestern county of the Montana Territory, where he is unknown and can leave his transgressions behind, start over again, build a better life for himself, and have a good name again.

Just as Martin Brice desired more than anything else the freedom a clear record would provide, many long to be forgiven and have their past wiped clean of anything that would come back to shame and destroy them. But with the data-gathering and storage technologies of today, the ability to relocate elsewhere without one's record following close behind seems virtually impossible.

Both the devil and tools like the UDC have so much information on us. They never forget, they never forgive, and they always keep close track of our activities to manipulate, accuse, or

ruin us when convenient to their purposes (Revelation 12:9-10). But all this knowledge and the power they exercise because of it are nothing in comparison to the omniscience and omnipotence of God.

With God, there is nothing hidden from His sight. He knows who we are, where we have been, what we have done, and everything else about us. It is before the Lord Jesus that we must give an account for our lives (Hebrews 4:13), for He is seated at the right hand of God far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion forever (Ephesians 1:20-21).

But God does what the devil and man cannot and will not do. He remembers no more the transgressions of those who trust in Jesus Christ's sinless life, death on the cross for sinners, burial, and resurrection from the dead (Isaiah 43:25; Hebrews 10:16-17). He clears your record and grants you a new life – eternal life (Romans 6:3-11; Jude 1:24-25).

“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, **‘Everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame.’**” (Romans 10:9-11)

In Christ, the blemishes and deep stains of your transgressions are not kept as unerasable data in a heavenly data center to shame and ruin you at some point in the future. They are wiped clean.

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E-Mail Rolaant McKenzie: rolaant@gospeloutreach.net

Website: <http://www.gospeloutreach.net/>