

The Hawthorne Stories

By Jason Klus

The Power of Innocence

Home for the holiday

Sarah Hawethorne, a ten year old girl, pushed open the front door of the house and threw her bags down. She yelled, "Hi Mom. I am back from school."

"In the kitchen. Put your bags away and then come and give me a hug."

Sarah did as she was told and by the time she got to the kitchen, her dad had made it in from the car. The house smelled of apple pie and roast. As usual she was getting her favorite dinner upon her return from boarding school. Her smile was from ear to ear as she hugged her mom.

"How was the ride Jon?"

"It was great. Next time you should ride to get her, Sandy. The ride there is boring but I really enjoy the company on the ride home."

"What did you guys talk about?"

Sarah grabbed a knife to peel some potatoes before answering. "Just about school stuff like what kinds of classes I have this term."

"Well fill me in. Any classes stand out?"

Sarah knew that the conversation in the car was going to be repeated but it didn't bother her. "As I was telling Dad, the most interesting class is about how individuals can impact the world for good and bad. I never realized that there was a category that included Stalin, Pol Pot, Martin Luther King, and Lincoln. It's strange."

As Sandy prepped the green beans she said, "That IS strange. I would never have combined those men into one group. Have you come to any conclusions?"

"Yup, I have decided that I want to be one of those people that marks the world for better. We learned that everyone marks the world, the difference between us and these guys is the scale."

"You are your father's girl. Isn't that right, Representative Hawethorne?"

Jon looked up from the paper that he had started reading and smiled. "Yes she is." He said with pride.

Sandy looked at her daughter. “You realize that making a mark that large isn’t easy. It will take lots of work, planning, and some luck. Do you know how are you going to make your mark? There are so many ways. Your dad is trying with politics while I am trying with law. Do you have any ideas on your way to achieve this goal?”

Sarah smiled. “Not yet but I have an advantage that you and Dad don’t.”

“And just what is that.”

“I am young and I have time.”

Jon chuckled, “She has got us there. Sarah go get cleaned up. After dinner we have to go to church. Father Amante asks after you every week and would be bummed if he didn’t get to see you during the break.”

Sarah smiled and ran upstairs.

The return to school

The week off went fast and Sarah found herself back at school before she knew it. World history was up first. The teacher, Mrs Serith, was a lecturer which sometimes made it hard to pay attention.

“Today we are going to start a unit on the renaissance which is a period between the 14th and 17th century. It was a movement that treasured art, math, science and learning. It is sometimes believed to have ushered in the modern age and was believed to have started in Florence Italy. In this unit we will be learning about many of the players. People like Da Vinci and Michelangelo.”

Sarah listened as the class went on. As the class progressed, she was riveted. For the next couple weeks, Sarah dedicated her time to learning about the renaissance. During her free time studies, a book pointed her to the culture of the Ottoman Empire which also seemed to pride itself in very renaissance like principles. She kept studying and wound up studying some artists from antiquity all the way to the 19th and early 20th century. A light bulb went off in her head. She headed to the library and started looking up details. When she was done an idea was born. She knew what she wanted to do for her attempt at marking the world. She also knew immediately where her first stop would be.

She needed to find her friend Liora. Sarah was jumping out of her skin with excitement. Liora and Sarah had been friends since they both arrived at school. The two were thick as thieves. If there was anyone that would take Sarah seriously, it was Liora. When she found her, Liora was playing soccer. Sarah grabbed a seat on the bleachers and waited for practice to end.

As Liora was leaving the field Sarah waved her over, “Liora, you know how we are studying people who left a large mark on the world with Mr. Congar trying to convince us that we can do it?”

Liora said, "Yes."

"Would you be interested in seeing if we can do it?"

"It depends. Are we doing Ivan the Terrible or Gandhi?"

"Gandhi, of course."

"Alright. Let me grab a shower and I will meet you at dinner."

Finding the first cohort

Sarah got her meal and sat in the corner of the cafeteria. She was waiting quite impatiently. A couple of other friends started heading to sit with her but she asked them to sit elsewhere.

"Sorry but I need to talk privately with Liora." The others went elsewhere. Liora came in with her soaked hair and dropped her tray across from Sarah.

"Spaghetti, Sarah. Why is it always spaghetti?"

"Yeah, Yeah."

"OK. What is it that has you jumping up and down in your seat?"

"OK, do you know how the children of Abraham all seem to be fighting all the time?"

"It isn't exactly a secret. Where are you going with this?"

"I have found something that all those religions clearly admire. While studying the renaissance, I noticed that each of the religions seem to have gone through periods where they were dedicated to learning and art."

"I am pretty sure that members of all of the religions are involved in art and science currently." Liora was unimpressed but was willing to listen.

"I guess what I am saying is, why don't we start a renaissance that is global? These things happen unintentionally. There has to be a way to start one. We just have to get the right people behind it and maybe the world can enter into a new phase, a phase where all people want to do art and science instead of fighting with each other. Wouldn't that be a better world then what we are currently involved with?"

Liora grinned. "Never let it be said that Sarah Hawthorne thinks small. What is the first step of your plan?"

Sarah smiled back. "My plan was to find out if you had any ideas on how to get started?"

"There is only one Muslim in this school. I guess if you really want to progress with religious art, we should have all the Children of Abraham represented. You should talk to Aamil tomorrow."

Finding the second cohort

It turned out that Aamil and Sarah had a free period together. The two did not run in the same circles but they were cordial. They said hi when passing. Aamil was sitting with some of his friends when Sarah walked into her free period. Sarah asked Aamil if she could speak with him for a little while. Aamil consented and the two went and sat at an empty table together. Sarah gave her spiel.

Aamil was visibly annoyed. "Let me get this straight. A crazy man goes nuts on the Jews. Then the world gives the lands of Islamic people to the Jews as an apology. The Jews, in fear of a recurrence of the crazy man, round up all the Muslims and throw them in large camps. These Jews then cut the camps off from outside interactions and are waiting for them to run out of resources and die. Your idea is that we are going to draw some pictures and suddenly everything will be great? I know you don't mean to be offensive but there are real problems between the religions. Pretty pictures aren't going to solve these things."

Sarah was dumbfounded but not crushed. She was aware that it wouldn't fix everything but she also knew the world would be a better place with a world-wide renaissance.

"Wait a second Aamil. It will not fix everything but let's look at some of the merit it might have. I admit that the Jewish people were battered in World War II. This does have the chance to get the Jews to not look at the world in fear. It has the potential to humanize the Muslims to them. The Israeli's grew up associating Muslims with rockets and bombs. I don't know who started what. I know that Jewish people associate Muslims with violence. This idea has the potential to change that. It could give people a chance to associate their religion with any idea that they can put into art. Instead of suicide bomber wouldn't you rather people thought of you as kind or some other quality that you admire? Art gives you a chance to say whatever you want. I think that we will find that people of all three religions admire and possess similar qualities. Isn't it worth it to try and find out if that is true?"

Aamil sat quietly and pondered. Sarah sat patiently as he was making a decision. Eventually he sat up and said, "OK but I reserve the right to jump ship if this heads in a direction I don't like."

"Of course, Aamil."

"Well Sarah, I guess my first question is what's next?"

"I think the next step is for all of us to take some time to think and get together in two days."

Aamil looked perplexed. "Who is us?"

“Us is you, Liora and I.”

“I should of guessed. Where?”

“Thursday at four on the bleachers would be good, if that is alright with you?”

“See you Thursday.”

The planning

Sarah sat on the bleachers with both Aamil and Liora. She had a pen and notebook out. Aamil started talking. “I have given some thought to your proposition and I am unsure what your goal is. We won’t be able to measure success if we can’t define success.”

Sarah responded. “I want to get the children of Abraham to work together for the common goal of starting a worldwide renaissance.”

Liora chuckled. “Do you have any ideas on how because I just don’t see how to go forward? What is your first step?”

“I was thinking that each of us could approach our churches and get them to commission art work. After we get the art work commissioned then we would have to get a building where we can display the work to the world. When the world comes and sees the work of the different religions, they will see that we aren’t that different. People will have to admit that Christians, Jews and Muslims possess and admire similar qualities.”

Liora thought Sarah was naïve but was uncertain of how to tell her. Aamil on the other hand knew exactly how to handle the situation.

“I am not going to my Imam and ask him for a huge chunk of money to commission art for the sake of attempting to prove to the world that Muslims are good people. Not only would I get laughed at, I am not positive it will work.”

Liora agreed which left Sarah a little down. “Well if that idea is so terrible, what do you guys think we should do?”

Liora looked up and said, “Well I think the first thing we should do is determine what our resources are. I don’t have much but I can throw in 60 dollars.”

Aamil pulled out his wallet. “I can throw in 100 dollars.”

Sarah took out a wad of cash. “I can throw in seventy dollars. What can we possibly do with 230 dollar?. That pretty much leaves us with nothing.”

Aamil looked at Sarah. "We aren't going to get anywhere with such a pessimistic attitude. You can't give up before we even start."

"What ideas do you have with such a meager amount of money?"

"Don't forget we also have youth on our side. People our age love lost causes. Even though we are starting small when the time comes to recruit, we have access to a ton of idealists before they get old and jaded."

Liora broke in. "Although your goal is sweet, I think it is to unrealistic. Bringing together the Jews, Christians and Muslims is a noble goal and would definitely leave a massive mark on the world. Starting a worldwide renaissance would also be amazing. Either task would be an amazing achievement that would be worthy of praise but both tasks at the same time is just too much. I think we need to decide which task is our goal rather than setting up a herculean task that we can't possibly achieve. Which is it Sarah, are we trying to generate peace between religions that have been at each other's throats since conception or are we trying to start a movement that will produce things of such beauty that the world will forever admire the creations?"

Sarah replied, "I want to do both."

Aamil interrupted. "Liora has a point and I agree. However, I think we are not going to have to make that decision soon. I think I have an idea that might be able to get us started. Considering the amount of money we have to work with, I think our only choice is a digital museum. We buy a site which is super cheap. Then all we have to worry about is finding content."

Liora piped up. "If we get say 10 artists from each religion then we will have thirty pieces to start with. I think I can come up with ten teen artists in my age range. What about you Sarah?"

"Sure but what do we define as work?"

Aamil opened up immediate. "Each piece of work must be submitted. We can't just post everything."

Sarah was confused. "Why, art is supposed to be free expression?"

"Don't be so naïve Sarah. The line between art and offense is often blurred. Some wise ass is eventually going to do something like draw a picture of Muhammad. Suddenly your attempt to bind the religions will turn out to be all out war. We need a council and we need to judge the art before we accept it as worthy of our digital museum."

Liora spoke up. "Aamil is absolutely right. If we want to use this thing to bind people together then we can't let things in willy nilly. I suggest that we have topics that we set in advance."

"What should the topics be?"

Aamil agreed with Liora. "Let's take some time and when we meet again we will each have three topics that we feel embody our religion. Sarah, I think you should write a mission statement. Something for the site that tells exactly what we are up to. Does this sound fair to every one?"

Sarah smiled. "For two people of warring religions that hate each other, you two sure seem to think similarly. I will get to work. Thank you, guys."

The Mission Statement

Sarah sat down with the first draft of her mission statement.

Welcome to the Children of Abraham digital museum. This digital museum was created to bring people together through the beauty of art. It is designed with the intent to give a mechanism of expression that will allow people of different religions to have a voice as well as hear the voices of others. Even though religious beliefs mark us all differently, we all have some ground in common. We admire love, generosity, beauty, strength and many other traits. This is a way to see these traits. I invite everyone to spend their time looking through the museum and hope that at the conclusion of their visit, they will have a new respect for the people of all religions.

The topics

When the group met at the bleachers, they all had folders with paper in them. Aamil was anxious, which was an uncommon occurrence for him. "What did you guys pick for your three qualities?"

Liora smiled. "I think I have some good ones. I chose perseverance due to the Jewish time in the desert. Loyalty is a big one for us and finally I chose sacrifice. I can't wait to see what comes of that. I think it leaves a bunch of room for creativity. How about you Aamil?"

"Well my prophet is a great warrior. In the spirit of that, I chose strength, discipline and honor. This should inspire some great works by the muslims. That leaves you, Sarah.

"I chose forgiveness, empathy, and benevolence. Also I wrote up our mission statement. It should be reworked now that we have the topics but I think you guys should read it before I rewrite it."

Sarah handed each of them a piece of paper and the two started reading.

Both read the statement and Aamil finished first. "It looks good. It needs some polish but overall not bad. I got the website up. I need to add the topics that the museum will be housing. I set up an email address for submissions. I assume the three of us are going to be the ones to decide what is art and what is offensive. If you give me a week I should have the site setup and searchable as soon as Sarah gives me the final draft of the mission statement."

Liora looked up from the current mission statement. “There are three people who I can think of that will definitely give us some content. How much money do we have left Aamil?”

“We have a little over a hundred dollars.”

“I think we might benefit from a prize for the best work. Is anybody against a hundred dollar prize for the artistic work of the year? Also I want to submit a piece but I think the three of us should be exempt from the prize.”

Everyone agreed to Liora’s ideas.

Aamil said, “As I was setting up the site, I realized that we are thinking of art as pictures and painting. I think we need to include music and sculpture. Can you add something in the mission statement that says all forms of art are appreciated?”

“You bet I will. If we spend a week getting ready, do you think we will be ready to go public?”

Liora piped up. “Let’s be sure to include Hindu and Buddhism. The only group that scares me is the atheists. I just know they will pull some stunt like naming a piece The Killing of God. I don’t want my name associated with something like that.”

Aamil responded. “I think we can include them. If they pull a stunt like that then we will just deny that piece entry. That’s why I want each piece to go through an approval process. We can nip offensive things like that in the bud.”

“Ok. I will have the new mission statement with all the updates in a couple days. After that Aamil will need a few days to polish the site and then we go looking for content.”

The launch

When Sarah finished the mission statement, she dropped it off with Aamil. He had been putting together the site and all he had to do was drop the mission statement into place. He asked Sarah if she had any content for the site. Sarah shook her head no.

“What do you think of this?” Aamil pulled out a rolled up piece of paper. He unrolled it. It showed a giant man surrounded by people in armor. In the bottom corner was a small man dressed in a white smock. Sarah recognized it right away.

“David and Goliath. It is beautiful. I love it. Who did it?”

Aamil smiled a little sheepishly. “I did it a few years ago. Do you really think it is good? I was thinking of scanning it in and placing it under the strength category.”

“You have to. I had no idea you were an artist. What you did is beautiful, I am not sure I can measure up.”

“It’s not like you can win the prize anyway. Personally I would love to see how you can put forgiveness into a piece of art.”

“Me, too. Forgiveness is the cornerstone of my religion. I am afraid to try and mess it up. How would that look?”

“Relax Sarah. Do the work and then if you don’t like it, don’t submit it. If you can’t put forgiveness into a work of art then someone else can. I showed Liora my painting and she is fine with it being the first work in the museum as long as you agree.”

“Agreed, there are so many things that make that painting the best starting point for our goal. We are David and our goal is Goliath. I am all about it being our first work of art. How come you didn’t tell us that you were a great artist.”

Aamil turned red. “I don’t know about being a great artist but I thought you guys knew I dabbled before you asked me. Do you have any ideas on the next step?”

“I have been thinking about it. I say we open it up to just members of our school.”

“Well, all things considered most of the school is Christian. That sort of leaves the Jews and Muslims out of it.”

“Are there Muslim and Jewish schools? I will present it to this school and you can pick a predominantly Muslim school to present it to. I am sure Liora will be able to find a predominantly Jewish school to get art from.”

Opening up to the schools

Sarah made up flyers that contained the mission statement, the site location and the email address to submit works to. She gave some of these flyers to Aamil and Liora. Liora took these things to temple and handed them out to her peers. The kids were into it but some of the parents were not convinced. Aamil hit a mosque and a Muslim school. He had a similar reaction from the adults as Liora did. The adults seemed afraid and several took the flyers away from the kids.

It became apparent that the adults were not happy to see the kids trying to make peace and even Aamil had to admit that this was not a reaction he expected. The three decided to meet up at the bleachers to discuss the odd reaction of the adults.

“Does anyone know why the adults are against the project we are working on?” Sarah was irate that people were against something that could help with the rift in the religions.

Aamil smiled, “I can think of about a million. Maybe, if you gave Jerusalem back.”

Liora laughed. “Maybe you could give us the land for the great temple back so we can rebuild the great temple.”

“Seriously guys. Why are the adults afraid of our website?”

“Honestly, I think we are better off with the adults being against the site.” Aamil was smiling as he said it.

“Why would that be Aamil?”

“Rebellion is a youth thing. I have been told by at least five people that they intend to submit art because their parents are against it. Let’s see how it plays out before we get upset.”

Liora spoke up. “Have we received any submissions besides Aamil’s?”

Aamil looked a little green. “Not yet but I know at least six people who are working on submissions. It takes time to make art. I think we will know where we stand in a month. I suggest patience. Also it wouldn’t hurt to pass out some more flyers. I have gotten a submission for jewelry. Does anyone have a problem with that as an art category?”

Both girls were fine with jewelry as an art form which brought their submissions from one to two.

As time passes

Sarah was bummed out. There were only the two entries and it had been a week and a half. Then suddenly two people submitted paintings. One was of animals lined up at the arc. It was ok as far as paintings went. The other painting was of a camp in the holocaust and the artist requested it be placed in the perseverance category. Both works were approved and added to the body of work in the digital museum.

The next piece of art was gorgeous but it raised doubts. Sarah wanted it included and Aalim was dead set against it. This left Liora to weigh in.

“Sarah we can’t put this in the Museum.”

“Why Aalim? It is literally the most beautiful piece and you can’t deny that.”

“It is a matter of principle Sarah. It is illegal what they did. I agree that I have rarely seen a piece of art that can compare with this but it is graffiti and that is illegal. We can’t condone illegal acts. We can’t let this in.”

“Sarah, I agree with Aalim. I love it but we can’t condone this behavior.”

“Fine, I will tell the artist.”

Sarah emailed the artist. She explained the problem and let the artist know that she was one of the best artists ever. The group would love to have a work that was legal.

As the month continued more work flooded in. A song came in. It was a rap song and contained a ton of cursing. This generated a discussion among the three. Aamil found it offensive but a big part of his offense was that it lambasted the Palestinians. Sarah wasn't sure how to handle it. She felt that this song used profanity in a foolish way but she could see circumstances when profanity could be used so she didn't want to bar all profanity. However she was fine with banning this song. Liora had a different feeling. Liora felt that it displayed an anger that should be recognized and this song was an attempt at bringing that anger to life. Liora thought the anger should be acknowledged. With two against one Liora gave in.

As the month progressed, everyone one was surprised by the amount of stuff that caused controversy among the three. As the month ended they realized that they were always capable of coming to a consensus which was a goal of Sarah's when she started the idea. Three people of different religions working together was no small feat.

They did a count of the body of work that they had posted at the end of the month. They had managed to compile two hundred and thirty seven pieces of art. However what they found with their metrics was surprising. The body of work was growing fast and if things kept going they would have an amazing amount of content. There was a problem. The amount of people looking at the work was flat. They had the art but they lacked people who were enjoying. Another break was coming up and the three decided that they would wait till after break to discuss the lack of art admirers. What good was great art if no one saw it?

Showing the site to her family

Sarah's dad picked her up from school. He gave her a huge hug as soon as he saw her. "Hey Sarah how are you?"

"Remember how I wanted to change the world for the better?"

"Of course I remember. Have you figured how to do it?"

"Yeah I have started a project that I feel might be able to achieve the goal but I may have hit a wall."

"Maybe if you talk it out then you will be able to figure out how to solve your problem."

"I was hoping you would say that. I will fill you in on the way home."

Jon smiled. He had no idea what she was planning but her ideas were always fun if unrealistic. He grabbed her bags and threw them in the trunk. The two hopped into the car. Sarah filled him on the project she was working on. The idea certainly peaked his interest. As they pulled into the drive way, "After dinner could I look at your site? Maybe I could have some ideas that would help."

"Sure, Dad"

After dinner, Jon sat down and started going through the website that the kids had created. He didn't make any noise as he examined what the kids had accomplished. Finally he looked up at Sarah who had been sitting at the edge of her seat.

"Well Sarah, you don't aim small. There is quite a bit of art here but you say that no one is looking at it. If I were you there are two things I would do. First I would get your priest, Aamil's Imam, and Liora's Rabbi involved. If those three support you then it will be easy to get the word out in the religious circles. The second thing is an old politician's trick. You should leak it to the press. There is always some reporter looking for a special interest story. Trying to get the religions to work together is just the thing that these reporters love to report on. Whether it works or not, I am impressed. I think Father Amante should be your next stop."

Sarah got on the phone immediately with Aamil and Liora to tell them that she was going to share the site with her priest and suggest that they do the same with their spiritual elders. They agreed and promised to discuss the reactions with each other when they returned to school.

Telling the Father Amante

Sarah made an appointment with Father Amante. She arrived early with her laptop. The church had WiFi and Sarah checked signal. She went into the church office and made sure that she could connect to the website. After a few minutes the Father entered the office with a big smile for Sarah.

"Hello Sarah. How are you doing today?"

"I think I will be better able to answer after we talk."

"How can I help?"

"I don't know but any help will be appreciated. I am trying to use art to try and bring religions together. I think it might be better if I were to show what I am building with my Jewish and Muslim friends." Sarah popped open her laptop and handed it over to Father Amante.

Father Amante started looking at the site. After fifteen minutes, he shut the laptop and returned it to Sarah. "Jesus loves a peacemaker."

Sarah wasn't sure what response she was expecting but she did know that wasn't it. She decided to investigate. "What do you think of the idea? It certainly has brought my friends and I closer. Do you think it has the potential to bring more than that together?"

Father Amante replied, "I think it does. I am wondering what part you are expecting me to play. Why did you bring this to me?"

“My dad thought you would be interested and we aren’t sure where to go from here. If the church backed up the attempt to bring people together then it might have more chance of making a serious difference.”

Father Amante looked at Sarah. “I am not really sure that I am allowed to participate in an inter-religious organization without permission. The best I can do is pass it up to the Bishop and we will see what happens. I think each religion may not want to be the first to commit to the idea. It is a political thing. What if we endorse and the others don’t. That would make us look bad. I will let you know when I get an answer from the higher ups. I don’t know how it is going to work out but I will tell you that I am proud that someone in my congregation is trying to make such a large impact. I will be in touch soon.”

A few days later Sarah got a call back from Father Amante. “I passed the message up the chain and everyone liked the idea. We can’t give you any money but the church has decided to shall we say advertise your site. Everyone in attendance this Sunday in the U.S. will be asked to visit your site and if they are of an artistic nature then they will be encouraged to participate.”

“I was hoping the church would commission some art like they did in the old days. However you can’t look a gift horse in the mouth. Thank you for your help, Father.”

Sarah’s return to school

When Sarah returned to school she met up with Aamil and Liora at the bleachers. “What did you do, Sarah?”

“Aamil what’s got you all agitated?”

“I am not really agitated. We had 3000 submissions in the last week and our hit counter is through the roof. My Imam was unimpressed and Liora got a pat on the head, and a ‘kids will be kids’ look from her Rabbi. However 2800 works of art were submitted by Christians. So I repeat what did you do?”

“My priest got the site mentioned at mass all over the U.S.”

Liora smiled, “This is going to quickly become a Christian site if we don’t find a way to even the numbers. You can’t get three people working to a similar goal if two are unwilling to play the game.”

Sarah decided that it was time for her last card to be played. It was a card she was hoping not to have to use. “The first thing we have to do is approve all the artwork coming in. That is going to take several days. My dad made a suggestion that I didn’t want to use but I think we have no choice. We need to find someone in the media to tell our story. Where are we going to find that?”

Aamil chuckled. “You do realize that the boarding school that we currently attend has the children of two newspaper owners and one child of a news TV personality. First though, it is unrealistic

that we can approve all of these entries. We are going to have to find people to assess these piece's and make sure nothing controversial gets through. There are just too many. I got three friends at my mosque who would love to participate but don't have an artistic bone in their body. All we need are three Jews and three Christians and we can setup three assessment teams. I will build a section of the site for assessment so all they have to do is login and vote."

Liora and Sarah agreed to get the remainder of the teams for assessment by the time Aamil was done building the section for art approval.

Bringing in the media

Sarah approached Tom in the hallway. "Sarah, everyone at school knows what you are doing. This isn't the type of thing my dad's readers are interested in. If I were you I would go see Will. His dad is always doing human interest stories in his paper. If your goal is to reach other communities then just white Christians, stay away from Dylan's dad. His news program is clearly aimed at the demographic you already have. I would try and get on Haq. That show seems about right for your demographic. Also Emet is a publication that might help you. I will tell you that I have discussed this with Will and Will is expecting you to approach him. Actually I think he wants to be involved. He loves an underdog. I got 5 bucks at 10 to 1 that you don't make a dent. Either way I win because you are attempting something good. Take care."

Tom strolled away but he had given Sarah direction and that was nothing to shake a stick at. When Sarah found Will at lunch he looked up and before she could speak he said, "Yes but you have to do an interview with a reporter. The writing has to be perfect if you want to go with an editorial. I have seen your writing and it needs the help of a reporter. I have talked to my Dad about it. Can I pencil you in for an interview this Sunday at my house around 2 pm?"

Sarah replied, "Sure and thanks." Then she walked over to Liora and Aamil for lunch. "Well we have our first interview. Have either of you heard of the publications Emet and Haq?"

Liora knew of Emet and Aamil knew Haq. Sarah said, "I have been told that those two publications have the audience that we really need. Do you guys think that we could get pieces in those publications?"

Aamil was the first response. "It will be a hard sell but I think we might be able to work something out. Haq is a very liberal magazine. I think we can all agree that we need to hit the liberal faction of our religions."

Liora was more hesitant. "Emet is not at all liberal. I think it might be easier to get a death to Islam in there then a let's live together happily. There is a magazine called Scepter. It has a much smaller fan base but they are younger and quite liberal. If I had to choose who to approach I would go after Scepter."

Sarah looked at Liora. “I have good news for you then. You do have to choose. Aamil and Liora do your magic. We need these readers to make us art for our digital museum.”

Success

Liora was shocked at how easy it was to get the digital museum and its mission statement published. It turns out the editor happened to be an artist herself. She was so taken with the idea that it was front page for almost a week. A giant headline read Kids and young adults show that they know more about peace than adults. It was sensationalism but young adults were Scepter’s bread and butter. The thing was it worked. Liora made sure that the piece said how the Christians were creating art and that the Jewish community was missing an opportunity to show their stuff. Gradually over the couple weeks after the article’s release, art from Jewish people climbed to nearly match the amount of Christian contributions.

Aamil managed to get his article out but he had to wait till the number of other religious contributions was much higher than the Islamic contribution. Once he could point out that the Christians and Jews were making staggering contributions to the art world while the Muslim community was sitting on their hands, people took notice.

As Sarah had suspected, every religion respected and loved art. Aamil, Liora, and Sarah had documented proof that art was something everyone had in common and hoped it would humanize people who previously thought of each other only as enemies.

The Power of Competition

In the office

Jon Hawethorne closed the balcony door to his office and looked around. He had only been in office for a week since being sworn in. The weight of his responsibility still weighed heavily but never as heavy as when he first entered the Oval Office. 300 million people were counting on him to bring them into the future both safe and prosperous. His newspaper and continental breakfast were already on his desk next to the President’s Daily Brief.

It still amazed President Hawethorne how the staff knew when to serve the breakfast. It was still warm when he reached his desk every morning but he had yet to catch them delivering it. He plopped down at the desk and picked up the paper. As he scanned the newspaper, he noticed that even though he had only been in office a week, he had failed to meet a single campaign promise. He smiled thinking he should have made the campaign promise to round up all the political pundits and imprison them.

He picked up his apple danish and read the note underneath. It said his doctor had put cheese on his "Do Not Have" list so he would no longer be getting his cheese Danish. He added this to the short list of things that were bad about controlling a super power and took a large swallow of coffee.

He finished his paper and cut out the crossword puzzle. It was great fun trying to stump his staff over the course of the day. As he finished removing the puzzle, he dumped the paper in the recycling. Next he picked up the President's Daily Brief.

First up was a report from the FBI. It seems that they managed to bring down a rather large counterfeit operation that could have potentially hurt the value of the dollar. The CIA expressed concerns over the number of anti-US gatherings in Pakistan and suggested that the unrest had nuclear ramifications. The NSA filed a report that software piracy around the world is harming US companies and is threatening the advance of many American corporations. Finally the Defense Intelligence Agency has noted some very strange military movements in China and will hold a debriefing later in the day when they have more information.

The president decided to start by pulling up the most recent CIA report on China. It seems that China had just gotten a new leader, Zhēngfú zhě. Zhēngfú zhě it seemed had risen to power by using communist hardliner speech. He had solidified his party by convincing them that China must spread communism if the world is ever going to be safe. He used what he called The Moral Decay Of Capitalistic Countries to instill fear into his party and claimed that he would bring China into a leadership role on the world stage.

Since Zhēngfú zhě had taken power, the CIA noticed an increase of 700% in hacker attacks that could be traced to China including two on the Department of Defense. China had also been attacking many countries through economic means. They were the second in software piracy and had been buying cars from Germany to disassemble and mass produce copies. China refused to recognize international patents. They were considered the biggest threat and counted Russia, Syria, Iran, North Korea, and Venezuela as close friends and allies.

President Hawethorne finished his catching up and was now more concerned about the Chinese actions. He had some small items to get done but they were just busy work till 10:30 when the debriefing was scheduled with the Joint Chief of Staffs.

Debriefing

President Hawethorne walked into the war room where his joint chiefs were meeting. He walked to the head of the table and sat down next to the Secretary Of Defense. Everyone found their seats but a CIA analyst who walked up to a large monitor and started talking.

"This morning at 4:55 our satellites picked up unusual movements of the Chinese military. Two troop transit boats started loading in Quanzhou. Five destroyers from Shanghai started heading toward a spot in the pacific. The destroyers have stopped in the East China Sea about half way between

Quanzhou and Japan. Also a submarine was seen leaving Wenzhou. It went under as soon as it left the bay. We currently believe that these components will most likely rendezvous and form a battle group. From the location of the destroyers they will be in a good place to hit South Korea and Japan. A formal inquiry was made by the state department. The Chinese response was that they were just running military drills and they stated that they would be joined by North Korea in these drills. The way we see it, there are three possible outcomes. First they are telling the truth and just want to see what the US response is. Second they are going to attack South Korea. Third they are going to attack Japan. None of the potential outcomes are desirable. I will defer to General Hill for the assessment of a combined Chinese and North Korean attack on South Korea.”

The CIA analyst sat in the corner away from the table as a four star general stood up and started to speak.

“If North Korea and China were to attack South Korea, they would stand a good chance of success. American casualties would be extensive because we still man the line. We are technically still at war in Korea which means there would not need to be a congressional act to reinstitute the war. The leader of North Korea has nuclear capabilities and is unstable at the best of times. We have to assume that he will not hesitate to employ his nuclear arsenal. It goes without saying the results would be pretty catastrophic for civilian casualties. To retake South Korea would most likely mean an all-out war with both China and North Korea which would have the end result of spreading us pretty thin. We would have to mount that attack from Japan. I am deferring to Admiral Demetriv for the assessment of an attack on Japan.”

The Admiral stood up.

“The final and probably least likely of the outcomes of the Chinese movements is an attack on Japan. Japan as we know is not allowed to have a military and is under the protection of the United States. That being said they still have a powerful force that operates under the name Japan Self Defense Force. This group is well trained and armed. Short of maybe a nuclear strike, this force is likely to be able to handle its own protection. This means that the Chinese battle group is just too small for Japan to be a likely target unless they are only going to attempt to acquire only part of Japan. If they are doing joint drills with North Korea, the position of their destroyers indicates that those maneuvers would likely occur in the Sea of Japan instead of the East China Sea. Currently there are several Chinese battle groups in the East China Sea. This means China and North Korea will have South Korea completely surrounded if we let them into the Sea of Japan. I would suggest that we prepare for the Chinese battle group entering the Sea of Japan.”

The president nodded at the threat assessment and the room went quiet. He thought for a minute and cleared his throat.

“I want to hear about responses. What are the best options to respond to this situation?”

The Secretary of Defense decided to handle this one. “We have come up with three different responses. They are labeled strong, stronger and strongest response. The strong response is to condemn China’s actions publicly and make the statement that if any actions result in harm to South Korea or Japan, it is tantamount to an act of war. The stronger response is to speak with Japan and organize our own war games as soon as possible. This increases response time if there is an attack in theater. In an effort to avoid misunderstandings the military has suggested that those war games occur in the Pacific by Japan. The third option is not recommended but we could sink the Chinese battle group with our submarines. There would be no proof we did it but everyone will know.”

President Hawethorne made his decision. “I want you to do the strong and stronger response. Does the military have the capability of putting a couple submarines in the East China Sea without anyone knowing they are there?”

Admiral Demetriv replied. “Yes.”

President Hawethorne gave the order to put the submarines in play.

The President asked Scott Slaem, Director of the CIA, “What do you think is most likely happening?”

“Mr. President, I think that the most likely scenario is that Zhēngfú zhě is trying to test you. You’re a new leader and he wants to know if you are weak or incapable. I think it is important that he see you as strong or he might do something stupid. The last thing we need is to go war with one and half billion people, sir.”

The President got up and started leaving as everyone broke into small groups to talk about the things that needed doing now that the decision was made.

As the president walked back into the Oval Office, he couldn’t believe that someone would be stupid enough to potentially start World War 3 just to see what he could get away with. As far as Hawethorne was concerned if you put a lot of fighting men into a small area, there is always a potential that they will fight. Due to the Chinese president there was a greater chance of people dying just to size up President Hawethorne.

Press Room

President Hawethorne glanced at the clock and it was 3:30 in the afternoon. The Press Secretary should be about half way through his afternoon press briefing. Hawethorne grabbed an apple from the fresh fruit bowl on the coffee table in the oval office. Then the President walked purposely to the press briefing room. He walked in as the press secretary was giving his daily update. President Hawethorne grabbed a seat. The press secretary paused but Hawethorne cut him off.

“Please continue. After you are done I would like a word with the white house correspondents.”

The press secretary continued to verbally spar with the white house correspondents. The correspondents didn't have a chance because they were so distracted by the appearance of the President. Hawethorne withdrew his pocket knife that was given to him by his grandfather and started cutting up the apple while throwing pieces of core into a nearby trash can.

"Alright ladies and gentleman, if there is nothing else then I would like to pass the microphone to someone who needs no introduction, the President of the United States." The press secretary immediately stepped away from the podium and made room for Hawethorne to take the stage.

Hawethorne stood up and walked to the podium where he cleared his throat.

"Ladies and gentleman, there will be no questions after I make my statement. It has been recently brought to my attention that China is moving forces to positions that threaten American interests. There has been several guesses at the intentions of China by my staff. The truth is that we will not know their intentions until China has finished its actions. There is one theory that is predominant among my staff. They believe that this could be an attempt to discern what type of leader I am by their president, Zhēngfú zhě. The idea is that after their actions are complete, they can measure my response and determine my backbone and resolve. I almost played along but if this is their intent, they are gambling lives and possibly war to achieve the single goal of taking measure of not America but of me as a person. So my military response is unfortunately to move forces into a small space which gives a greater chance of conflict so that if China attacks our interests then we can respond quickly and appropriately. Zhēngfú zhě is also a new leader and I would like to take his measure. Instead of threatening him and risking world war 3, I have a different means in which to take his measure. Therefore I want the world to know that I am challenging president Zhēngfú zhě to a contest. This contest will determine which of us can do greater humanitarian works for people who are not part of the countries that we lead. The contest will be for the duration of one year. I trust that the correspondents in this room can get this message out to the world. I will be sending a formal challenge to President Zhēngfú zhě in a couple days. If he accepts the challenge, we will meet to formalize the rules and a start date. If he fears his ability to do great things for humanity, I suggest that he not show up because I will as they say 'be prepared to bring it'. Thank you for your time and please spread the word to everyone in the world."

Hawethorne immediately walked out of the room which was silent instead of the usual questions that were yelled as he walked out the door.

Acceptance

Within twenty four hours the challenge was being talked about everywhere. The action seemed unprecedented and everyone was waiting with bated breath about what if any, would be the Chinese response. Hawethorne was sitting at his desk reading over the formal challenge that his staff was writing up. The phone rang and it was his secretary. Admiral Demetriv was here to see the President. Hawethorne put aside his challenge and had his secretary send the Admiral in.

The admiral entered. “Mr President, I just wanted to tell you that even though the Chinese sub is still unaccounted for, the troop transports and destroyers have change course and seem to be returning to China. While this development is new, we will keep watching until we are sure.”

“That is good news Admiral. I suggest we reciprocate with our movements once we are sure that Zhēngfú zhě is standing down.”

“We will keep you informed of any developments. If there is nothing else, I will take my leave?”

“There is nothing else, Admiral. Thank you for keeping me in the loop.”

The President finished his work on the challenge and had it sent to the US embassy in China. The next morning upon entering his office there was a note on his desk that the challenge had been delivered. He sat at his desk and started his morning routine. There was a knock on his door at 9:15. It was his secretary, Miss Finn.

“Mr President, I think you might be interested in the news.”

“What is it?”

“Just turn it on.”

The President had a flat screen in a cabinet. He turned it on to the news. There was President Zhēngfú zhě giving a press conference. The translator was saying, “I accept the challenge and the U.S. President will be receiving my formal acceptance before the day is out. I assume he will be OK with meeting in New York at the UN in two weeks to establish the rules.”

Hawethorne looked at Miss Finn. “Tell the staff we will be going to New York in two weeks. We have a lot of work to do.”

Five hours later, Hawethorne was sitting across from the head Chinese diplomat. In his hand was a formal acceptance of the challenge.

“Tell President Zhēngfú zhě that I am looking forward to our contest and I hope the end result will be great works by both countries that make the world a better place.”

The Rules and Judges

Zhēngfú zhě and Hawethorne talked on the phone and agreed to meet first for lunch at the UN and talk about their expectations of this contest before bringing others into the fold. The cafeteria food was just that, cafeteria food. The two men sat across from each other and the UN had cordoned off an area so that they could speak in private. Zhēngfú zhě spoke English fairly well and spoke up first.

“You provided a most unconventional response to my actions. It was enough to let me know not to take your expected responses for granted.”

Hawethorne smiled. “You are most kind. I like to think that your acceptance of my solution tells me a lot about you.”

“Probably not as much as you think. If I did not accept your challenge, I would look weak to my party. That is one luxury I am not allowed.”

“Well President Zhēngfú zhě, I must admit that you have been very eloquent about how much better communism is than capitalism. It seems we are about to find out if you are right. I would like us to be friends competing against each other. Each of us hoping our opponent does well but we do better than our opponent. I want to wish for a good competition.”

Zhēngfú zhě had a look like he expected a trick. It was an uncomfortable few seconds and ended with a smile on Zhēngfú zhě face. He put out his hand for a handshake and said, “To changing the world for the better and proving communism is better in one fell swoop.”

Hawethorne shook Zhēngfú zhě’s hand. “To changing the world for the better and proving capitalism is better in one fell swoop.”

The rest of the meal went by with an incredible calm and relaxed conversation. If both leaders were honest with themselves at the end of the meal, they would have to admit they liked each other. After the meal they adjourned to a meeting room with the Security Council members from France, United Kingdom, and Russia. The Russian member spoke first.

“We three people, not our countries, have accepted the request to sit as judges in the contest you two will be engaging in. The idea is to rank the two countries humanitarian efforts over the next year if I understand this correctly.”

Both men nodded.

“The first rule is that you will not be credited with any humanitarian actions that benefit your citizens. If you do something that benefits your citizens and other leader’s citizens, you will only receive credit for the other leader’s citizens that are helped.”

Both men nodded.

“Each month you will be required to send the three of us a report on the month’s activity. We each will then give the better report a point. That will put three points in play each month. These reports will be secret and only the three judges will be given access. That means a maximum of thirty six points for the year. Unlike the reports the score will always be available. The score will be updated two weeks after the submission of reports. If anything dishonest or untoward creeps up, the judges reserve the right to punish the perpetrators with anything from loss of a point to automatic forfeit. Do both of you agree to this?”

Both men nodded again.

“In the event of an 18 to 18 tie there will be a last month added to the competition. The winner of that month will be awarded the victory.”

“The judges will make themselves available to answer questions at all times but you must approach all of them at once. If the judgment is not unanimous, the judgment will not be considered part of the rules. An email address will be provided and the mail will be checked every seven days. Our response will be delivered seven days after receiving the message. This means that it takes two weeks to get a judgment from us. We hope that will help you guys to avoid constantly asking us things. Also we are able to change the rules if we unanimously agree that we have found something unsavory that we are unable to foretell.”

Both men nodded again.

“Finally, the prize. The loser promises to make a statue for the winner. The statue must be at least six feet high and be complimentary to the winner. It will be placed in front of the UN. We added this condition in hopes to further good sportsmanship. Also the reports of both parties will be publicized at the conclusion so the world will know what your countries have done for the world.”

The French member stood up and handed each of them a document and added, “Here are the rules we just laid forth. Please read them and sign the bottom if there are no questions. After you both sign these, the game starts and will end one year from now.

Both men read the rules which were exactly what they had heard. They signed the paper, shook hands and wished each other luck.

Putting ducks in a row

The president got into Marine One and grabbed the phone to call the Speaker of the House and the Vice President. Both were short conversations where he told them he would like to address both houses of congress in three days. He was lucky congress was in session or he would never have been able to call on them in such a short period. Both the speaker and vice president promised Congress would be available for the speech at 8pm. They also agreed that the speech would likely be the highest rated television speech in history.

As soon as Marine One landed the president jumped out of the chopper and ran into the Oval Office. The office contained the people who were going to head up teams. He had forwarded a list of rules to them and asked them to familiarize themselves with it before his arrival.

“Alright ladies and gentleman, you guys will be leading teams and I picked each of you personally. First an easily said task that will be extremely difficult to achieve goes to you Jenn. You are going to be responsible for the monthly report. The entire country will all be sending you our achievements for the report that goes to the judges plus I want you to look for things that might not make your desk. Your report on our actions will be integral in determining whether or not we are given

points. Everyone else, it is important that you make sure everything is well documented and sent to Jenn. Make no mistake, Jenn's team will need as much help as she can get. Jenn please go and get your staff ready. For the rest of you, please be sure that our opponent is kept in the dark as much as we can. They have almost a billion more people than us. The last thing we need is to give them ideas."

Jenn got up and headed for her office. Hawethorne pointed at Jacob.

"Jacob, you are no longer fund raising for my campaign. We need money and lots of it. You take whoever you need and start fund raising for the competition. Don't hesitate and feel free to advertise what you are raising money for."

"Shouldn't we keep quiet about why we are raising funds?"

"No worries Jacob. Zhēngfú zhě doesn't need to fund raise. China is Communist. He speaks and it gets done. It gives him an advantage that I am sure he hasn't missed. All you need to worry about is getting as much as you can. Don't just use our friends but also go after our enemies. Our enemies have an interest in us winning as well. Hopefully they will be able to see past party lines."

Jacob got up and left.

"Scott Slaem, I want the CIA to generate a list of every international injustice. Every group that you think we can help that deserves it. I especially want you to look through history to find causes that were the flavor of the month and have fallen by the wayside. We need a list of tasks to work on as of yesterday."

As Scott left there were only two people left. The first was Admiral Demetriv.

"Admiral, I want you in charge of our intelligence for the game. If Zhēngfú zhě sneezes I want to know. If any agency gives you hard time, call me. I will call them personally. Once a month I want a report."

Finally the last person left was Cameron who was the secretary of education. He was looking perplexed.

"Cameron, you are my secret weapon. Here is what I want from you. I want you to select a high school class president from each of the fifty states and one from Washington DC. I want all fifty one people at a hotel in DC in a week. I will be addressing them in secret. Please make sure these kids are of the highest caliber."

The Secretary of Education left with a bemused look. He wasn't sure if Hawethorne was all there but he did know things would be interesting with him around.

The Congressional Speech

President Hawethorne had read the speech he was going to give five times before going to the chamber of the House of Representatives. It was about two hours before the address and the President sat listening to music on his phone with ear buds. He hoped that would prevent anyone from bothering him if it wasn't important. He waited to be told that everyone was in the room and when someone tapped his arm, he knew it was time. He entered the chamber and walked to the podium without the ceremonial hellos that were customary. He hoped this would let everyone know he meant business. He waited for the political clapping to stop.

"I want to thank you congressmen and congresswomen for your time. This is going to be a short interruption. As I am sure you are aware, a dangerous situation occurred and in an effort to disarm the situation, I was forced to enter America into a contest. We have faced this opponent before. The face of communism has resurfaced. It is our responsibility to prove that our way of life has merit and I am relying on the members of congress to rise to the occasion. In the past we have quibbled amongst ourselves when there was no threat but now we face a threat that I hope will bring us together. We all have read the rules of the contest and if not, please feel free to contact my office. I will be sure the rules of engagement are forwarded to you. I have no doubt that you all see a chance to be a part of something that is bigger than just our country. If this is going to benefit us in anyway, I cannot micromanager everything that is done in the contest. If this were a military conflict I would be delegating the fighting of this conflict to the military. This is not a military conflict. The entire nation is part of the contest. This is why I am calling on you all to help win this contest. I am arranging access for all of you to submit your works on this contest. I need every one of you. You may ask what we risk. We risk losing the faith of the world. We risk our reputation. If any of you are foolish enough to think that that is nothing, I suggest you ask a business person what it means to lose your reputation and trust of the world. Ask yourself if people no longer trusted America how could we do business? This is a fight to remain number one in the world's trust. I ask you right now to put aside your differences for a year. I am asking you to show the world we are the juggernaut that we claim to be. If you stand with me, I can't see us losing. I am asking that you help me show the world that America is the best both functionally and morally. Let's retake the moral high ground together as a team."

Hawethorne walked out to a standing ovation but he knew that the applause could be real or it could be political posturing for the cameras. He desperately hoped for the first.

The high school initiative

Hawethorne was running from problem to problem for the next week. After the days ended he went to his study to prepare his talk with the high school kids. He was exhausted. Matters of state occupied his day so that he was only able to concentrate on the competition at night after his full day of work. As he was getting into the SUV to go to the hotel where the kids were housed, his wife commented on how bad he looked. Hawethorne sighed.

"I know Sandy but I think the first month is going to be the most important. It will dictate how the rest of the contest goes. With him being a dictator, it is going to require America to step up as a

whole. If they don't, I think we could be heading for a disaster. In three weeks I will take a break but until then I have to go as hard as I can."

Sandy smiled. "Just know that America has a chance to do something great. You made that possible. If they don't perform then they are wasting an opportunity that you gave them."

"Even though that's true, it won't be viewed that way."

They drove to the hotel in quiet. When the President walked into the room the seated kids got quiet. He walked to the podium. "First I want to start by saying that I want you to hold this conversation that we are going to have in confidence. There will be a short statement and then we will go into a question and answer phase. That phase will last as long as necessary assuming that no emergencies come up. I am coming to you with hat in hand. I have experienced firsthand the power that your age group possesses. I came to ask you guys if you would exercise that power in the competition with China. I want you guys to create state governments and a national government for American citizens under the age 18. Each of you here is a president of your student body. All fifty states are represented as well as a president of a school in Washington DC. This gives you 51 people so there should always be a decision of every vote as long as you don't allow people to abstain. I don't want to get too involved in how you guys handle your business. I came here to give a couple suggestions and give you time to get to know each other over the next week. At the end of the week my people have arranged for your return trip home. Tonight I have one goal. I want you guys to identify a leader out of the people assembled here. That person will be given unfettered access to me. I am hoping each person in this room will not only participate but will gather and lead the schools of their state or district. I warn you that how you guys approach helping is entirely up to you. I don't have all the answers, in fact I have precious few answers. I just know that your generation is crafty and smart. If you and I can tap that, I think it will make America an incredibly stronger opponent. I want you focused like a laser on beating China. After there are no more questions, I will ask for a show hands of who here wishes to participate in this task I am asking you guys to undertake. I guess it is time for questions. Please raise your hand if you have a question. I will pick people out people at random until there are no more questions."

Every hand in the room rose. The president pointed at the boy up front all the way on the right.

"I am Tim. You have more power then all of us combined. Why are you coming to us for help? I find it hard to believe that we can do something you can't."

Hawethorne smiled. "First off I think you underestimate yourself. There are three reasons I am approaching you. I want to make it clear Zhēngfú zhě is not to be under estimated. It is of the utmost importance that you guys understand how slick this man is. If you think that we can beat China without every able body and mind then you are sorely mistaken. I have met this man and I respect him. Second reason I am here is the idea that the more eyes on a problem the more solutions are seen. As a group

the youth of America is brilliant and has massive untapped potential. I fully expect Zhēngfú zhě to tap his youth. I am just trying to do the same. Third I want the world to see you and what you are. I don't just want the world to see my generation when they make the reports public at the end of the contest. I want the world to know not to mess with your generation when you guys come to power. Anymore questions?"

Hands shot up again. The President pointed to the person next to Tim.

"I am Seth. What exactly are you expecting of us?"

"Well Seth, I am not going to tell you what to do. I am going to give you guys a place where you can submit a monthly report about your actions that are related to the contest. I am going to give you each a copy of the rules and let you guys figure it out. That is if you want to be a part of this after our time tonight. I think you are strong and smart. If I were to tell you what to do then there would be no reason to involve you. Your minds and work ethic are what I need. I am just support. If you want support let me know but don't expect me to tell you what to do. If I have to hold your hand, just leave now. I have lots of people who will only do what they are told. I don't want you in that category. Next Question?"

Hands shot up again. The President pointed to the person next to Seth.

"I am Mary. You definitely have some idea of what you are looking for. The numbers are obviously significant. What is your idea of what you want?"

"Mary is it? That is an awesome question and one that I was hoping someone would ask. You are right that the group of you guys is not arbitrary. I will not tell you what to do. I will tell you what I would do if I was in your position. If you like the idea feel free to use it and if you don't then so be it. If I were in your shoes I would look at history. Most notably I would examine our founding fathers. Each of you is the head of a school government. I think of this as a local government. What I feel you lack is a state and federal government. If I were you I would think it was time to correct that. That is why I set it up with an odd number. As a whole you can make the decisions like the second continental congress. Personally I would look into Thomas Jefferson. That is all the help you will get from me as far as the direction I would take. Be careful though. If you make something too powerful you might regret it when your generation takes the reins from ours."

The question and answers continued for many hours. At two in the morning there were no more immediate questions. The president asked for a show of hands to see if they were willing to give his plan a try. Before anyone could raise their hand Mary stood up and said, "Wait a minute. I see no reason to rush this. I want to wait till the end of the week to vote. I think we should be afforded the privilege to confer with each other before answering this question." There were several whispers of agreement throughout the room.

President Hawthorne grinned.

“That makes perfect sense. There is one last thing I would suggest. If I were you I would put someone in charge of order and determine who talks when. You might want to consider a talking stick. Mary if I had a vote for the person to keep order you would definitely have my vote. Goodnight all. I look forward to hearing your answer. Please send your response to this email address. After receiving your answer the email address will be destroyed.”

A day before the end of the week the president received a message that Acting President Mary Armstrong would be calling on President Hawthorne the next day. She arrived the next day and had to wait an hour so that the President could make time for her. Mary walked into the Oval Office with supreme confidence that only a young person could generate.

“President Hawthorne, it is so nice of you to make time for me on such short notice.” She couldn’t resist the smirk at the absurdity of her fake indignation. “I came to tell you that by unanimous consent we accept your suggestion that we expand our juvenile government. We are still fighting among ourselves about how to go about this. As an opening act of diplomacy, we have decided to win this competition with China for you. We have voted and I am acting President until we can have elections. We have determined that we need a year, a month and a day from when you signed your acceptance of the rules for the competition between the US and China before we are ready for elections. This way the competition will be over before elections. Here is the name and email address of the person we have assigned to interact with your report writer. I trust you will see it reaches the appropriate person. If there is nothing else I will be heading out. Busy Busy you understand.”

“Here is all my contact information, Mary. Please promise that you will guard it with your life. It is a pain to change everything if this information goes public.”

Mary grew very serious. “I will not let you down with this information or with the task of beating China. Are we good for now?”

“I think that is everything. I look forward to working together. Don’t hesitate to call if you need something.”

Mary’s smile came back as she spun around with great zeal. “Catch you later.” She shouted on her way out the door. Hawthorne was beside himself. He felt his opinion of Mary could not get any higher.

Severe Tropical Cyclone Hu

Hawthorne was going over reports about the economic troubles in Michigan. Things were definitely going in the wrong direction there. The White House chief of staff walked into the oval office and waited for the President to acknowledge his presence.

“Mr President, I have just been informed that there is an extremely likely chance that Severe Tropical Cyclone Hu will be hitting the Philippines and Vietnam. The expected damage is very severe.”

“Just what I need, a crisis while all this goes on.” He picked up his phone and hit the button for his secretary. “Please get Admiral Demetriv on the line and send the call in directly.”

After fifteen minutes the phone rang and President Hawethorne picked it up.

“Admiral Demetriv. Please prepare the seventh fleet and the Red Cross for a disaster response. As soon as they are ready I want you to send them to the Philippines and Vietnam. “

“Yes Sir.”

“Thank you, Admiral.” The president hung up the phone.

Five days later the Admiral walked into the Oval Office.

“Admiral, it is good to see you. How are things going?”

“Mr President, we reached the storm damaged areas of the pacific. Upon arriving a curious thing happened. There were men everywhere which we assume showed up before the storm even hit. They had packs so large they could barely carry them and red helmets. When we tried to engage them they would only hand us a piece of paper and move along.”

The Admiral handed a piece of paper to the President. President Hawethorne read the paper and dismissed the Admiral. The Admiral promptly left and when he closed the door, President Hawethorne started laughing. After a few moments, the president got up and walked to the Press Briefing Room where there was a briefing in progress. He walked to the microphone and asked the Press Secretary to take a seat.

“Excuse me ladies and gentleman, I just got a message from President Zhēngfú zhě that I would like to read to you. It goes, ‘Dear President Hawethorne. I wish to inform you of the fact that you will no longer have the luxury of leading disaster response for the world. It is the intent of China to surpass you in the area of disaster response and if you want to maintain being the front runner in this area you will have to be a great deal faster. Your opponent, Zhēngfú zhě.’ Members of the press, America is being challenged. In response I am asking Congress to provide four more holidays. That is 1 for each season of the year. On these federal holidays, which will be called community holidays, everyone will gather with their communities and together help anyone in their community who needs it, as best they can. The help can be anything from painting an elderly couples house to holding a barbeque for the poor. The goal of these days is to have two results. The first is to help others in your community and the second is to strengthen the community bonds. If Congress approves these paid federal holidays, I will approach the UN to see if these days can be made international holidays. If this happens, the world will have stronger communities and it will help members of communities that are having hard times the world over. Thank you.”

The President walked out of the room and headed back to the Oval Office.

The Ultimate Delegation

The President sat down for dinner with his wife Sandy.

“You look terrible Jon.”

“I feel miserable Sandy.”

“Have you been sleeping well?”

“Not really. I just have so much to do that I am unable to take even a second for myself.”

“We discussed this before you started campaigning for President. You know what to do.”

“I know we agreed that when I get into this position I need to delegate things so that I don’t burn myself out. I need to delegate the contest with China most but I don’t trust anyone to do it. I don’t know what to do. Who could I possibly delegate that too?”

“Jon, I know who I would pick but the question is who would you pick?”

“Humor me. Who would you pick to delegate running the contest to?”

“I would pick James Eempio.”

President Hawethorne put his fork down and looked at his wife in disbelief.

“Sandy, he is perfect.”

“I know dear.” Sandy grinned.

The next day after reading the paper and eating his Danish President Hawethorne had his secretary call James Eempio.

“Hi James, it is Hawethrone.”

“Yes sir I know. What can I do for you?”

“I have given a lot of thought to my current predicament. I seem to only have time for my competition or running the country. I know you have experience with the powers of the Presidency as well as great humanitarian works. You are known for helping to get clean water to people with meager resources and housing the needy. I was hoping that I could convince you to take control of the competition with China.”

“Ha! Finding the Chinese a little more formidable than you thought they would be?”

President Hawethorne assented sheepishly.

“OK, send me a status of everything that you have done and I will look it over. I assume that if I need anything from you, I will just need to ask. Also I want a list of people that will report to me and for you to notify everyone involved of my role.”

“Consider it done and thank you, James.”

The discussion with Mary Stronghold

President Hawethorne picked up the phone and called Mary Stronghold just after the first months report was delivered to the UN.

“Hello President Hawethorne. How can I help you?”

“Hi, Mary. I just wanted to touch bases and see how things are going. We just sent the first report to the judges.”

“Oh, I guess you are wondering why my colleagues and I have not contributed anything in the first report.”

“I guess it is right to business then. I was wondering.”

“Well Sir to be honest with you, we underestimated the true scope of the task. The man hours alone are actually quite staggering. We took your suggestion and looked at history. However we expanded the search from just people with good ideas to include people with bad ideas. The most prominent of things we examined was the paramilitary Hitler Youth. As we looked into it further, we realized that we could potentially create something sinister. When we realized that it stopped being a game. I know we promised you victory but we voted. The decision was that we would rather fail at our promise than build something that is bad. I hope you don't hate me but that is our official stance.”

President Hawethorne was disappointed but he was not going to tell Mary that.

“That's smart. I actually am glad about your priority. It is smart and the last thing I need is the collective youth of America involved in something sinister.”

“Don't count us out yet President Hawethorne. Building fail safes is just taking longer than expected. We still expect to make a very large contribution over the next eleven months. We haven't been sitting on our hands over the last month. We have implemented our tax code and are working diligently on what services we can provide to our tax payers. Unlike your government, we give our constituents the right to join or not but if you join, you pay taxes and get access to our services. We provide tutoring and rides to places. We protect people from bullying and make sure our citizens always have someone to turn to. We are also going to make sure there is representation through voting and we will always be vigilant in finding new services to provide. We are thinking of making a court that kids can take their teachers to if they feel they are being treated unfairly. We tax a dollar a week and ask that the constituent provide more if possible. It may seem like little but there are about 25,000 schools

that are currently signed up. Each school has an average of 1000 students. By our calculations, over the next 11 months we should raise almost a billion dollars to put to work. We will have expenses so we can't apply all that money to the competition. We are currently working on a spending bill that will apply half of that money to your competition."

The President's jaw was on the floor.

"Well Mary, that is absolutely spectacular. I did want to tell you that I have placed a person in charge of everything involving the competition. You still have my contact information and can use it whenever you need. Regarding the competition, if you need anything the new person to contact is James Esemio. I will make sure you get his contact information."

"Excellent choice, Mr President, he is a very awesome character."

"I am glad you approve President Armstrong. Is there anything else?"

"Just one thing I guess you should be aware of. A lot of us have friends in other countries. We are trying to get them to also start their own student governments but we have realized that that is dangerous for some of them. I just wanted you to be aware of what we are doing. I have to run if you don't need anything."

"No Ma'am. Thank you, I think you guys are doing amazing. I am extremely impressed. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, President Hawethorne."

The Chinese Cuban initiative

President Hawethorne picked up the phone that was ringing. It was his secretary, President Zhēngfú zhě was on the phone. The president asked the people in his office to step out and told his secretary to put the leader of China through.

"Hello President Hawethorne. I hope I just need a few minutes of time. How are you?"

"President Zhēngfú zhě, it is nice to hear from you. Things are going well. I enjoyed your note and even though I want the points for the game, I am glad you will be taking an increased role in disaster relief. To what do I owe the honor of this phone call?"

"Well, I was talking to one of my allies in the Caribbean and he was explaining how he wished his relationship with the United States was better. So naturally I thought, why not check with you and see if I could help make the relationship better. Maybe get a couple points for being a peacemaker."

"Are you saying that you are calling to get me to remove sanctions on Cuba?"

"That is exactly what I want."

"I can't do it."

"You can't or won't, President Hawthorne."

"I can't. I am not so vain that I would deny a chance at peace just to prevent you from getting points. It would take an act of congress to remove our sanctions. I will support you in any way I can in this endeavor but it is just not in my power. If you are going to achieve this, you are going to have to talk to Congress. I have some pull in my party and I will use it to help you in this task but ultimately you have to get to the legislative branch."

"Does Congress know that this embargo is only functional as a statement and that Cuba can get anything they want from you by going to Canada?"

"Honestly, I don't think they give the embargo any thought whatsoever. I will tell you that I feel the country missed a great opportunity when hurricane Katrina hit. I was embarrassed that we spit in their face when they offered help. We sure messed up there. I will support you if I can get a promise from you. I want your assurances that nobody will arm them to attack us. As long as they don't threaten us, I see no reason not to be cordial."

"What would you suggest I do to fix this strained relationship?"

"I would approach Congress publically and also talk to the people of the US."

"How would I do that?"

"That is one thing about America. The media is free to talk to who they choose. If the media likes you then you can tell America whatever you want. Just be aware, in America someone will try to profit from demonizing you no matter who you are. If you can get this issue onto Congress's agenda, I will do what I can to support you."

"Thank you, President Hawthorne. Good night."

"Good night, President Zhēngfú zhě."

The Kylibi defense in Africa

As the President was talking on the phone, General Hunter Bonner walked into the Oval Office. The president welcomed him and asked what was needed.

"Mr President, there is a situation in Africa that is just developing. There are two tribes that have lived next to each other for generations. The first group is a tribe called Kylibi and they are without a doubt pacifists. The tribe that is next to the Kylibi, called the Windlomo, are not pacifists. The Windlomo have experienced a drought and the Kylibi are on very prosperous land. The Windlomo have chosen to take the land that the Kylibi have and in the process commit genocide. Our current

information suggests that there will be no Kylibi left alive in three weeks if someone does not intervene. The question is what are your orders? Should we stand down or get involved?"

"General, I can't abide by genocide. Do what you have to do to protect the Kylibi. I want a full report monthly until the situation is resolved."

"Yes sir."

The president went back to work and didn't think much on it. About five weeks later, James Esempio asked for a word. When the President's schedule cleared up, Esempio walked into the Oval Office.

"Mr President, there has been an issue with the competition that we feel you should be aware of. We decided that your prevention of genocide in Africa should be added to the list of humanitarian tasks performed this month. The judges looked into the defense of the Kylibi tribe. They found that the military was forced to kill a bunch of the Windlomo. They released a change in the rules and have given all of the points for this month to China. The new rule is that there can be no intentional loss of life for the activity to be considered a humanitarian effort. We know that you are more upset about the loss of life than anyone but you still need to be aware of the fact that we basically just publicized your actions to the world."

"Don't worry James. I would give the same order in a heartbeat if I needed to. I need to talk to General Bonner to find out how the drilling for the wells is going on Windlomo land. If there is nothing else, I have some things to handle."

A few days later the Whitehouse Chief of Staff entered the room and turned on the news for the President. There was Zhēngfú zhě on the TV giving a speech. The translator was playing on the speakers.

"Due to the actions of the American President, a tribe of gentle good people were saved from genocide. It is the opinion of China that this type of behavior should be encouraged worldwide. Defense of the innocent should be everyone's priority. Because of this, I have petitioned the judges and been granted the right to give two of the points that China earned to America in the spirit of good gamesmanship."

Lebanon

President Hawethorne walked into war room and sat at the head of the table.

"All right, what do we know right now?"

"Mr. President, an unknown group of people on the Lebanese-Israeli border has kidnapped a few Israeli soldiers who were manning a border crossing post. Israel has provided an ultimatum to the

Lebanese government. If their men are not returned in three days, the Israeli's will take steps. These steps will likely consist of an air campaign and several incursions into Lebanon."

The president shook his head.

"I have seen this before. What was the relationship between the two countries before this occurred?"

"That is what is so odd. It really seemed that things were going well."

The President said, "I have seen this before. I want you to find out if the people who committed this kidnapping report to Glorious Teacher Hakem Alem."

General Bonner spoke up first.

"What exactly do you think is happening sir?"

"As I am sure you all know, Glorious Teacher Alem hates Israel. He has found a way to keep Israel isolated from Lebanon. He has his men kidnap someone from Israel and Israel, bless their aggressive souls, pounds the crap out of Lebanon. Then when Israel stands down, he comes in and provides relief to the battered Lebanese. The Lebanese then love the Glorious Teacher and Israel is again surrounded by enemies. He has done this before."

"What do you want us to do?"

"Scott, please find out if I am right about what I think is going on. As for me, I will be getting on the horn to Israel and see if I can talk them out of what is probably the inevitable conflict between the two countries. Put the sixth fleet on notice. We may need a seriously quick response from them. I want a large number of the Army Corp of Engineers to be moved to Italy where they will be able to join the sixth fleet quickly. After I call the Israeli PM, we will better know what we need to do."

Two days later the President walked back into the War Room. As he sat, he cleared his throat and the room went quiet.

"I was unable to convince the Israeli PM that attacking Lebanon would play into his enemy's hands. Scott believes with 75% chance of likelihood I am right about what is happening. The Israeli PM is certain that his people will not tolerate the world thinking that Israelis can be taken without a serious and violent response from him. I can only see one thing to do."

"What is that Mr. President?"

"We are going to wait for Israel to decimate southern Lebanon. Then we will swoop in as fast as we can and fix everything in Lebanon that Israel breaks. We will have to move fast but we should be able to get the support of the Lebanese citizens and leave no good will for Glorious Teacher Alem. Now that you know the plan, please work out amongst yourselves how to achieve the goal."

A month later the president came into his office and found a note waiting on the desk. The note said, "Congratulations on your handling of the situation in Lebanon. I will be submitting the countries work in war torn Lebanon to the judges. – Eempio"

The Gobi Desert Settlement

Admiral Demetriv was sitting on one of the couches in the Oval Office talking to the President.

"Mr President, remember the report I gave you about the Chinese settlement just outside the Gobi Desert?"

"Yes I remember. What about it?"

"Well for the last six months we have been watching this massive installation going up. They added a huge airport and a complex of giant buildings. This thing is large and we have been trying to figure out what they are up to. It turns out we think that it is nothing nefarious."

"What is it?"

"We are fairly sure that it is a hospital complex like the world has never seen. What we don't understand is the placement. It is nowhere near any kind of major city. It is just sitting in the middle of nowhere."

"Keep an eye on it, Admiral."

Two weeks later the Admiral returned to the Oval Office and again in conversation he mentioned the complex.

"We know what the complex is for. President Zhēngfú zhě is advertising a new service for the world. If you are sick and cannot afford medical care, you can submit your case to the doctors at these hospitals he has built. If the doctors approve you then you are flown into the hospitals and cared for."

"It is a good idea. I wish I could do something like that but I have no idea how to fund it. Have you any idea about his choice of location?"

"Actually he is not hiding that either. He plans to make it a center for solar power collection for his country."

The president couldn't help but admire President Zhēngfú zhě. Two birds with one stone. President Hawthorne wished he had thought of it.

Meeting in NY for the final results

Two weeks before the end of the contest, President Hawthorne invited President Zhēngfú zhě to spend the final day of the contest in New York City together. They were two points apart with American in the lead. The next three points would decide the victor.

They sat down at breakfast in a nice restaurant and just talked for several hours about nothing and everything. It was a long conversation that rambled. By the end of the meal several things became evident. First the two leaders respected each other and second there was a camaraderie that had developed between the two.

President Hawthorne smiled.

“President Zhēngfú zhě, I understand that you are a fan of the Opera. We have time to kill before five o’clock when the results are released. I have arranged a surprise for you.”

The two men walked to the car and went to a theatre. Each of them took seats in a theater that was empty except for the two of them.

“President Zhēngfú zhě, I had a statue made for you whether you win or lose. This stupid little game has had a great impact.”

“President Hawthorne, I have a statue for you as well. I can’t believe the outcome our stupid game has had.”

The two men sat back in their chairs. As they did a little girl walked onto the stage in a strange costume. Her voice belted out a song in Italian that neither man in the room understood. The two friends sat back and were awestruck by the sheer beauty of what they were listening to.

The Power of Anger

The Incident

A pretty 14 year old girl walks into the main room of a community center while carrying several large white boxes. A man in a suit by the door whispers into his hand. “Hummingbird is in the main hall. Team three has her.”

“Good morning Winston.” The girl said to the man in the suit.

“Good morning Sarah. What is in the boxes? Is it another attempt to get Casey to speak to you?”

“Yes.”

“Sarah, you have spent every free moment trying to get through to Casey. The things he has seen are pretty rough. I just want you to know we are all pulling for you.”

“I talked to his foster parents yesterday. Did you know he doesn’t have a birthday? They found him eating trash and beaten. I am going to do whatever it takes but that child is going to talk sometime and I hope it’s to me.”

“I hope you are right. He hasn’t spoken to anyone yet and he has been off the streets for a month. The doctors say he is fine physically.”

“I got a smile out of him last Wednesday when I was reading him a story. That was just the beginning. That boy is going to be happy and well-adjusted before I am done with him. Trust me Winston.”

The room was full of kids. All were obviously wearing donated clothes and many were a little scruffy looking. It wasn’t an orphanage but a day care center for the poor. Their parents were all hard working citizens that had to work and could not take care of their children while fighting the good fight. Suddenly a child looked toward Sarah. The child screamed, “Hi Sarah.” A bunch of others looked up and ran toward her. Sarah was definitely a favorite of the kids. In fact if you asked Winston, he would say that Sarah was a favorite wherever she went.

Casey sat in the corner but he did look up. Sarah smiled at him but he put his head down and looked back at the floor. It seemed like that was all he did. Sarah spoke up and asked all the kids to listen up. She had a surprise for them. The kids got quiet. “I have an announcement. Today is Casey’s birthday and I decided we should have a party for him. Does that sound like fun?”

The kids responded with a flurry of positive statements. “A party, yes. I like parties. Oh cool. We are going to have a party...” Casey didn’t move. Sarah retrieved one of the boxes from the table. It contained tape, streamers, signs and all sorts of decorations. “Ok the first thing we must do is decorate.” The other volunteers came and helped the kids decorate. With the kids occupied, Sarah took the opportunity to go and talk to Casey.

“Hi Casey. Today is your new birthday. It is October 12th. From now on if anyone asks for your birthday, you just tell them it is October 12th. OK?”

Casey looked up briefly and looked back down.

“I will be back in a while Casey but if you want, you can join us. It is your choice.”

Sarah went back to helping the kids decorate. She had to stop some of the children from mummifying Sam with streamers. After a half hour the room was properly adorned with festive colors. Sarah called the kids to the center of the room.

“Alright guys. I think the room is done. Do you like it?”

The kids all signaled their approval in different ways.

“All right, I think we should start the party. Who wants to play games? I think we should start with pin the tail on the donkey.”

The game was started and the first player was so dizzy that she fell. Another kid pinned the tail on one of the volunteers. The kids thought this was great fun. Sarah caught Casey watching instead of looking at the floor. She wanted to jump up and down but instead she played it cool so as not to startle the young boy. After some time, it was clear that even though Casey didn't participate, he was enjoying watching the party. After the piñata burst, Sarah made sure to get some candy to give to Casey.

“All right kids. It is time for us to sing happy birthday.”

Sarah opened the last box on the table. She showed all the cupcakes to the kids. They all tried to grab the cupcakes from the box but, Sarah deftly pulled the cupcakes from the kids reach. She explained, “First we have to acknowledge the person responsible for all the fun we had today. Today is Casey's Birthday. Before we can have the cupcakes, we need to sing Happy Birthday to Casey.”

The entire group sang like there was no tomorrow. Motivated by sugar, the kids really belted it out. Casey sat in the corner and continued looking down but his face turned red in embarrassment. After the chorus of happy birthday, Sarah grabbed a cupcake and napkin. She went to Casey and gave him the cupcake. As he was digging into the cupcake, she handed him a baggy with the piñata candy.

A little while later Winston walked up to Sarah. “We need to leave in fifteen minutes.”

“OK Winston. Let me say goodbye to Casey and we will go.”

Sarah went up to where Casey was sitting in the corner and knelt down to look him in the eye. “Happy birthday, Casey. I have to go but I will see you again soon.”

Casey looked up and smiled. Then Casey went back to looking at the floor. It was progress. Sarah had hoped for more but at least it was a move forward. She went and grabbed her coat. As she was walking to the door, Winston spoke into his hand. “Hummingbird is leaving for the car.”

Winston was right behind her as she stepped out of the door. He heard shots being fired from a distance and grabbed Sarah. He dragged and tossed Sarah into the awaiting bullet proof vehicle and smacked the roof three times to signal the driver to leave. As the vehicle sped away from him, Winston looked down to see his black suit covered in blood. There was bone fragments and brain on him and he was not injured. Winston realized what that meant and was immediately filled with anger.

Notification- finding out and rushing to hospital

The president was in the oval office. He was meeting with a few people. They were discussing the money that they would be providing to Egypt as help. The group were disagreeing on whether Egypt was an ally or just taking the United States' money while continuing to act against the United States interests. A man came into the room and whispered in the president's ear. He promptly got up and said, "Gentlemen there is a personal matter and I must leave immediately. Please excuse me."

The president promptly walked out of the room and headed to the first lady's office. He entered the office and closed the door behind him. She was alone and crying.

"I am so sorry that I wasn't here when you found out. I wanted to be the one to tell you. I need to identify the body at the hospital. Do you want to go or do you need to stay?"

"She is my baby girl. Of course I am going! Why Sarah? She was everything."

The two embraced for a while and then headed to the vehicles.

The parents arrived at the hospital and were met by a secret service agent. He escorted them to the morgue. The sheet was pulled back on a body. Underneath was three quarters of the face of a young girl, about 15 years old. The first lady collapsed on the body and started sobbing and crying, "My baby. They killed my baby."

The president nodded to the doctor to show the confirmation of what they were expecting. Then he wrapped his wife in an embrace and helped her out of the room and into the hall. A secret service agent provided a chair from somewhere for the first lady. The first lady sat in the hall, composing herself. The head of the department of homeland security, George Franklin, arrived and stood quietly by until the president looked up. "How did this happen George? Her safety was your responsibility. What the hell happened?"

"Sir we are going through the video and people who witnessed what happened. As best we can tell, it was a one in a million shot. Two gang members were shooting at each other from over a hundred yards away. The first shot fired in the altercation glanced a car, ricocheted and hit your daughter. As best we can tell she was dead within a small fraction of a second from

when the bullet left the gun. We have both people that were involved in custody and we are keeping them completely isolated. Neither is aware of the consequences of their actions.”

“I want those men killed for their actions. We will make an example of them.”

“I am not sure that is a good idea, sir.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“Sir one is 14 years old and part of the CS-43 gang. The other is 16 and part of the Money Inc gang. The 14 year old is the one that fired the shot that killed your daughter.”

“You keep them isolated till I have dealt with my daughter’s funeral. I will have a list of people that I will need to talk to after the funeral. I am not in the best decision making frame of mind that I have ever been. Nothing will happen till after the funeral when I am in a less reactive role.”

Support-Funeral and various well wishers

“I am sorry for your loss Mr. President.”

“Thank you for your condolences, Judge Griffith. It means a lot to me that you were able to make it to the funeral. I understand that you lost a brother to gang violence. How did you get over it?”

“I didn’t. I would love to tell you that after a while the feeling of loss just goes away but the truth is it doesn’t. I grew up in gang turf. The rolling 17’s ruled my neighborhood. Almost everyone I grew up with died or was imprisoned due to the gang. My older brother died in the initiation process. Many of my friends were killed and several were strung out. When I became a judge, I put almost all of the 17’s away.”

“Did that help with your feeling of loss? I haven’t been sleeping well. Can you sleep now?”

“You will be able to sleep eventually but if what you are asking is if I got my pound of flesh, the answer is no. By putting all the 17’s in jail, I made them much more powerful. You see, Mr. President, there is a saying among criminal organizations. The inside controls the outside. By imprisoning almost all the 17’s, I made them major players in the prison gangs. The people involved in killing my brother are more powerful now than they ever were in the past. Due to their increased power inside, they have gone national. Anyone in prison in southern Illinois is paying the 17’s or protecting the 17’s in other prisons. They live like kings and their territory is expanding by ridiculous amounts. In fact to be honest, my attempt at destroying them has completely backfired. Don’t worry though Mr. President, the pain will fade in time.”

“Judge Griffith, I need your help on a small project that I am working on. Could you come by the House in the next week? I think I could really use your help with the healing process. I am glad to meet someone who understands what I am going through.”

“Yes sir. I will wait for your secretary to call.”

Preparations- Meetings with people

Head of DEA

President Hawthorne looked up and saw the head of the DEA, Dean Reynolds. “Thank you for coming so quickly, I have some questions about the gangs that are so prevalent. The first thing I would like is some idea of the scope of the problem. Please sit so we can chat about your assessment of the situation.

As both men sat on the plush couches that faced each other, Dean cleared his throat. “Well Mr. President the situation is for lack of a better term, fubar. We are not the only organization fighting this problem. Although it is not our primary objective right now, we expect that to change considering recent events.”

Hawthorne interrupted, “What do you mean that it is not your primary objective?”

“Unfortunately, the DEA’s primary goals are not to go after the distributors but to go after the people making the product. That being said, we still have a great deal set up to fight the gangs. Have no fear the FBI, Coast guard, local police, and many other agencies are trying to handle this problem as well and we expect that you are going to give us permission to redirect more resources to expand everyone’s roles in this fight.”

“You’re right about that. How big of a problem are we looking at?”

“Mr. President, the problem is massive. We have about 1.4 million gang members in the country. Some are in the prison gangs but we also have organized crime, street gangs, and motorcycle gangs. All of these gangs are financially supported by drugs. The street gangs are primarily kids but they are armed and dangerous as you are aware. It is rare to find someone in that environment that has made it to the age of 25. Organized crime is more dangerous and far more difficult to put into prison. These organized criminals and motorcycle gangs are fairly hard to infiltrate because the recruitment process is so long. They usually have to be taken down from the inside.”

“Dean, what is the intel like on these people?”

“Well, to be honest we are outnumbered by a lot in this war but what we know is a good deal. The problem is that we can’t prove a lot. The people that have the information to put a lot of these people away are working through the ranks to try and get to the big fish. Even

if we had the ability to round them all up and throw them in jail, I would resign before participating in that plan.”

“Excuse me but did the head of the DEA just tell me that he would not arrest criminals? You better explain yourself because right now, I think I may need to replace you.

“Yes I did. When I got to my position I hated all the scumbags that I am responsible to deal with and I still do. I wish I could round them all up and put them in jail but I have to be realistic at my level in my job. It really is simple. It costs about sixty thousand dollars a year to house a criminal. Each prisoner will last an average of fifty years and there are 1.4 million gang members. If we were to round them all up then you just spent 5 trillion dollars. The people running the prisons would be happy but let’s look at what you bought. The way it looks to me is that we will still have a bunch of users with money. With the distribution gutted, there will be a reprieve for a few years as the distribution people rebuild. In a few years things will return to what they are now. The prison gangs will go from large to massive and the shotcallers will make sure the people we imprison never leave. I am sorry but gutting the distribution system will have minimal effect on the problem if not exacerbate it. Besides the head of many of these organizations are in other countries, central and south America specifically”

“So what do you recommend Dean?”

“Well Mr. President, there are many different ideas about how to handle the problem but currently law enforcement is reacting rather than anticipating the bad guys moves. The bad guys move and we try to catch them. You know the cat and mouse game. The truth is that it all boils down to money and people wanting to feel good. There will always be people who want to feel good. Those people will always pay to feel good if they can swing it financially. Some of those people will find drugs meet their needs. Drugs will always be in demand because of this. There is one group of people who feel that if we can kill the supply then people will never know what they are missing. This group has set the agenda. If you don’t know something will make you feel better and you never see it, how can you get addicted? These are the people in my position and higher. This is the goal we are seeking, to eliminate that idea that drugs are an option for getting your kicks.”

“I think I see where this is going but what are the other ideas, Jon?”

“Well, the other extreme that is bandied about some times is the idea that we legalize all of it and all our problems disappear. The bad guys lose their money and are poor. The business world steps in. They pay taxes and the government becomes rich. Everything is peachy.”

“What do you think about this solution? I get the impression you don’t agree with this either.”

“It’s not as good a solution as the proponents would have you believe. If you look to history and more specifically prohibition, it did really hit the criminals hard when we legalized alcohol. However it did not stop all the troubles around alcohol. We have people who can’t work because they can’t control themselves. People die in car accidents caused by alcohol. Vehicular homicide is part of everyday life. People still make it illegally because we made it so expensive to make legally. Kids still have access to it no matter how hard we try to stop it. Not to mention that the public might try and hang you for making drugs legal after we spent decades on propaganda that was designed to brainwash people to hate drugs. If you make all drugs legal, I could potentially see our country going the way of the Roman Empire. I think it will put us on a direct course to destruction by decadence.”

“Is there any answer?”

“The only way I can see you winning the current engagement is to mix the two potential solutions. Examine what you can legalize and make the rest illegal. The pie gets smaller. Then I would make sure everyone in the country was made aware that the war on drugs is over. The final thing I would do is start a new war. I would declare The war on addiction and chemical abuse. I would tax everything that can be addictive including gambling and send all that money into the new war.”

“You can’t be serious?”

“Sorry sir but it is the right move. However I am not sure that solution could be sold to the American people. I am not in your position and I never will be. Whoever does this is the type of leader I would follow though. To me there are two types of leader. One type sees where everyone is going and runs to that direction to get there first. The other one convinces everyone where to go and everyone walks there together. My solution requires the second kind of leader.”

“Thank you for your time, Mr. Reynolds.”

“You’re welcome, Mr. President! If you need anything please call. The world is a darker place without your daughter.”

Director of CIA

President Hawethorne looked up and saw Director Scott Slaem of the CIA. “Hi Scott. I wanted to talk to you about the drug gangs that are plaguing the country right now. I am specifically interested in these CS-43 and Money Inc gangs which are responsible for my daughter’s death.”

“Well Mr. President. Those are really not the type of things that we concern ourselves with at the CIA. These guys are kind of supposed to be handled by DEA, FBI and local police.”

"I am aware that you guys are not to be employed internally. However it was recently brought to my attention that many of these gangs are international. I asked you here to let you know that I am going to be adding to your plate."

"Yes Mr. President. What is it you would like from CIA?"

"I want you to learn and identify all gangs and criminal organizations that operate both inside the US and outside at the same time. I then want you to send me a monthly report that identifies international targets and the best things to do to disrupt and destroy all of the non-domestic operations of these organizations. If they are involved with our gangs and criminal organizations and are not American citizens, you are to identify them and send me a list with their names. I want to make sure you understand that I want names and roles that they play. Are we clear?"

"Yes Mr. President. Just to be clear, no American citizens?"

"Exactly. Thanks Scott. I have an important meeting now with Admiral Demetriv. I want your first list as soon as possible. Have a good day."

"You too. Mr. President."

Admiral Eric Demetriv

President Hawethorne looked up and saw Admiral Eric Demetriv. "Hello Admiral. I want to talk to you about a couple things. I was wondering about the status of decommission is on the aircraft carrier Swartzmead?"

"Well Mr. President. It is still on schedule to be decommissioned in three weeks. It has been relieved of duty and sits with a skeleton crew in South Carolina. That is an odd request if you don't mind my saying. "

"When you have finished taking it apart, what do you intend to do with it admiral?"

"It is scheduled to be sunk and turned into a reef."

"I think we can find a better use for it. I was wondering if maybe we could get off topic for a little bit and talk about you personally. I hear you are thinking of leaving the service. Retiring I believe?"

"Yes sir. I will be retiring in the next two months."

"Maybe I could either change your mind or get a recommendation of someone else. I have a task that will be running the operation of that carrier but not in a military capacity. I am thinking of selling it to the DEA but it would need someone to pick a crew for it and run it. I was thinking of you."

“Sir I am unwilling to answer yes or no until I know more. I will not end a noble career with illegal activities.”

“I wouldn’t put you in that kind of situation so there is nothing to fear. Currently the CIA is identifying non-citizen targets that are causing death and destruction in the United States. The Swartzmead will be tasked with protecting these citizens by removing the people and places that are contributing to harming these American citizens. The DEA and FBI will also supply you with tasks to complete as well. “

“Sir, I will have to get back to you. This is a big decision.”

“Take all the time you need. Three things: One: I expect full discretion about this. Two: do not let them decommission that carrier. Three: if you are not going to take this job, please give me a list of people you would consider for the post.”

“Yes Sir. If there is nothing else, I will take my leave.”

“Absolutely Admiral and have a good day.”

The interview with the gang members that killed Sarah

The boy who killed Sarah

President Hawethorne looked through the one way glass at what looked like a child. It was a child that had killed his daughter. The kid was chained to a table and sitting in one of the two chairs in the room.

“Does he know he killed my daughter?” Hawethorne asked.

“No one has talked to either of the people involved in the incident as per your request.” The officer in the room notified the President. The president opened the door and sat down face to face with his daughter’s killer.

Fighting the urge to beat the boy, the President smiled. “You have been accused of discharging a fire arm in public on the date of October 15. I am here to find out why.”

The boy looked up and said, “I want my lawyer and my phone call.”

“Unfortunately, that is not going to happen. Why did you shoot?”

“Lawyer, bitch. I know my rights, mother fucker.”

The president sighed and kept trying. “You killed an innocent girl. How do you feel about that?”

“Look bitch, I want my lawyer. I don’t care if some stupid fool is dead. People die every day in my world. What the fuck does that mean to me? I am a soldier mother fucker and people die in wars. I lost enough friends to know that. Now give me my lawyer bitch.”

Again the President sighed. “What do you mean you are a soldier?”

“Lawyer, bitch”

“What do you mean you are a soldier?”

“Lawyer, bitch”

“Tell me, about your gang, I believe it is called CS-43?”

“Lawyer, bitch”

The president got up and left the room. On his way out he said, “Fear not I will see to it you are treated as a soldier.”

The other boy

A boy sat in a room and looked almost identical to the boy from CS-43. The president sat down across from the child and looked at him until the boy spoke.

“Hey aren’t you the President?”

“Yes I am. I am here to find out what happened on October 12. I have been told that you were involved in a shooting where an innocent bystander was killed. Tell me what happened.”

“Where is my lawyer? I don’t speak without my lawyer.”

“You know I am the President. I have the power to get you out of here if I am motivated to use it. Maybe if you tell me what happened, I could get you out of this. Currently, I see no reason to do so. It is a risk but if you tell me exactly what happened, I might be inclined to help you.”

The kid squirmed nervously. “I was just protecting myself. That guy from CS-43 started it.”

“Maybe we should start at the beginning. How did you wind up as a gang member?”

“Same way anyone does. If you aren’t part of a gang then you are nothing. When I was growing up you had a choice, be a victim or join Money. I joined Money. When I was 11, they gave me a 60 second beat down by five guys. That is the first part of the initiation. Then I put in the required work and was elevated to soldier. Without my boys, I would have been a victim. I

ain't going to be a victim. In my world it is ride or die. Is that enough, are you going to get me out?"

"Tell me what happened on the 12th and maybe we will talk?"

"Right now I am not an enforcer. I make money by selling drugs and pay it to the OG's. I was assigned the corner I was on. CS-43 wanted the corner. It makes good money. The other guy was sent to take the corner. I am responsible to protect the corner. I ain't no punk. It happens all the time. Can I go now? You promised."

"I said maybe. "

The president got up and left.

The Confidant-talk with closest friend and god father

Certain items of questionable morality have come across the President's desk. It was important to the president that he not only make the right decision but also one that did not set a precedent that could be used for extreme evil. He liked to discuss these things with his best friend from child hood. This was the first time during his administration where he would be discussing something of questionable morality that he was designing and implementing. His friend's name was Frank and Frank also happened to be Sarah's godfather. The President knew that the next step was irrevocable and wanted to talk to Frank to make sure that pulling the trigger on his plans was the right move. Frank entered the oval office and grabbed a seat in one of the comfortable couches.

"What do you need that you had to talk to me right away?"

"Frank I can't give you all the information about my plans but I wanted to talk for a little bit about Sarah and what happened to her."

"Sure Jon. I am all ears."

"I guess the best way to put it is that I think there is a way to prevent these types of things from happening as often. It requires some hard choices. I am ready to make those hard choices but I am on the fence. It is very much fighting fire with fire."

"Well, I see this is going to be one of those conversations were we speak in broad generalities. Let me guess, you are afraid that doing the things that could prevent innocent bystanders from dying could make you the bad guy."

“Yes but it is more than that. I will need to use the power of the president to shift the balance of power to a point where there is no longer an equal division of power in the country. But if I don’t pull out all the stops, am I destroying Sarah’s legacy?”

“Don’t worry about her legacy. She is and always will be remembered as a kind and loving soul who would do anything to help anyone in need. If I were you, I would worry about your legacy.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well consider this idea. It is sucky, but at the same time it might help you. You could probably do something that protects the government and meets your own personal needs as well. Just do all the dark and dirty things that are necessary for you to look yourself in the mirror and help the people who are victims of criminal violence. Document these things and then toward the end of your presidency, you would leak them. This way you could take more power than any man should have to do the noble thing. During your exit from office, congress can see how you took advantage of the system and close those loop holes so that no one can take advantage of the things you took advantage of. FDR wasn’t subject to term limits but I bet if you could ask him, he would say they are great idea. Without knowing specifics, that is the best I can do. It isn’t a great plan but it will allow you to do what you need to do and make sure the presidency doesn’t become too powerful. Is there anything else?”

“No it gives me some thinking to do before I decide what to do next. Thanks Frank.”

“I hope it helps. Be careful. This type of stuff is how Hitlers are made.”

Frank got up and left.

The rules

Executive Order setting up secret courts

EXECUTIVE ORDER 103985

A court shall be established for the sole purpose of identifying and judging of people both foreign and domestic, that are a threat to the government of the United States with involvement in schedule 1 and schedule 2 narcotics. This court will act under executive privilege and will be considered higher than top secret. The cases will come from two lists. One list will be provided by the DEA and the other list will come

from the CIA. The DEA will be responsible for enforcement of the courts decisions. This order is also under protection of executive privilege.

Executive Order Enemy Americans over 18

EXECUTIVE ORDER 103986

Enemies of the state are selling illegal schedule 1 and schedule 2 narcotics to pay for their wars against the United States. Effective immediately, if anyone over 18 is caught in the transport or sales of schedule 1 and schedule 2 narcotics then they are aiding and abetting the enemy. They will stand accused of treason and will be submitted to the court established in Executive Order 103985. This order is under protection of executive privilege.

Enemy Americans under 18

EXECUTIVE ORDER 103987

Anyone under the age of 18 that is found to be selling or manufacturing illegal schedule 1 or schedule 2 drugs will be jailed till they are 18 and then released.

Enemies over seas

EXECUTIVE ORDER 103988

Illegal schedule 1 and schedule 2 narcotics dealers and manufactures that are not American citizens but are sending drugs to the United States are enemies of the United States. These men are sentenced to death. This order is protected under executive privilege.

Actions

The Chief -Captain's orders

Admiral Eric Demetriv notified the president that he was willing to participate in the new segment of the DEA that had been dubbed the Lone Wolves. His new rank was that of Chief -Captain.

The newly minted Chief -Captain received a stack of documents. The first thing in the stack of documents was his orders from the President. They stated that his job was to destroy anyone or anything foreign involved in the making and/or supplying of illegal narcotics to the United States. As for American citizens involved in the manufacture and /or supply of illegal narcotics, they would be delivered to the Johnson supermax prison in Illinois to a Winston

Howley for processing. Once per month the Chief -Captain would receive two lists. One list would contain foreign targets furnished from the CIA and consist of people and places that were to be killed or destroyed. The second list would be compiled by the DEA and FBI. The second list will only allow for arrests and seizure of property.

The Chief -Captain put down his orders and picked up the next document which was a report from the CIA.

CIA Drug Threat Assessment

The CIA has divided the drug threat into four areas, west coast threats, Mexican Border threats, Canadian border threats, and east coast threats.

Currently the biggest threat to the West Coast is the Heroin coming in from the Triads. This Heroin is brought into the United States by what is called the Heroin Pipeline. The poppy is grown in Afghanistan. The triads then purchased the poppy and bring it into china. Once in China the triads turn it into Heroin. The heroine is shipped across China to Hong Kong. From Hong Kong the product is loaded onto ships and sent to the US.

Currently the biggest threat at the Mexican border is the drug gangs and cartels importing cocaine and marijuana. There are two items that make this a very explosive situation. The first problem is how under manned the border is. There are tunnels, boats over rivers, and people driving and walking over the border carrying drugs. The inability to shut the border down is a huge part of why the cartels and drug manufacturers make so much money off the American people. The second danger of these Cartels and gangs are the illegal narco-militaries that they have created. These armies are well trained and ultra-aggressive. Stopping these armies and closing the holes in the border are necessary to stop the Mexican border threat.

The Canadian border is probably the least threatening of the borders. Certain assets have reported that due to the lack of government interest in the border that the Japanese yakuza have set up shop in Canada and ship their drugs into the US from there. They make their money in shipping illegal substances across the border. Their specialty is prescription drugs, marijuana, and ecstasy. Because our eyes are spread so thin and there is little violence associated with their organization, they are considered a low priority on the target list.

Finally there is the east coast. This area is overrun with drug activity. The I-95 corridor brings Cocaine from South America particularly Columbia and Venezuela up the entire east coast. Meanwhile the Russian Mob imports both drugs and weapons into New York City and uses I95 to spread their products to the rest of the east coast. Turkish Heroin is being brought in from Europe. The entire coast is inundated with Drugs.

Lists of specific targets are to come but this is the basic current situation assessment for the non-domestic US war on drugs.

After finishing the CIA report, the Chief -Captain immediately started reading the next item in the stack.

DEA-FBI situational analysis

The current domestic drug problem in America is massive. It is estimated that the war on drugs costs an estimated 40 billion dollars a year. In the United States there are three different kinds of players involved in the drug business that are causing massive problems. These are the street gang members, the 1% motorcycle gangs, and the prison gang members.

The prison gang leaders are probably the most dangerous because of how they are operated. Every prison has three to five gang leaders. These gangs are always divided by race which is why there are only three to five per prison. However there are often disagreements both internally in the gangs as well as between the gangs. Drugs on the inside exist and are sold at ten to fifteen times street value. The gangs also run protection rackets on criminals who are inside. Their members on the outside are willing to do anything for the gang out of loyalty. This means the gangs have a reach outside of the building while being pretty well protected on the inside.

The 1% motorcycle gangs are a whole different animal. Often many are military trained. Their fixation with travelling leaves them with vast expanses of territory. These guys are smart and brutal. Their initiation processes usually lasts for multiple years so it is hard to get people on the inside. Their drug of choice is Meth and they are frequently producing mass quantities. With their nomadic tendencies, they spread meth everywhere. They are also known to sell untraceable weapons throughout the US with street gangs responsible for much of the purchases.

The final group that needs to be addressed is the street gangs. The name will probably make you think of a bunch of small groups. There are some gangs that meet those criteria but there are also gangs that are many generations old and span all the way to the international level. These street gangs are not what the populace usually thinks of. They are extremely dangerous and often the most dangerous members consist of their members who are not even old enough to fully understand the ramifications of their actions. These gangs are responsible for the most heinous and vile crimes you can imagine. Their violence level is massive while they have learned that the law will excuse them for their age. The only advantage we have is their immaturity makes them easy to catch. As they turn of age, they are often sent to prison and become soldiers for the prison gangs. This strengthens the prison gangs. All of these new prison gang members bring their entire network of resources for the prison gangs. These "KIDS" are probably the greatest danger of all posed by the US's drug problem.

List of specific targets will be delivered on the 23rd of every month.

Chief -Captain Demetriv put down the DEA assessment and grabbed the last report that was in his inbox.

Resources allotted to Chief -Captain Eric Demetriv for operation clean sweep

1. The aircraft carrier Swartzmead
2. Two F-22 stealth raptors
3. Five stealth UAVs
4. One chinook
5. One Osprey
4. An office in Washington DC
5. Five buses for prisoner transport
6. 500,000,000 per year for aircraft carrier operations
7. 500,000,000 expenses for non-aircraft carrier expenses and payroll for the lone wolves.

The admiral was stunned. The budget was much higher than he expected. He sat and thought for a couple hours trying to plan who to contact for his new job. After his time of reflection, the Chief-Captain picked up the phone and started calling people from his past that he would need to complete his task. In the beginning he would need a Captain of the aircraft carrier, a Captain of ground forces, a Captain of air forces, and finally a Captain in charge of purchasing.

Demetriv's first call was to a longtime acquaintance, Retired Aircraft Carrier Captain Sam Perry. Sam was an old salt who believed in rules and had no interest in placating people who did not follow the rules. He served most of his life and kind of missed life on the sea. He jumped at the opportunity when it was offered. His exact words were, "An old man and an old boat. Definitely better than sitting home watching game shows, I am in."

Demetriv smiled into the phone. "Well I will let you get to it. You have 4500 people to hire and I have a few more calls to make. The Swartzmead is parked in South Carolina and is awaiting your arrival. I need you to prep it and have it ready to move out as soon as you can. You're payroll allowance is 300,000,000 for now but if you need more then that give me a call."

Demetriv hung up the phone and picked up the phone again. He started dialing his next name, retired marine Colonel Don Jenkins. He put his twenty in after college so he still had youth on his side. It took a little while to find him but the Colonel picked up right away.

Demetriv spelled out the mission and after a long pause the Colonel said, "I would like that. I lost several boys to illegal narcotics. What will my command consist of?"

"Captain of Ground Forces is your new rank and we don't know the targets yet. I was thinking fifty marines on the Carrier and Fifty in the office we have been provided. I set aside 10,000,000 for your payroll and there will be a purchasing officer who will be able to meet specific needs as we move forward. In fact that is my next call. By the way, the president has given us a few buses. I am not fully sure what that is for but I think it will most likely be for something you will have to get done. Your first task after hiring your team is to square away the office that we have been assigned. I will send you the details. If you need anything let me know. I still have a couple calls to make."

Warrant Officer Antonio Mason was next on his list. He was young but the Chief-Captain didn't get where he was by not being able to spot genius. However he was dealing with a natural born barterer. It took doubling his salary but Warrant Officer Mason was Captain of Purchasing and Supply Mason by the end of the conversation.

That left one slot to be filled. The Captain of Air Forces slot was of the utmost importance and there was only one man in the entire world that the Chief-Captain would consider for the task. It was Lieutenant Colonel Bryan Castillo but there was a problem. He was Navy through and through. Getting him would be difficult even with the caveat that he would still be on a boat. There was one hook that would work with him every time. If the president asked a favor of him, he would be hard pressed to say no. The Chief-Captain put in a call to President Hawthorne and explained the situation. Three hours later Demetriv had himself a Captain of Air Forces with the name Bryan Castillo.

The Chief-Captain went to the White House when the President asked for a status report in person. Hawthorne invited the Chief-Captain into the oval office.

"Chief-Captain, how are things going with the creation of the Lone Wolves?"

"Well sir we are hiring as fast as we can. It is kind of hard to predict what we need till we get our orders. We will probably have completed our initial hiring by the end of the month. Hiring 5100 people takes time, plus they all need to have a satisfactory clearance."

"I asked you here to find out where we stand but also I have something for you to take care of. Here is a list of current prisoners that we hold. These prisoners are in for life without parole and they are causing problems in their prisons. They control prison drug trades and the like. They need to be separated from the rest of the prison populace. This is why I acquired a prison that will be solely for the use of your Lone Wolves. Take this list and arrange for them to be taken from their prisons to our prison. I have assigned a warden for our prison. His name is Winston Howley. He will make sure they get treated properly."

The Chief-Captain looked at the list. There were about 150 names.

“Yes sir. Anything else sir.”

“That will be all, Chief-Captain”

Max Clark's ride

A prison guard walked up to a group of people in the exercise yard.

“The following people will be coming with me. Prisoner 12899, prisoner 12734, prisoner 24931 please follow me. You are being transferred. You each have 30 minutes to pack everything that you are bringing.”

Max Clark, leader of the Aryan Knights, started walking to the cell block to collect his belongings. The other two prisoners called also started heading inside. They were Max's brother and his number two officer Stanley Richardson. After they were packed, they were herded into the exit yard and onto a bus.

“Where are we being sent?” Max asked a guard but the guard didn't say anything.

There were another five people chained to their seats in the bus. Seven guards were on the bus and they were the heaviest armed guards Max had ever seen. One guard jumped into the driver seat and said, “We have a bit of a ride today so please bear with us.”

The bus rumbled out of the gate. After about three hours the bus passed a sign that said welcome to Illinois. Two hours after that the bus pulled into another prison. Everyone was pulled off the bus and lined up next to it. Max smiled at Stanley. “Fifty bucks we get a ‘don't mess around speech’ from the Warden.”

Stanley snorted in disdain. As he did a man walked into the yard. “I am Winston and I hope we can all get along. Please enter the door on you right and enter the large caged room. From there you will be processed and taken care of.”

Everyone did as they were told. Several guards in a different uniform than the ones worn by the bus driver paced back and forth just outside the cage. Winston walked to a computer and hit some buttons. He told the guards to remove Max Clark from the cage and bring him to the door near the computer.

“Max you will be the first to be processed. Please go through the door and sit at the table closest to where you entered the room.”

As Max went into the room he realized it was a court room. The judge was already seated and there were two lawyers seated at tables facing the judge. A name plate was in front

of the Judge. It read Judge Griffith. Also there were 5 of the biggest guards he had ever seen. He sat next to the lawyer closest to the door he entered from.

The Judge cleared his throat. "The defendant stands accused of treason specifically because his involvement in the drug trade is weakening the fabric of the United States. How does the defendant plead?"

Max's jaw hit the floor. After a few second's, the Judge repeated, "How does the defendant plead?"

Max straightened up and said, "Not Guilty!"

The prosecutor was asked to state his case. "It has been proven in a court of law that the Aryan Knights organization is responsible for the import of drugs and controlled substances to prisons. The Aryan Knights have already been judged as guilty of treason. Max Clark is the head of this organization as is well documented by the papers procured from the DEA and Justice Department. Using the Ricoh guidelines, he is guilty of drug trafficking and therefore by Executive Order 103986, he is guilty of treason. Your honor, the state rests."

The defense lawyer stood up. "I have been unable to find any defense based on my study. I wish it wasn't true but there is no defense. The state's case is airtight. The Aryan Knights are heavily involved in violence and Drug trafficking."

The Judge spoke up. "The information from the DEA and Justice department is damning. Max you are found guilty of treason under executive order **103986**. Your sentence is death. Bailiffs please remove the guilty party."

Max was grabbed by both arms and dragged out of the room into a hallway. There were doors on the left and right. He was taken to the third door on the right. It opened into a large court yard. There was a wooden pole which Max was immediately chained to. He was facing a different door in front of him. Seven guys bearing rifles entered into the yard.

The last one into the yard said, "Ready, Aim, Fire"

The first domestic list comes in

The Chief-Captain sat at his desk in Washington DC. He booted his computer and logged in to his secure email account. As he was going through the items, he realized that he had an email from the DEA agent responsible for sending the Chief-Captain the monthly list of domestic actions. He popped open the list and started going through it. All the items were the responsibility of Captain Don Jenkins, so he forwarded the email to the Captain.

Twenty Minutes later he got a response.

"I will take care of this right away."

Spark and Brain

Spark, who was leader of the death punch motorcycle gang, came out of his house and jumped on his bike. He was headed to the clubhouse to meet with everyone before a ride. Brain was done cooking meth and the club was headed on a run which would deliver the meth to three different states. He arrived at the club house and went in to discuss the logistics of the ride with the rest of the members.

Brain was half in the bag while the rest of the gang all had their saddle bags on the large table. Brain walked up to Spark and said, "I think this may have been my best cook yet."

"What does our profit look like, Brain?"

"I think we should clear 500,000 dollars. I wish I could go with but I haven't slept in three day."

The door to the clubhouse exploded and flash grenades went off. Men in body armor with badges on their chest flooded into the room. The first guy through the door had a paper with two pictures.

He went through the shocked faces that had blood coming from their ears. When he got to Brain, he waved his right hand and two men grabbed Brain and put him in restraints. As the two guys dragged out Brain, the man signaled again at Spark. Two guys grabbed Spark. After the two men were out of the room, the men in body armor took pictures of the mountain of meth and backed out of the building.

Once outside the armored men and their prey all jumped in a waiting bus and the bus took off. The side read Illinois Corrections which was strange since they were in Oregon.

Javier

Javier owned a real estate company. However his was the only real estate company that didn't suffer in the slightest during the recession. That was because his money actually came from the Fernando Cartel. The real estate that he owned was rented by various gang members in Los Angeles. When they wanted to buy coke from the Fernando Gang, the gang members would pay rent and in exchange packages would show up at the house rented by the gang.

This left Javier in a situation where he never saw the product which is how he liked it. Some creative accounting and he felt unstoppable. What he didn't realize was that the DEA knew everything because his accounting wasn't as clever as he thought. One morning he woke up as usual and hit his personal gym for a workout. A nice swim in the pool and a couple eggs for breakfast left him ready to start his day.

He kissed his wife good bye and told his kids to listen to their mom. On his way out of his multi-million dollar house, he grabbed the Bentley keys and jumped in the car. The gate of his gated community opened as he rolled past it and closed behind him. A bus that was clearly a prison transport blocked his path so that his car was stuck between the bus and the gate behind him. A man with an AR-15 marched up to the driver side. As he looked around, men came out of bushes and the bus. He was surrounded. They all had strange badges dangling from their necks.

Javier rolled the window down. "Can I help you officers?"

The young man at the window smiled. "Let's not get started on the wrong foot. We know about how you generate your income. The question is, are you going to fight with us or are you going to come with us quietly as they say?"

Javier got out of the car and said, "I want my lawyer".

"That is above my pay grade. It is my job to take you to Illinois."

Javier got onto the bus. "I have never been to Illinois. What are the charges?"

"You will find out when you get to court."

The bus drove away.

Grigory

Grigory was born in Little Odessa in New York City. Currently he was looking down at a boy named Vlad. "Where is my money Vlad? Your block went through too much product for the money you provided. We let you start on loan with the expectation of a return on our investment. The streets are abuzz with rumors of you bragging about having ripped us off."

"I will get your money Grigory."

"It is too late, Vlad. You made us look bad. Word came from up top to make an example. It's such a waste."

Grigory pulled a nine millimeter out and shot Vlad in the face so his family would have a closed casket at the funeral. This would let the street know who was responsible. He holstered his weapon and left the alley. As he started walking down the street, men approached him from behind and in front. They had badges. Grigory smiled.

"What do you want? I have never talked before. When will you guys learn? You got nothing on me. Why don't you go bother someone else? My lawyer will have me out in 24 hours."

One of the men lowered his AR-15 and smiled. "Well if it is such a minor inconvenience then I can see no reason for you not to comply. Please turn around."

The man cuffed Grigory and started leading him around the corner. One of the men with the strange badges was signaling from the alley where Vlad's body was. He walked up to his team leader.

"We were just a bit too late. I photographed the scene."

"Call the locals." The team leader replied as he ushered Grigory onto a bus to sit with five other guys chained to their seats. "We have a sixteen hour ride ahead of us. Send our report and the pictures to Winston."

Artur

Artur was exhausted as he sat by his desk. He was not a big fellow. He had spent the last four hours going over his payroll. His pharmacies were still in the red. He had to figure out a way to get more money out of his business. Five of his eight pharmacies were fine but the other three were lagging. It was time for layoffs and Artur was a nice man. The thought of having to let people go was gut wrenching to him.

He pulled up his employee list to try and determine who he was going to have to let go. John was a definite. He was young with no family to support. He would bounce back. Tina also had to go or take a serious pay cut.

Artur needed coffee and something to eat. He left his office and went to the diner down the street. After a nice meal he headed back to his office in the center of Portland. When he went back inside, there were two men with badges looking at him. He started sweating immediately. The door behind him opened and two more guys walked in. He was standing there visibly shaking with adrenaline.

"Don't do anything you will regret, Artur. If you struggle now then you will just make it worse. We know that you have been illegally selling prescription drugs to pay for your pharmacies. Please turn around so we can cuff you."

Artur started sobbing as he presented his wrists to the man with the cuffs.

One of the men looked at his team leader. "This is not exactly the hardened criminal, is he?"

Stepan

Stepan sat in his office in the port that he owned. In his port he had set it up so he could bring pretty much anything he wanted in without the government knowing. He had

cameras all over the complex so that he could see what was going on. He looked at his monitors. There were men with guns coming in the main gate.

Stepan was a firm believer in not fighting a lost cause. He went out the window and jumped in his car which was parked next to the window. He floored it. As he rounded the corner shots were fired at the back of his car. He drove the eight football fields in length to a cigarette boat.

Stepan was in boat and headed toward open sea with freedom in site.

Back on the dock three men in body armor watched the boat jetting away at full speed. One of the men had a look of disbelief. "I can't believe that we didn't see that one coming. There goes our perfect record. I have a report to file gentlemen. Let's go. This one goes to Stepan but I have a feeling we will get another shot at him. Shut down the port and send everyone home. Nothing is coming through here anymore."

Alexi

Seven men paid their twenty bucks and walked into the after party. They had clothes that matched the environment but if you looked closely you could tell they had armor on underneath. They were surrounded by people younger than them. Loud music was bumping in the building. The floor was littered with empty bottles of water. The men walked around with a picture in their hands. This was their fourth night/morning of going to these places. The person they were looking for was responsible for most of the dilated pupils in the room. In fact this man, Alexi, was responsible for most of the dilated eyes on the east coast. He was the largest ecstasy dealer in the US.

According to the intel, he frequently hung out at raves, parties and concerts. He never held the product. He had a following of displaced kids that took all the risk for him in exchange for the ability to live the party lifestyle without jobs.

The intel said that he was responsible for many overdoses and was making a fortune every week off the weakness of teens and young adults. The team leader responsible for taking Alexi was definitely taking this one personal. Alexi was destroying many lives every night.

As the group of men circulated, one of them radioed that he had acquired the target. The target was in the back room of the party venue with a small group of people. Everyone got into position to enter the room. They drew their weapons and kicked the door down. Alexi was on the other side with a weapon drawn. The team leader shouted, "Alexi put down..."

Alexi fired his weapon toward the door. The team leader fell to the ground. The man behind the team leader opened fire and Alexi got an entire clip in the chest. Everyone started running. In an amazingly short time the venue was cleared. Alexi lay dead and the team leader was taking his body armor off.

The team leader said, "Thank God for body armor."

The Swartzmead enters the Pacific

The Chief-Captain's phone rang and it was his secretary.

"Sir, Captain Perry is on the line. Would you like me to patch him through?"

The Chief-Captain accepted the call.

"You are making good time, Sam. The first foreign target list hit my desk just a few days ago. What is the status of the ship?"

"We are doing pretty well. All aircraft are ready to go although we have tons of room. So now that we have our targets, is there anything that we need to add to the ship sir?"

"I am kind of wondering that myself."

"The only target that you gave me was the Pacific. Do you want me parked anywhere specific?"

"Yes, Sam. For now I want you parked near the deepest part you can find and just keep yourself there. I am going to have to gather all the Captains before the end of the day to discuss our list of objectives. Many of our targets are not going to be easy to pull off without starting an international incident which means we need some finesse. I will send you a time for a secure teleconference room and you will see what I am talking about."

Three hours later all the Captains and the Chief-Captain were conferenced together. The Chief-Captain cleared his throat and all conversation stopped immediately.

"We have our orders and some of our tasks are going to be easy and others not so much. So let's get started. There is a large prison in Mexico. It has been over run for years by a street gang that is international. Everyone in that prison is part of this gang and somehow they still get messages out. The people in this prisoner send hundreds if not thousands of kill orders a year. It seems that the powers that be, both in the US and Mexico, want this prison to disappear. Bryon, I am tasking you with this task. Is there anything you need?"

"We didn't get any JDAMs. We have the raptors which can deliver but we need to buy the actual bombs. We are talking several hundred thousand dollars for what we should have on hand."

"Antonio can you make that happen?"

"Your ordinance will take a week to be delivered. No worries, Sir"

“OK I told you that one was easy. It seems that the highest priority from the people giving us marching orders is to shut down what they have dubbed the heroin pipeline which is predominantly run by the Chinese triads according to the intel. They are loading up boats with heroin and shipping into the states. The boats are crewed entirely by people from their organization. The CIA is in the process of marking these boats with GPS. When they reach a very deep part of the Pacific, we are to sink them without any survivors. This one is on you too Bryon. Are there any foreseeable problems?”

“Nope, if they are GPS marked then I see no problem. I just need more JDAM’s.”

Captain Mason spoke up. “Just tell me how many you need. I will get extra. I have a feeling this isn’t the last time we will need these.”

“Alright the targets we have been provided are about to get a little more tricky. We have been asked to take out a member of a Mexican cartel that has done several hits in the United States. The fact that the people killed were doing business with the Mexican Cartels doesn’t change the fact that this guy feels comfortable coming into the United States. This one is sanctioned by both countries as well. Is this something you can handle Don?”

“If it is sanctioned then there is no problem. I hired two sniper teams. If you send me all our information, I will send one of them out right away.”

“I have a job that is not as easy. There is an Afghan warlord that we need to remove. Not just him but as much of his organization as we can. We have one advantage with him. He doesn’t hide his activities. He checks his field like clockwork, once a week every week, just before he sends a shipment to China. The current plan is to land a strike team a few miles out from his farm. March into his field at night and take up positions to ambush him and the flunkies who always accompany him. Then according to the plan take his trucks, which are in a garage by the field for loading. Drive the trucks to the border of china to meet with his buyer. They have satellite footage of the last four meetings and we know the GPS location. Capture the buyer and blow up the trucks. Then hike to a safe place and get picked up. This is the plan I was given, do you think you can handle it?”

“That is a tall order. Can people know we did it? Is this one also sanctioned by Afghanistan?”

“No.”

“We can’t use any of our current weapons then. We are going to need Russian and Chinese weapons.”

“That is why I went to such lengths to get Mason. “

Mason grimaced. "If you want a couple AK's no problem but, outfitting fifty men that's a whole different story. How many people are you talking?"

Before Captain Jenkins could respond Captain Castillo spoke up. "I can only deliver 34 men. We only have an old chinook to work with."

Captain Jenkins added, "I can't tell you how many men are needed till I have looked at the mission specifics. I don't know the terrain and the numbers of opposition. I will need to look into it but I feel like we are going to need to not be Americans often. We should probably get enough to outfit all the men. My question is why don't we put some hellfires on some drone and just eliminate them that way?"

The Chief-Captain decided to field this one. "The higher ups have reasons for wanting it done this way. They want to see if there is anything else in those garages that are useful. They want you to grab maps, intel, and hard drives if any exist. Also they want the buyer alive if possible. He might be able to show us where the poppy is processed."

"Bryon, get with Mason and make a list of all that you need so that if things go bad we can deny. This is by far the most complicated of tasks. We definitely currently lack the skillset to pull off the next few tasks unless you guys have ideas that I missed. I think we need some spooks for these tasks and I want to run them by you to see if you have any ideas. There is a man named Jacque in France. He is importing Turkish heroin into the United States in massive quantities. He is extremely wealthy and very well connected. If he dies with even the slightest suspicion then we will be in severe trouble. I think we should hire a spook for this. In fact, I think we should have several spooks on the payroll full time for these types of items. Does anyone see another way?"

Everyone was quiet so the Chief-Captain moved on.

"The final item on the list is an antique dealer in Canada. We need to break into his office, take all the computers and safes. After that we need to kidnap the owner. This is the tip of the yakuza iceberg in Canada and the CIA has asked us to sneak in there and return the owner for interrogation. We are to break the gas line to the furnace and blow the place on our way out. It needs to be quick and the Canadians are to never know we were there. This one is on you Don, but make sure you use your crew from the domestic forces you have."

"Consider it done, sir"

"Next on the Docket, I have hired a new Captain. His name is Captain Frank Hayes and I stole him from the NSA. He will be assembling a team for the next item on the list. There are about twenty banks that are known to accommodate drug dealers of all sizes. They are all over the world. We have been given the task of a fundraising operation. It will be our job to seize all the money from a list of accounts provided by the CIA. I am not entirely sure how this happens

but I have been told that Frank is the best at this type of thing. If he asks for anything, I want you to drop everything and provide it. I have been told that if he does well enough, money will never be an issue for us again. We get to keep what we take. He will be arriving tomorrow. Are there any questions? No. Ok gentleman. We all have our tasks. Let's get this done."

The chief-captain got up and went to his car directly after the meeting. He drove to the White House for his scheduled progress report with the president. He arrived at the oval office a little before three o'clock and had to wait twenty minutes for the President to be available. He sat at the President's invitation.

"Chief-Captain, how are things going?"

"Well sir. It is too late to back out now."

"I know Winston has informed me of that. Are things being taken care of? Do you have everything you need?"

"For the most part we are or will be in good shape as soon as we get some items. I have one problem that will require some additional staff. I need some people well trained in the art of assassination. Unfortunately those guys are hard to find especially since most of them come from the CIA. I was hoping you could put in a call and get the CIA to send some people our way."

"I am sorry Eric but I can't do that. I know I said I wanted you to be a one stop place to go to for anything involving the drug war but I am not comfortable giving you your own hit squad. It is just too much power in one place. As it is your unit is more powerful than many of the smaller nations' armed forces. How important is this? I know it is the first list. How many people are designated to be assassinated?"

"There are three that the CIA says should be disappeared, sir. I can only imagine that there will plenty more."

"Here is the way I want to handle this. I like having your eyes on everything. I will talk to Scott Slaem. You will still get all the action requests from the CIA. Anything you determine that should be handled by a CIA specialist you will send to a special unit of the CIA that I am going to have Scott create. I promised you I wouldn't blemish your stellar career and if found out, assassinations would do that. I would rather not put that on you. Is there anything else Eric?"

"Nope that covers the first list. I will send you a report when the next lists come in."

"Good. Thank you, Eric."

The next six years passed in what seemed like no time at all. The Chief-Captain was always running from list item to the next. He was extremely effective. The president was now close to the end of his presidency when the event happened. Eric's phone rang and it was President Hawethorne. He made it short and sweet.

"Eric, you are hereby ordered to park the Swartzmead in San Francisco and liquidate the lone wolves. Thank you for your service and the service of the lone wolves. You could not have performed better."

Discovery

"Mr. President, are you sure you want to do this. This will ruin your reputation and may land you in jail. I am your lawyer and even I do not know how this will play out. You really did all this without people realizing. The public knows about some of this but I don't think anyone realizes how far you went. I will leak this if that is what you want but are you sure about this?"

"Yes Charles, I am sure. I want all my notes leaked to my party on Friday. Then on Wednesday, we will make all of it public knowledge. I leave office soon anyway. It is the right thing to do."

"Why, sir?"

"If I don't make it impossible for someone else to do this then I might as well execute myself for treason. This is how we are going to tell the world about the presidency being a little too powerful for its own good."

Congressional discovery

The speaker of the house and the vice president were sitting across from each other. Each has a print out in their hand. The print outs were the notes on what was called operation Clean Sweep.

The speaker looked up and said, "I knew he was being tough on drugs but did you know about all this?"

The VP, "I had no idea. What do we do? He says he is releasing this to the press in a few days. He hasn't said why. We cannot just let this slide. We need to talk to some lawyers. I do not know international law but I am sure there is a good chance he broke it repetitively."

"Yeah. We can't impeach him. By the time we do he will no longer be president. What good will that do? We have to do something. Congress already looks incapable of handling its

own business. This could destroy our party and possibly severely damage congress.” The speaker looked out into nothing in a state of shock.

“He has agreed to sit in front of Congress and be deposed. That will buy us some time. We need to get lawyers together and hammer all these things out. When he told me of what he wants, he made clear that he would give us as much time as he can before we have to react. He figures that to be properly deposed, we will get another couple weeks. The public finds out on Wednesday. They will get these papers then. I highly suggest we publicly announce the deposition on Tuesday before he releases this to the press.”

The speaker grunted his agreement and both went back to reading.

Public discovery

The public awoke to read the Register’s front page.

President Releases details on his Anti-Drug Campaign

The President released his notes about the anti-drug policy that he initiated after the loss of his daughter Sarah. It is apparent that many American citizens were killed by the order of the president. The notes are on the web at our newspaper’s website. Congress has declared a hearing where the President will be questioned about the actions concerning his anti-drug policy. The President is scheduled to be in front of congress with his lawyer starting this Monday.

Check back at the Register’s web site as developments unfold. Feel free to get involved in the social media conversation. Is the president a hero or a cold blooded killer?

Impeachment

Being deposed from congress

President Hawthorne sat down next to his lawyer. The room went silent as he cleared his throat.

“Congress men and women, I have a brief statement before we get to the question and answer portion of the deposition.”

“As I am sure you are all aware of, I lost my daughter to the scourge of drug gang violence. When this happened, I moved the War on Drugs to the front burner. I looked at it and studied the problem that we face as a nation. After examination, I concluded that to fight this war would require drastic and dramatic measures which you have all been made aware of. Those measures may not have ended the conflict but it certainly changed the face of our opponent.”

“I have ordered certain metrics taken that show the results of the measures I have taken. The first metric is the amount of violence in the school system as rated by the teachers. According to polls, the trouble makers in the school system have been pulled out of the schools and have left an environment that is conducive to learning.”

“According to police metrics, the drug dealers no longer operate in open site. No longer do the dealers control sections of the cities and towns that they live. Residents no longer live in fear even in the poorest neighborhoods. The people in control of the drug trade don’t flaunt their ill-gotten gains and draw the admiration of the youth. ”

“Violence is down because people realize that the consequences of such action will be met with fierce retribution.”

“These changes can be tracked directly to the actions taken after the loss of my daughter and the only thing I wish is that it didn’t take such a loss to motivate me to move on this issue we face as a nation.”

“I wish that these were the only results that my actions had, but they have had one more result that I can’t help but admit. This result is a change in the power possessed by the office of the President of the United States. This change is the reason that Congress and the public have even been made aware of the actions of my office and I.”

“At my orders citizens have been put to death with minimal due process. Even though this was necessary, I can’t help fearing that this same power could be put to use for immoral reasons. I feel it necessary to ask Congress and the public if they really want this power in the hands of the president going forward.”

“From today going forward, you can no longer deny that this power exists. This is the opportunity to curb that power before it is ceased to wipe out political opponents and damn anyone the President doesn’t like. This threat may indeed be more dangerous than all the drugs in the nation and I want it known that it exists.”

“Now I am willing to answer your questions.”