

The

Constitutional Convention of 2022

by

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Other books by this author

Omaha

The Mumps Programming Language Basic IBM Mainframe Assembly Language Programming Meanwhile Didius Julianus hastily made his way to the camp, and, standing at the gates of the enclosure, made bids to the soldiers for the rule over the Romans. Then ensued a most disgraceful business and one unworthy of Rome. For, just as if it had been in some market or auction-room, both the City and its entire empire were auctioned off.

Roman History , Epitome of Book LXXIV , Cassius Dio

Article V

The Congress ... on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments, which ... shall be valid to all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof ...

United States Constitution

Prelude

In 2014 and 2015, by executive order, the southern border of the United States was opened to all who wanted to cross. Tens of millions of undocumented immigrants took advantage of this opportunity and passed freely into Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and California.

It was border patrol policy, by executive order, to disperse them as quickly as possible throughout the country. In practice, this meant dumping them into urban ghettos nationwide.

Soon there were teeming communities of impoverished immigrants living on the streets, in box cars, under bridges, in abandoned buildings and homeless shelters throughout the country. Local welfare systems were overwhelmed. Crime skyrocketed. Gentrified urban condo dwelling progressive elites fled to the suburbs. Cities became war zones divided among competing drug gangs.

Initially, the public health system detected only a few cases but soon many more. After many years in remission, tuberculosis was suddenly epidemic again. But this time it was drug resistant. Soon there were urban epidemics of hepatitis and typhoid as well.

Then the nightmare.

A highly contagious newly mutated strain of ebola was detected, almost simultaneously, in New York, Boston, Newark, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland and Los Angeles. In the crowded urban slums it spread rapidly and soon was ravaging every major city in the country. The health care system was incapable of dealing with the crisis. Within weeks the death toll was staggering. Entire cities were quarantined by the military.

Soon, from former urban ballparks and playgrounds, billows of black smoke rose by day and night as the corpses of the dead were burned by the thousands. America looked like Medieval Europe in a time of plague.

Eventually, the ebola epidemic was contained to only a few hot spots. It was gradually eliminated but the final death toll was over five million.

On the other hand, while the typhoid outbreaks were likewise contained, the hepatitis and tuberculosis epidemics raged on.

Nearly ten million people had contracted one or the other. Both of these incurable diseases were still spreading.

Wednesday, November 2, 2016

Time: 1:00 AM

No one expected it to be a good night. Most, in fact, knew it would be very bad. But this is worse than anything anyone predicted. This changes everything.

The small crowd still lingering in the ballroom of Washington's elegant Hotel Vendome is thinning out. Only a few clusters of people mill about the otherwise empty room, commiserating with each other about the night's results. The TV announcers finished their wrap-ups hours ago and the camera crews are packing up the last of the gear.

A few balloons roll aimlessly around the floor which is strewn with paper, napkins, confetti, and crushed plastic cups. Waiters stand idly along the wall making occasional wisecracks to one another about the events of the night. A large projection screen on the stage shows color bars. Some tinny music can be heard over the PA system.

Senator Hillary DeWitt of Rhode Island, her political advisor Shane Bader, Bob Cutter, CEO of Inter Continental Network, and George Salazar, billionaire hedge fund operator and notorious currency speculator, are huddled at a round table covered with a stained white cloth and littered with ash trays, crushed cups, napkins and a few half eaten plates of hors d'oeuvres.

Senator DeWitt is a jellied woman, well past her prime. She is the product of an orthodox ultra left wing education at some very expensive schools. Initially, she languished teaching law at a backwater state school in the Midwest.

But her career quickly blossomed when she checked the right box on an employment application to a prestigious northeastern university. Despite the fact her only contact with Hispanic culture was an occasional fast food breakfast burrito, after she checked Hispanic, previously closed doors quickly opened.

She cultivated all the right political connections and, in short order, she was appointed senator after the untimely death of the lush who had occupied the seat for nearly fifty years. Since Rhode Island is a one party state, her subsequent election to a full term was a foregone conclusion. After her elevation as Rhode Island's first blond, blue-eyed Hispanic senator of impeccable German ancestry, she made millions in the futures markets with the help and advice of George Salazar who became both her political and financial mentor.

Bader is a pasty, fat, bald man usually attired in ill fitting baggy clothes. He reminds people of Peter Lorre but without the charm. He fixes elections and handles the darker side of politics, for a fee, for a fee. His ethics are flexible.

Salazar is an oily money man. He buys things and people. He represents DeWitt's Wall Street friends, of whom she has many. DeWitt's fair share program will, if enacted, mean monopoly profits for him and his cronies. He donates millions to the party in gratitude.

George Cutter represents the print and broadcast media. These are mainly conglomerates whose many non-media divisions individually and collectively have massive contracts and dealings with the federal government. During the housing meltdown, Intercontinental had to be rescued from bankruptcy because its consumer finance division was up to its eye balls in non-performing sub-prime loans. Consequently, he makes sure that what gets written and broadcast pleases his government patrons.

"Well, George, I expect you made a killing on the market tonight, as usual, while the rest of us got killed," snarls Hillary.

"Now, I think we all saw this coming. No sense not taking advantage of the obvious. That's what options are for, as you well know," replies Salazar.

"Bad yes, but no one saw this," moans Cutter. "Our polling unit never thought it would be this much of a disaster. Never!"

"Really? You didn't see this coming?" says DeWitt sarcastically. "How the fuck could you miss it?"

"We thought people had calmed down. Things have improved in the past year," says Cutter. "Our analysis said that people wouldn't really blame the open borders policy. I guess we underestimated public sentiment."

"Underestimated? Five million bodies burning in open pits and you didn't think anyone would notice? And the TB and hepatitis epidemics? And you didn't think people would blame the pot head in chief and his party?"

"It's beginning to abate. It wasn't all his fault. He just wanted to help people. There are some new experimental drugs that seem to be working."

"Well, people, there's nothing we can do about it now. The question is, where do we go from here?" says Hillary as she turns towards Bader.

"Well, for the Democrat Party, there aren't many options, as I see it. We lost 45 states, nearly 400 House seats, and almost every governorship and state legislature in the country. Total wipe out. Basically, the Whig party was better off after the election of 1856."

"You mean, out of business?"

"Correct. You can fix broken but you can't fix this mess. We blew it and there's no going back."

"Well, we have that narcissistic moron in the White House to thank. Who the hell thought it was a good idea to let that incompetent screw the crap out of everything? What were we thinking?" says Hillary.

"Well the rest of his political zoo didn't help things much either," mutters Salazar.

"Maybe things aren't as bad as they seem," says Bader. "Sometimes they bounce back."

"Bounce? Ha! We'd need a moon shot to get out of this hole," laughs Hillary.

"Well, maybe not. But think of it this way, none of this is our problem any more. It's all the Republican's problem now. And things are not going to get any better in the near term, probably a whole lot worse. In reality, would you seriously want to be in Whitman's shoes? Just look at things. The economy is in shambles and getting worse, inflation is out of control and the Fed is still printing money like confetti!"

"True."

"And we still control the Senate. His administration will be a living hell."

"Yeah, thank God for six year terms and the power of incumbency. But, what difference does it make at this point? The question is, how can we get back in the game?" asks DeWitt.

"Basically, we turn the tables. We still own the Senate, most of the bureaucracy, the media and a lot of judges. We can sabotage anything he tries to do. We make him fail then we pick up the pieces."

"Yeah, but I don't think that will bring our brand back into style very soon," say DeWitt.

"So, we get a new brand. Time to start a new party, or, rather, maybe revive an old one."

"What do you mean?" asks Salazar, his interest perking up.

"When the Whig party collapsed in the 1850s, the Republican party was created overnight and took the White House four years later."

"True, but what do you mean by *reviving* an old party? Not the Whigs, for God's sake!"

"No, something more recent, the Progressive Party."

"Explain."

"At the beginning of the twentieth century, the progressive movement got started in this country. La Follette, Taft, and Woodrow Wilson, they were all progressives. Later on, Henry Wallace, Margaret Sanger, Charles Davenport and a lot of others."

"Wasn't Wallace vice-president once?"

"Yep, FDR's VP until FDR replaced him with Harry Truman. Otherwise, Wallace would have become president in 1944 when FDR died. Believe me, things would be a lot different now if he had! As it was, Wallace ran against Truman in 1948 on the Progressive Party ticket."

"Didn't exactly win. No electoral votes, as I recall," mutters Hillary. "A lot of good that will do us!"

"No, he didn't get any electoral votes, but he did get more than a million votes. That was also the year the Dems split and Strom Thurmond ran as a Dixiecrat. Thurmond got the same number of votes as Wallace but Thurmond got 39 electoral votes. For that matter, La Follette got nearly seventeen percent of the popular vote in 1924 but he ended up with only thirteen electors. There's an important lesson here. With the current system, it isn't how many votes you get, but it's where you get'."

"So how does all this help us?"

"The Progressive Party faded away in the 1950s. We bring it back. It's got a catchy name, tests well in focus groups."

At that moment someone cranks up the music and the roadies march in to start hauling off the stage setup. As they begin disassembling the risers, the noise level becomes deafening.

"Lets go up to my suite," says Hillary. "It's impossible to talk down here now."

They nod, rise and file out to the lobby and across to the elevators.

Bader pauses at the entrance and tells the maitre d' to send up some trays of cold cuts, vegies, dips, chips and whatever else is available.

Walking across the lobby to the private elevators he spots billionaire insurance magnate Warren Table.

"Hey Warren, come on upstairs and join us. We've got some talking to do."

"After tonight, drinking might be more apropos than talk."

"We'll be doing that too. We're meeting in Hillary's suite. You need to be there."

"Might as well. There's no party down here, that's for sure."

The two men head for the private elevators where the operator recognizes them and asks, "Senator DeWitt's penthouse?"

"Yes, thank you."

The elevator door glides shut and the small private car swiftly rises to the penthouse floor and a large, \$10,000 per night, suite of rooms that DeWitt has taken for the week. As they cross the small lobby to her door, the service elevator dings and the door opens. A liveried waiter wheels out long white cloth draped cart on which are an assortment of hors d'oeuvres. In the center are bottles of scotch, rye, gin, vodka and bourbon, wine and champaign.

Bader and Table enter the suite first followed discretely by the waiter.

Inside the suite, they find themselves in a huge living room, fifty feet long and

thirty feet wide. The room itself is arranged with several areas of sofas, tables, and crystal lamps. One wall is all glass with a central sliding door that leads to a room length balcony overlooking the glittering lights of Georgetown below and the illuminated Capitol monuments in the distance.

The waiter goes about his business swiftly. Placing the serving table at one end of the room, he opens two bottles of wine, one white, one red, lights several little candles under the hot trays, arranges the cutlery, and departs unobtrusively.

Bader sees that DeWitt and the others are out on the balcony taking in the view and calls out to her through the sliding door. Turning, she sees Bader and Table and waves. She and the others return to the main room where they avail themselves of some wine along with little plates of food and take seats.

"I've also asked Steve Black to join us. He's on his way over right now," says Bader.

"Admiral Steve Black? From NSA?" asks Cutter.

"Yes," replies Bader. "I think he may have something to contribute."

Just then the door opens. It's Admiral Black.

Admiral Black is crisply attired and usually silent. He listens and takes notes. People who get on his bad side seem to disappear. All Washington fears him and what his spies know and they know everything. He understands how to use the vast NSA spy data trove to accomplish whatever his masters want.

"Stevie! Come on in. We've been expecting you. Get something to drink and sit down," squeals DeWitt.

He takes off his coat, sets his briefcase next to a chair, pours a small glass of sparkling water and joins the group.

"Ok, so, Bader, what's your plan? What's this about a new Progressive Party?" asks Salazar.

"Here's the way I see it. First of all, the Democrat Party is dead. The brand is worthless. Trying to rebuild it is a waste of time. It has too many elements that are out of touch with reality."

"Ok, I think tonight more or less proved that," interjects Table.

"The Democrat Party was definitely trending progressive under Wilson but in 1932 Roosevelt changed it all. He built a new coalition that altered the direction of the party. His coalition was unstable. It was too sensitive to pressure groups from within, a lot of groups that really had little in common with each other. It held together for thirty years but, from the mid 60s on, it's been breaking up. This year, it's gone. No one is going to put it back together again. It's over."

"That seems glaringly obvious," says DeWitt. "So, what do we do now?"

"Now we need a new coalition of groups loyal to our values. With them, we can take back the country. We build a new Progressive Party, a coalition of connected groups, groups with common interests across the economic spectrum. A coalition that can last."

"Well, since 1860, the Republicans have hung together for a hundred sixty years, and elected eighteen presidents to the Democrat's ten," says Black.

"And three of those Democrats got the job because the incumbent died in office, I might add," says Bader.

"So, if you were putting together a new party, who would be in it?" asks DeWitt.

"Well, those that already call themselves progressives, along with socialists, welfare people, the newly legalized immigrants, the greens, environmentalists, climate change people, government unions, minorities, university faculty, naive students, and the big city political machines."

"Doesn't sound like a coalition that can take Congress. Sounds more or less like the demographic rundown of most big cities," says Cutter.

"Skip Congress. Congress is an anachronism. It's just a debating society. We don't need it. It's on its way out. What we really want is a permanent lock on the presidency. That's were the action is. The agencies and commissions. They run the country now. Not Congress."

"Well, they do have a lot of influence on society. And, I guess you're right, over the past hundred years, Congress really has ceded most of its authority to the bureaucracy," agrees Hillary.

"Correct. And it's the president who appoints the agency bosses, senior staff, the commissions and regulatory boards. That's where the real power is, the real tools of government. The president also appoints the judges, they validate the power. The president manages the bureaucracy, they execute the power. Screw Congress. Personally, I'd rather control the EPA, IRS, NSA, SSA, BLM, FBI, CIA, DoD, DoE, Homeland, TSA, and all the others any day! That's where the real authority is to remake society, not the damned Congress!"

"Well, I guess we've certainly seen some of that for the past eight years. Just about everything Obama did after he lost his lock on the Congress was through an agency controlled by his appointees." says Cutter.

"But I still don't see how we win at the presidential level? How do we take the Electoral College when all we really control is just a bunch of big cities in the Northeast?"

"Well, don't forget Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit and most of California," says Salazar.

"Here's how. Remember that National Popular Vote law from a few years ago?"

They look to one another and nod.

DeWitt says, "I thought that was long since dead?"

"No, it's still on the books in those states that passed it years ago. At the moment, it only needs one more state for it to come into effect. Either Iowa, Connecticut or Oregon will do. Once it passes, then the candidate with the most votes wins the presidency, the Electoral College is effectively out of business," says Bader.

"And what are the prospects in those states for it to pass?"

"With enough money and media support, very good. That's where Salazar and Cutter come in."

"We'll do whatever you want at the networks, you know that," says Cutter.

"Money is no problem," says Salazar.

"Count me in too," adds Table.

"Ok, then what's next? How does this help? I don't see how it means we get to elect the president? The total vote in those cities still won't give us a majority," asks DeWitt.

"So, we get more voters to vote for us."

"How?"

"We get that immigration amnesty bill passed in the upcoming lame duck session."

"I'm sure the votes aren't there for that," says DeWitt. "Way too much opposition."

"Actually, we only need about twenty votes in the House. The Senate is on board," says Bader.

"And how, now that we've lost, do you propose we get those twenty votes?"

"First, it's the lame duck session and Obama is still president. The new representatives don't take their seats until January. Second, there are people who will soon be out of office, they want friends who can take care of them. Obama can still grant favors, to them, their kids, their relatives. Ya'know, appointments, pardons, you name it. Third, having won big, the other side might be more inclined to be generous. Fourth, and most important, we just blackmail the rest. Steve, do you want to elaborate."

"I wouldn't actually call it *blackmail*, I'd prefer to call it persuasion."

"Aggravated persuasion, ok?"

"Works for me. Yes," says Admiral Black as he opens his brief case and pulls out a stack of manila folders.

"Here are files on twenty members of the House whose votes might be obtained were they to know the contents of these were going to be released."

He passes the folders around to the others who take several minutes thumbing through them and passing them on to one another. More than a few chuckles, gasps and muttered utterances of *oh my God* are heard.

Eventually Admiral Black retrieves the folders, hands them to Bader and smiles.

"Yes, I think those files could change a few votes," giggles DeWitt. "Where did they come from?"

"Did I mention I run NSA? Do you really need to ask?" replies Black. "We've got everything on everybody. A politician can't fart in this country without us having a record of it."

"Something to keep in mind," says DeWitt. "Ok, Bader, put this all together. I think

I see where you're going now."

"Sixty million newly minted voters out of the shadows, so to speak. Ninety percent of whom are in big urban islands on the East and West coasts, Chicago, Cleveland or Detroit, California. All on EBT cards. We'll own them, totally. In the past, this wouldn't matter much. We would always win New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, California and so on. The number of votes we won by never made a difference. We only got the electoral votes of a single state regardless of how much we won it by. But, once the National Popular Vote law kicks in, bingo. We own the presidency. Our EBT sheeple will out vote the opposition. The rest of the country will be shit out of luck."

"Brilliant!" exclaims Cutter.

"But we need to do things in the right order. First, no mention of the push to get the NPV law passed, not yet. At the moment, it's far beneath the radar. It's long been forgotten. Lets keep it that way for the time being. We wait until we get amnesty passed first, then we push the NPV law."

"Perfect, absolutely perfect" says Salazar.

Admiral Black excuses himself saying, "By the way, if you need any help getting the NPV law passed, just ask. We also track state politicians."

They party the night away like it's 1932 all over again. Happy days will soon be here.

Saturday, November 19, 2016

In a late night, lame duck session, rushing to complete business before the Thanksgiving Recess, both the House and Senate pass a sweeping immigration reform bill and send it to President Obama for his signature. It provides amnesty for sixty million illegals and the customary, meaningless commitment to increased border security.

The passage of the bill surprises many observers since a large number of House members, previously against amnesty, suddenly change their votes and support the measure. There is jubilation in large cities as millions of formerly illegals are now citizens.

State welfare departments begin sending out millions of newly minted EBT cards and voter registration forms. Big city political machines roll into action.

The goal is to quickly mold these clients into a permanent underclass of government dependents. This means delivering crappy schools, dilapidated housing, high crime neighborhoods, broken families and a bevy of puppet community organizers to ride herd on them, services that urban political machines deliver well.

Thursday, December 8, 2016

The Connecticut legislature passes the otherwise forgotten National Popular Vote act and the governor quickly signs it into law. The winner in the Electoral College will now be determined by the overall national popular vote.

Politicians across the country are caught off guard. They suddenly realize that the game has been changed, significantly changed. Attempts to roll back the NPV law in those states that have passed it are futile.

Through a combination of airtight control of the welfare classes, the honored traditions of big city vote fraud, mass illegal immigrant amnesty, and the creative hacking opportunities presented by electronic and online balloting, presidential electoral power is now tightly in the grips of the progressive political oligarchs.

They will control the voters, they will count the votes, and they will determine the outcome. They own the national government at the presidential level. From now on, vote rich, mainly coastal, urban precincts will decide the outcome presidential elections.

January 20, 2017

Inauguration Day

Despite the demise of the Democrat Party in the elections of 2016, the hapless Republican who becomes president today faces a tsunami of social, medical, economic, political, foreign and immigration disasters.

His every effort to right the ship of state is thwarted by an invincible quadrumvirate of opposition: the Senate, the media, the judiciary, and the retrenched federal bureaucracy. The forces set in motion by the policy errors of the previous eight years continue to spiral out of control. His honeymoon is short and loveless.

Tuesday, February 7, 2017

At about 10 am, in a large and crowded convention center in Los Angeles, the gavel falls on the organizational convention of the New Progressive Party. The crowd bursts into applause.

The delegates attending represent a wide and colorful spectrum of left wing activists and special interest groups.

There are government unions. Their interest is in selecting politicians who will insure that their members get the largest possible slice of government revenue for the least possible amount of work.

There are the environmentalists, greens, global warming and renewable energy crowd who want to completely shut down coal, oil, nuclear and natural gas energy production and run the country on windmills, solar panels, tides and wood chips.

There are the organic, anti-GMO, anti-hormone, anti-antibiotic, anti-vaccine, antipreservative, anti-additive, anti-feedlot, free-range fringe who want to ban any form of farming or medicine not in use in the year 1600.

They are saucer-eyed academics with elaborate theories of political social organization and questionable personal hygiene.

There are the usual fat cat big city oligarchs looking for ever larger federal handouts to buy off their serfs.

There is a menagerie of activists interested in socialism, woman's rights, gender and sexual orientation quotas, welfare handouts, legalized recreational drugs, Sharia law, polygamy, racism, white privilege, homelessness, Palestine, gay and transgender privilege, fracking, and, as always, the man/boy love association.

There are antiwar pacifists who want to disband the military, the anti-big business groups who want an end to private property. There are the occupy Wall Street dudes with their quaint trademark toilet training. One group wants to build a spaceport for the aliens they believe are coming soon to take them all home.

None of these groups really matter. The real power is looking down on them from the sky boxes above.

A color guard marches smartly down the center aisle to trumpets blasting ruffles and flourishes. Once the guard is lined up across the stage, the band begins the national anthem.

Some stand with raised, clenched fists while many remain seated in protest of the unjust, racist, sexist, homophobic American society. Some others stand to turn their backs in protest.

From the wreckage of the Democrat Party a new and well financed political force is rising, One whose fortunes are now somewhat guaranteed. The new party is the financial creation of a group known as the Progressive Alliance, a secretive dark money organization funded by a shadowy collection of public spirited billionaires. It is they who will control the party from behind the scenes, they who will pull the strings and they who expect to profit immensely from a state regulated, competition-free economy.

From the VIP guest boxes high above, a small group of very wealthy donors, consultants and politicians smile down in approval at their creation. All have done their job well.

George Salazar turns to Warren Table and Hillary DeWitt and says, "Ever see such a bunch of wackos, misfits and crazies in one place before?"

"Now George, they're our people. And don't say anything that might be recorded. You know how easy it is to eavesdrop these days," scolds DeWitt.

"True, our friend Steve Black is tribute to that. So, now, what's next?"

"Well, we do this convention and, with Bob's help, and that of our other friends in the media, people will be told that a glorious new day has arisen. A new hope, a new beginning! Right Bob?" says Shane Bader.

"Well, the people in this country are basically a vacillating crowd of children. They're easy targets for the right message. We control them. We do it every day," comments Bob Cutter of Inter Continental.

"Glad I don't watch much news on TV," laughs Warren Table.

"Oh, we can get you in other ways. It's not just the news, we slip our message into the entertainment programs, the happy talk shows, you name it. It's called product placement. When we do a full campaign, everything you see or hear will be tuned to the message. Right now, our anchor, Dianne Frost, is nearly orgasmic, bubbling over about the glory of a new age dawning, the future of our nation, the selfless generosity of those that helped pull this historic event together, the usual crap. The other networks are saying pretty much the same thing. It's all coordinated. After five days of this, ending in the mass torchlight parade and outdoor rally on Saturday night, the Progressive Party will be firmly established. The next set of polls will show enormous support. Just wait and see."

"I like your enthusiasm Bob. It gives me confidence that we can really pull this off," says George Salazar.

"And now we simply sit, wait and watch. Whitman's days are numbered. Anything he attempts will fail. If we can't thwart him in the Senate, the courts or the bureaucracy, Admiral Black's people will help us. Now we wait," says DeWitt.

Wednesday, November 7, 2018

Time: 1:00 AM

In a jubilant ballroom at the Vendome Hotel in Washington, the gathered Progressive Party faithful joyously celebrate a very good mid-term election night. While the House of Representatives is a reach too far, the party has scored several victories in the Senate.

Because of the concerted propaganda campaign on the part of the news media, the economic problems of the past two years of Republican administration, the lingering epidemic, now blamed on the Republicans, and holdover Democrats, now rebranded, the Progressive Party will retain its small but critical majority in the Senate and be a roadblock to any real solutions.

The confetti and balloons fly, the band blares away, the jubilant crowd claps in unison, a flack on stage futilely attempts to make an announcement. The media correspondents are having a collective wet dream. The party will go on all night.

Just as happy but with less noise, confetti and balloons, a group of insiders, the real rulers of the party, celebrate in the same luxury penthouse suite where only two years before the Democrat Party died and the Progressive Party was hatched.

The same group of people has reassembled but this time they are joined by former Maryland governor Robert Jennings, Art Goldberg, head of MegaMax Pictures, the large Hollywood entertainment conglomerate and owner of Continental Nationwide Broadcasting, Mike Bunker, former head of SWAT teams in Los Angeles and an expert in large scale police state tactics, Jane Shouter, chair of the Federal Reserve, Joe Bucci, head of the largest federal employee union, and Harry Rhodes of Massachusetts, majority leader in the Senate.

Governor Jennings is a red-faced, perpetually happy man, completely detached from reality. He smiles, jokes, slaps backs and does what he's told. He has the IQ of a gnat.

Mike Bunker's LA paramilitary squads were a gang of fun loving sadists, the secret police and occupying army envy of any regime. They were the street

fighters who bullied, intimidated, terrorized, and groped the public. DeWitt looks forward to the day when she can employ his services at the national level.

Jane Shouter, chair of the Federal Reserve, is a small, nervous woman. She and her Open Market Committee do what they're told but she understands, all too well, the economic ruin the past ten years have caused. She knows, and is resigned to, a very bad place in economic history.

Senator Rhodes has the personality and ethics of a lizard. He's a cold blooded creature whose joys in life include padding his wallet and destroying the lives of others. With large, bug-like glasses, he seems more fitted to be an inmate at a place whose walls are padded and whose doors have coded exit locks.

On the large screen TV they watch the proceedings from the ballroom below. Ecstatically dancing about the room is Hillary DeWitt, one arm raised with a half full glass of scotch and soda and the other waiving an expensive, colorful scarf, the perfect image of an aging overweight drunk cheerleader. The rest clap in unison to her antics.

A moment later the TV coverage goes to commercial and she flops onto a couch, spilling about half of what's left of her drink.

"Oh naughty me, I've made a boo-boo," she mutters in a childlike voice. Harry Rhodes hands her a large table napkin, takes her drink, and places a fresh one on the table next to her.

"Thank you Harry. You always know I want more," she coos.

"Don't we all," quips George Salazar.

"Next stop, we take back the White House!" slurs DeWitt, holding her glass high.

They all burst into applause. She's their gal! Their ticket back to power.

Spring 2020

Once the Electoral College was fixed in favor of the Progressive Party, the presidential election of 2020 essentially became a one party affair. The only real contest is for the Progressive Party nomination.

The battle, stripped of its rhetoric, is essentially a welfare benefits bidding match, pandering to the consensus, shared by more than half the country, that the remainder owed them a living.

The campaign for the nomination, or more accurately, the auction, is couched in predictable airy, cloying slogans and focus group tested themes.

It is a crusade about sharing, working for the public good, villainizing the successful, class envy, racism, income inequality, the planet, and the children.

It is all swaddled in media consultant catch phrases. America's voting age toddlers will swallow any euphemism in exchange for a bribe.

From a very limited field of contenders, the winning candidate is, not surprisingly, the progressive's progressive, Hillary DeWitt. Her campaign is based on an elaborate economic blueprint that calls for a comprehensive, collective public and

private national economic policy, a partnership that will work for the true benefit of society, not just the few.

In her scheme, there will be systematic, scientific, central government coordination and management of the economy. The fruits of industry will be shared with the public in general and the dependent underclasses in particular.

In her progressive world view, the complexities of the modern economy require a unified, centralized coordinating hand rather than the wasteful, haphazard, unpredictable, free market based systems of the past.

Her campaign is a runaway success. Her opponents drop like flies.

It also helps that all her challengers' secret lives and affairs somehow leak to the press at just the right time, complements of Admiral Black.

Wednesday, July 15, 2020

Time: 10:00 AM

The crash of the gavel opening the 2020 Progressive Party Presidential Nominating Convention in Boston, Massachusetts barely causes a ripple among the chattering mobs milling about in excitement.

The gavel bangs three more times.

"The convention will please come to order," drawls the speaker repeatedly as he continues to bang the gavel.

After several minutes of futility, the chairman finally gives up and roars the over the speaker system, "All stand for the national anthem!"

Nothing will get a crowd of Progressives to sit faster than that. The hall erupts in jeers as the color guard troops down the central aisle to a booming, flourishing fanfare and march.

Once aligned across the front of the stage, the band breaks into the national anthem, the usual clenched fists appear. The few people still standing turn their backs to the stage.

When finished, the color guard marches smartly off and the chairman announces the invocation will be delivered by the Wiccan High Priestess of the New Haven Reformed Asmodean Coven, Her Unholiness Yama Shaitan.

The crowd jumps to it's feet and roars it's approval. The lights dim and a cloud of theatrical smoke erupts on the stage. A huge flaming Wiccan pentagram flashes on the giant screen. Laser beams dart swiftly about the darkened hall.

Then a bright, thin green spot beam targets a diminutive black clad woman being carried to the podium on a sedan chair held aloft by six oiled, horned devil masked muscle men wearing nothing but tight leather jock straps. The band breaks into the *Ave formosissima* from the Carmina Burana. The crowd chants along in unison.

After a largely incoherent and difficult to hear address, the priestess looks up from her prepared notes and roars, "In the name of Lord Satan, I unbless this hall

and declare these proceedings open."

The band beaks into a rhythmic Voodoo inspired dance number and the audience begins bouncing and gyrating uncontrollably. The priestess is hauled off and lights are turned back on. The smoke slowly clears.

In the VIP booth high above Warren Table says, "These people are fucking idiots!"

"Warren, honey, they're our people. We need them. And we don't want them to think very much," says DeWitt.

George Salazar comments, "They get nuttier every year. Are they all off their meds? This isn't going out over the air, is it?"

"No, the nets and cable went to a puff piece about the glorious history of the progressive movement right after the anthem. We knew this was coming. No sense letting anyone see it. Might raise questions. We have a lot of filler for the crazy parts yet to come. Don't worry, the public won't see any of it," says Bob Cutter.

"Well, that's a relief. So that means tomorrow's transgendered drag ballet and tribute is canceled?"

"It will happen but it won't be broadcast. Only sanitized images will be televised. We have agreements with all the print media and web news portals to only post pictures and articles supportive of the cause. During inconvenient episodes, we'll do special coverage of the celebrities and rock stars in attendance and their unique perspective on politics, economics, physics, world peace, that sort of thing. People are easily distracted," says Bob Cutter.

Below them the convention drones on.

Friday, July 17, 2020

The convention plods on for several days. Each speaker attempts to out weird the other. No theory or idea, regardless of how ridiculous, is out of order.

Finally, on Friday night, the poll of the states begins. In short order, Hillary DeWitt of Rhode Island becomes the Progressive nominee for president and Robert Jennings of Maryland becomes the nominee for vice-president.

DeWitt's acceptance speech will be delivered Saturday night. Rapture and the smell of burning 'medicinal' hemp fill the hall.

Saturday, July 18, 2020

An air of fervid anticipation hangs over the crowd, mostly drunk, stoned or both. They wait in joyful anticipation of their hero and new leader.

After a dull and wandering acceptance speech by Jennings and a one hour fictionalized video tribute to the life story of Hillary DeWitt, the chair of the convention rises.

"My fellow Americans, it is my high honor and great privilege to introduce to you the woman of the hour, the Progressive Party's nominee for President of the

United States. The next President of the United States, the Honorable Senator Hillary DeWitt!"

The audience roars, several bands begin playing and the place is pandemonium. Her picture flashes on screens all around the hall. Laser beams flash. People are fainting in the excitement, or just ODing, it's hard to tell.

She strides confidently in. Waving, bowing, blowing kisses to all, ginning ear to ear. She walks to one end of the stage and waves and bows, then to the other and waves and bows and then the same in the center.

She holds her arms above in a V sign for victory.

Finally, the podium rises from the floor along with the Teleprompters and she calls for silence. Over and over again.

Eventually the crowd begins to quiet down and she starts, "Mister chairman, distinguished guests, delegates, my fellow Americans, I accept your nomination!"

The crowd reverts to another ten minute demonstration. The network announcers and correspondents have a collective on-air leg tingle.

Finally the crowd becomes quiet and she roars, "I believe that government should be the mentor of the economy because only government has the resources, skills, and insight necessary to efficiently, systematically and fairly coordinate the needs of people, industry, and the environment. Only government can insure that benefits are fairly distributed to all!"

"I believe that the cutthroat, dog-eat-dog evils of capitalism can be eliminated and replaced by an efficiently managed centrally planned system whose benefits can, at last, be equally distributed to all."

"I believe that only with scientific planning, can government end the economic waste of the past. Only the people's government, not the private sector, should decide, in the public interest, which products should be produced, in what amounts, where factories should be built, how many employees should be hired, what constitutes a fair wage, and what research and development truly benefits the public good. We believe that formal political power and economic production should be seen as a single unit to be kept working in harmony, like a well-tuned engine, by those experts the state recognizes as suited to the task."

"It is my goal, as a progressive, and that of our partners, to foster greater reliance and trust in government. There should be more power vested in the executive branch and less in a factious and deadlocked, do nothing Congress. We need to move away from the eighteenth century model of society where a debating club of amateurs is allowed to make critical national decisions. We need to entrust these to those scientific, selfless government agencies and their administrative commissions who work daily for the welfare of each one of us. We must end political division and partisanship and learn to rely on those whose only purpose is to work for the public good."

"For industry, I offer, in exchange for accepting comprehensive federal oversight, that their profits will be regulated but guaranteed. They will be freed from wasteful

competition and a needless and wasteful race for innovation. It is time for us all to have a fair share of the economy."

"I promise to authorize a National Economic Planning Authority, to unify and coordinate government management of industry and commerce. Our new EPA will allocate resources to those industries working for the public good and drive out those that are not. From now on, business needs to be on notice that it works for the common good and the welfare of the people, not the profit of the few. We will have a new national social contract between business, government and the people!"

From the VIP booth above, her friends nod in approval as they sip champaign and watch the crowd below cheer ecstatically.

"She's the one!" exclaims Salazar who invested nearly two hundred million in her rise to power. "Now, the payoff!"

The others raise their glasses in a toast.

Fall, 2020

As the fall campaign begins, DeWitt finds that she has many on her side.

The big money interests on Wall Street eagerly endorse her plans without reservation. To them it means no more competition, safe government partnerships, cheap labor, guaranteed profits and easy money. DeWitt is Wall Street's sweetheart. She and her radical progressives are wholeheartedly supported by a vast network of client mega-corporations with intricate, incestuous, interlocking boards of directors, eager to be insiders in the new order. They donate money to her by the truckload.

She is also the favorite of the far-flung web of government unions. They drool at the chance to implement her scheme of comprehensive state economic regulation in all its bureaucratic splendor and detail. They eagerly and lavishly pour millions into her campaign coffers.

The conglomerate corporate owners of the TV networks, broadcast stations, cable channels and newspapers, habitual addicts of huge government grants, contracts, licenses, bailouts and favors, slavishly support her. It is a duty dictated not only by self interest but also by personal preference. They perform their supporting roles with Pravda-like efficiency.

The public teachers' unions have brilliantly done their job preparing the public. A generation lowfo voters, the product of a backward national public school system, ignorant of the smallest hint of history, economics or civics, are easily coaxed to memorize and imbecilically chant her slogans and wait in rapturous joy for her every broadcast text message.

The fall election campaign is farcical. Her opponent is savaged daily in the media. Fabricated stories about mistresses, bribes, drug use, drunkenness, unpaid taxes, billions in off-shore bank accounts arise like clockwork. All manner of concocted charges that he has engaged in acts of racism and misogyny are broadcast and published. Shadowy PACs funded by her billionaires crank out

slanderous social media memes while the comedy news shows spread the propaganda to the uninformed long since duped into believing what they are watching is actual news.

The national TV debates are rigged. Her partisans are the only moderators and they take every opportunity to tilt the table in her favor.

She knows every trick in the book. Her campaign is one of audacious deceit.

To the lowfos and the dependent classes, she promises to double their government benefits and to spread the money around in ever new and more generous ways. She proclaims a crusade to punish the rich and disburse their illgotten wealth, something the rich, her true partners and sponsors, think very droll.

The campaign focuses on the usual progressive vote buying giveaways, the catnip of the left. An EBT card in every pot and two in every wallet. Bribe them with free stuff then shackle them to lives of government dependency. It works every time.

Tuesday, November 4, 2020

She easily buys the election.

In fact, she is so popular that, on election day, her vote total in many precincts vastly exceeds that of the live population. Big city political machines are masters at the art of vote counting.

However, while her personal vote total is a majority, she actually wins in very few states. She has fewer than ten percent of the counties nationwide in her column. Her votes are mainly in tightly packed, recently legalized, coastal urban enclaves.

But the changes to the election laws that her friends worked so cleverly to establish have effectively eliminated the Electoral College and, with it, any need for broad, national support. Thus, the votes of her urban islands are enough to grant her victory.

The inland states, the other ninety percent of the country, are now disenfranchised outsiders. They are no longer participants in this theater. They grow ever more angry and disaffected. They recoil at the prospect of being fettered to, and ruled by, a small, alien, seashore, parasitic, mega-rich progressive oligarchy.

Congressional districts, however, are another matter. They are geographic in nature. While a Progressive Party district in New York might have a population that votes 110% Progressive, this only gives her one vote in the House.

A rural district in Iowa, counts the same. While she has some loyalists in these places, they do not have majorities. Her opposition is widespread and far less clustered. Thus, it wins many more seats.

The vast hinterland, fly-over country to Progressives, not sharing her vision of redistributionist national state socialism, sends her a House of Representatives very much not to her liking.

Wednesday, January 20, 2021

The inauguration is a festive affair with all the usual pomp and ceremony. She basks in the glow of the stoned crowd and the adulation of the press. DeWitt makes an inspiring but content free speech.

The crowd, consisting mainly of unionized government workers and EBT people, would have roared its approval if she had read the phone book. They want their payoff.

The inaugural balls are few, not many of her people want to pony up the \$500 price of a ticket. Unfortunately, it seems that you can't charge an inaugural ball to an EBT card. An oversight to be corrected.

DeWitt attends three then retreats to her new digs on Pennsylvania Avenue. She has a lot of work to do in the morning.

Thursday, January 21, 2021

Time: 10:00 AM

The next day, DeWitt quickly gets started putting her plans into action. She starts with the true keys to the kingdom, the federal bureaucracy.

It is this vast network of federal regulatory agencies that is the real key to power in Washington. They write their own laws, called regulations, and enforce them in their own administrative courts, and police them with their own paramilitary forces. The are a government unto themselves. In fact, they are the government.

The purpose of DeWitt's first meeting is to pack the management at major agencies with people loyal to her alone. It is the unchecked authority of these departments that will let her rule as she sees fit, with or without Congress.

In the Oval Office are DeWitt, Bader, Salazar, Rhodes, Admiral Black, Bob Cutter, Bob Cooke, chair of the Progressive Party, Janet Shouter, Arvind Gable, head of IRS, and Joe Bucci. They sit surrounded by stacks of folders and laptops.

Gable has yellow, pointed teeth, thick glasses and beady, shifting eyes. He and his auditors know how to make people squirm attention, pay, and obey.

While she is thwarted in the House of Representatives, she still, however, has a majority in the Senate. This gives her all she needs to fundamentally transform government. The Senate will rubber stamp her appointments. Her minions will soon be in charge at all the powerful, unaccountable, federal regulatory agencies.

"Ok, we've taken care of EPA, Homeland, FBI and IRS. Arvind, before we go on, how are things at IRS, opposition-wise?" asks DeWitt.

"Madame President, you'll be happy to know, we're on top of it. During the transition period we've identified who donated to a PAC that opposed you and the audit letters will be in the mail tonight. Their lives will soon become a living hell."

"Excellent, keep up the good work. Now, what's next?"

"Take your pick. Federal Election Commission, Securities and Exchange

Commission, Federal Communications Commission, NLRB, FEMA, CIA, DIA, Departments of Education, Agriculture, Interior, Health and Human Services, DoD, Bureau of Land Management, Office of Financial Research, the Federal Reserve, Bureau of Customs and Border Protection, Secret Service, National Reconnaissance Office, Bureau of Industry and Security, Office of Civil Rights, thirty circuit court judges, fifteen appellate court judges, all ninety-two Federal Attorneys and a few other minor appointments we can get to later. It's gonna be a long day," answers Bader.

"Why is Office of Civil Rights important?" asks Janet Shouter.

"So we can have an official way to call people racist," answers Bob Cooke.

"Oh, I didn't think of that."

"Ok, lets do some judges first," snaps DeWitt. "I don't want any judicial interference with my executive orders. I'll be the one to decide which laws we'll enforce, which we'll ignore and what the rest of them mean, not some old fart in a black robe."

Bader jumps to his feet and passes out folios to each saying, "First, here is a fresh list of judges who will be resigning."

Scanning the list of judges Harry Rhodes gasps, "Holy shit! These are some of our worst pains in the ass! These people blocked just about everything we tried to do! They wiped out most of Obama's agenda calling it unconstitutional. When did they resign?"

"They haven't yet. But they will," says Admiral Black quietly.

"Steve here has given us a few dossiers, if you know what I mean," says DeWitt sarcastically. "They won't be around much longer, unless they want their files sent to over Inter Continental News, right Bob?"

'Well, it would be our civic duty to broadcast anything that came our way, regardless of how embarrassing it might be to the victim, uhh, public figure in question."

"They're being contacted as we speak. The resignations should start flowing in a day or so," says Bader.

"But how did you do it? Most of these people are squeaky clean," asks Salazar.

"For the tough ones, we just downloaded a lot of kiddie porn onto their office computers then had it 'discovered' by court IT staff. It works every time. It's one of our favorites. For others, we just got some embarrassing extra-marital photos, a few wearing lampshades, the usual," says Admiral Black.

"So, then our problems with the judiciary are over!" squeals Rhodes.

"And expect a lot of other resignations soon from agencies with holdover staff we would prefer to replace with our own people," says Bader. "Oh, and by the way, Harry, we have a few files for you that might be helpful in dealing with uncooperative senators too."

DeWitt says, "I think we need to understand, people, that from now on, things are

different. We're going to use government, all of it, to achieve our goals. If that means using the IRS, fine. If that means using surveillance information to convince people, fine. This time we're not going to be denied. I was elected and elections have consequences. And I want the bureaucracy to understand this. They work for me now. Only me. Now, Admiral Black, perhaps you can give use a brief overview of how we'll be doing data collection and coordination in the future?"

"The main thrust of our efforts will be to consolidate and integrate all domestic and foreign surveillance in one database. President DeWitt will be organizing a confidential inter-agency committee consisting of representatives from NSA, FBI, IRS, DIA, CIA, ONI, and Homeland Security for the purpose of coordinating all intelligence gathering activities."

"The goal is to identify and punish those guilty of social treason. Our people will do the usual, read email, hack computers, record phone calls, track license plates, examine tax returns, the basics. We will then, in a systematic way, store the data in a centralized data base. Then we'll apply sophisticated AI algorithms to analyze behavioral patterns. Those whose activities are identified as suspect will be selected for examination in greater detail. From now on, no one will be able escape their responsibility to support the state."

"All this will be implemented at the new, massive NSA computer facilities being built in the remote mountains of Utah. It will truly be the Fort Knox of domestic intelligence data! It will contain the most comprehensive population database ever assembled, the fruits of years of hacking and spying. It will all be stored in massive mountain vaults, on millions of computer disk drives. Every phone call, every computer file, every text message, every photo, every Internet search, every bank transaction, every credit card swipe, everything will be recorded. At last, we will be able to quickly and efficiently identify troublemakers and insure domestic cooperation with the state."

"Don't you need permission from the FISA court, or what ever it's called," asks Joe Bucci.

"Technically, but it's really just a formality. They're a rubber stamp. The only rights they protect are government rights. We co-opted them a long time ago."

Dewitt interrupts, "Once this is fully implemented, uncooperative judges, politicians, citizens, newspaper editors, network executives will be identified in real time. They'll quickly find out that if they challenge the new system. They will be found and punished quickly and without mercy."

"What if we get sued or Congress starts subpoenaing records?"

Bader answers, "Court challenges will be dealt with by assertions of Executive Privilege and National Security which our newly appointed progressive judiciary will accept. The subpoenas will be quashed. Objections to executive authority will be no longer be entertained. Don't worry. Our new judges will do their job."

DeWitt, looking determined, says, "However, as is the case with any major change, there may be some people who will resist in more militant ways. Thus, I

want every major department of government to be prepared with its own police force that we can call out if needed. We need to follow the example of the BLM. When they need to go after some rancher or farmer who isn't doing as he's told, they call out their armed paramilitary units."

"This may make some people very angry," says Bob Cooke.

"As Machiavelli said, *it is good to be loved but it is better to be feared.* I want it known that if you challenge the government, expect a midnight battering ram at your door from an armed federal SWAT team. As for as I'm concerned, let the Library of Congress get a SWAT team. There'll be fewer overdue books in no time!" says DeWitt.

The others present laugh, a couple applaud.

"Ok, before we break for lunch, I want to work on Agriculture and Interior," says DeWitt. "I want to show those damn Midwest farmers and yokels who voted against me who's boss. I want to make their lives a living hell. All those damned tea bagger types yapping about their precious constitution. Lets start with the Farm Credit Administration. Who can we put in over there? I want someone who will bankrupt those hog lot bastards. I'll show them what kind of rights they have. I run this country now, with or without their consent."

After a brief lunch break, the work drones on all afternoon until late at night. Seizing control of a government is time consuming.

Friday, January 22, 2021

Time: 10:00 AM

DeWitt, Shane Bader, George Salazar, Warren Table, Jane Shouter and Cynthia Goff, Secretary of the Treasury meet in the Oval Office about the economy.

"Ok, Shouter, what the hell is going on?" says DeWitt in an exasperated voice.

Jane Shouter begins, "Well, Madame President, for the past few years, we've been having increasing structural difficulties in the economy. And now, more importantly, the Obama administration's EPA environmental policies are finally coming home to roost. They're pretty much savaging the energy sector. Beginning a few years ago, the regulations have now resulted in the closing of thousands of power plants along with drastic reductions in coal, oil and natural gas output. And, for the past few years, the climate has been cooling off and the demand for energy is rising. That wasn't anticipated when the regulations went into effect."

"So? How does that effect us?"

"This has made many things very difficult. Now we're having serious problems generating enough electricity or providing enough natural gas to heat homes, businesses, and run factories. For example, we have only half the natural gas supply for New England that we need. The environmentalists blocked a new gas pipeline back in 2014 and, now that the Plymouth nuclear station is closed, we're seriously short of gas to run power stations to makeup for the lost electricity. The last of the coal fired plants in that region were shut down six years ago. With

most of the available gas now going to home heating, there's almost none now for electricity. So, basically we're expecting lots of brownouts, or worse, and very soon. Our only alternative is to burn oil but that is extremely expensive. None of this is good for the economy."

"Where did they expect to get their electricity?"

"Well, they thought all those wind farms out to sea would make up the difference. They haven't and, anyway, that electricity is just as expensive as oil fired electricity."

"What about all those solar panels?"

"For God's sake, it's New England! The sun never shines there in winter. But it's not just New England, factories are shutting down everywhere. Not enough electricity and not enough natural gas to heat or run them. It's an enormous drag on the economy and it's getting worse each month. Those regulations were time bombs set to go off after Obama left of office, just like the health car law which is still causing companies to fire people and automate. It seems companies have discovered that machines don't need health insurance."

"Then there are issues with raw materials. For all practical purposes, EPA regs now make it illegal to dig anything out of the ground, to cut down a tree or, for that matter, to build a factory. So, companies have been relocating to Mexico and Canada as fast as they can and taking the jobs with them. The job losses since the election are accelerating."

"And then there's our balance of payments problem. Since we don't really make much of anything in this country anymore, we import nearly everything and we export next to nothing. This means that the dollar is coming under significant pressure. We're not sure if we can maintain its value in foreign exchange markets. If there's a run on it, it could fall very fast and very far."

"So what? How will than effect us?"

"The price of all those imports will skyrocket, that's how. That means a huge increase in inflation. It's a very big danger, at the moment."

"But the economy is improving, right? The stock market's been up for the past few weeks," asks Bader.

"Perversely, the stock market is up because the economy is in a downward spiral. The market is going up because they expect more easing from us at the Fed. Translation, more printed money. That always makes the market go up. Bad news makes the market go up these days. The real problem is that no one wants to invest. Investors feel the risk is too great in a managed economy, running mainly on printed money. Too many people are putting their assets into precious metals, real estate, foreign currency, and tangibles, not factories, retail stores machine tools, software or research. Bottom line, no investment, no new jobs."

Salazar interrupts, "Hillary, the basic problem is that all those stimulus programs, buy backs, make-work government construction schemes have fizzled out by now and just left us with the debt on which pay interest. Now people are losing

jobs, defaulting on loans, going on unemployment, disability, or welfare and becoming government dependents. Fewer people are working every day. The economy is shutting down."

"Well, there's nothing wrong with being a government dependent as long as you vote as you're told," mutters DeWitt.

Shouter says, "The Federal Reserve has been doing all it can to stimulate. Unfortunately, most of the easy money is ending up in stock buy backs, bonds and offshore transfers. Another problem is that it's also letting the government grab all the free cash it wants in order to support some very dangerous levels of public debt."

"I really don't understand how all this effects the economy. Why not have more money? People are always happy with more money," queries DeWitt.

Table interjects, "The problem is that Fed printed too much money. When that didn't work, they printed more. The more they print, the more they have to print just to keep the damned leaky balloon from crashing and the system from imploding."

"For the past twelve years, government deficits have been limited by nothing but the supply of paper, ink and electrons. All the massive overruns were covered by no-cost, zero interest money. The Fed printed and the government borrowed. Borrow and spend has been our national economic policy for twelve years. Now, if the they stop printing, the government will collapse. We're trapped."

Salazar interjects, "Yes, and all that printed money has actually only made the economy worse. Free loans made it cheaper for companies to automate and fire workers. So, then the government raised the minimum wage. And that killed off just about every entry level job in the country. They were all replaced with kiosks, robots and AI. That put millions more on welfare. Cheap money means more automation which means more unemployment."

"Right now, the economy is choking on free money. The country is running on nothing but increasingly worthless paper. The printing presses are making things worse, not better."

Shouter says, "I'm hoping for a miracle but I really don't believe one will happen. Perhaps you could start a nice little war someplace? That would sort things out in no time."

"So, bottom line, we're in trouble?" says DeWitt.

They all nod.

"We need a plan, Saying we're for puppies, sunsets and world peace might win a beauty contest but it's not a plan," mutters Salazar.

"Well, as it turns out, Bader and I do have a plan. I need to get my administration off on the right foot. Show the people that I mean business. So, looking over what's been done in the past, In my opinion, what this country really needs is for the government to step up and do its part. I've consulted with Dr. Peter Kroger, the Nobel Prize winning economist at Upper Montrose State University who writes for the New York Globe. He believes that the problem with Obama's stimulus plans is that they were too small. I agree. I think we need something much, much bigger," says DeWitt.

Shouter rolls her eyes and objects, "That's very dangerous, Madame President, with the current debit to GDP ratio. The markets will not receive this very well. And don't you need Congressional authorization for something like this?"

"Congress won't do what I tell them and I'm not going to stand around, do nothing, and twiddle my thumbs during a crisis. I don't need the Congress. I'll do it myself. I'm declaring an emergency and doing it by executive order. Congress is obsolete. We don't need them any more. And Kroger is very insistent. I believe him. We need to act. Bader, you've prepared the press release?"

"Yes Madame President. It's all ready. I've already asked the networks for special air time for tonight at 9 PM."

"And the speech?"

"Already loaded into the Teleprompter."

"Excellent. Lets run it up the flag pole and see if anyone salutes. Thank you all for attending," says DeWitt rising.

The others rise and leave but Bader falls back and hands DeWitt the folder of press release materials, her speech, a copy of the talking points that will be sent to all the usual people who will be interviewed by the networks.

She thumbs through it and say, "Looks very good. Now we'll see if it works."

Monday, January 25, 2021

The Asian stock markets open in chaos after DeWitt's announcement of a new three trillion dollar stimulus program. The price of U.S. 10 year Treasury bonds drops twenty percent and dollar falls to 70 Yen.

The situation worsens when Europe opens. The dollar drops to 190 against the Euro and the cable rate falls to \$3.50 Sterling. The London stock market drops more than ten percent The German and French market sag by like amounts.

The U.S. futures market is not pretty. At 9:30 AM the New York Exchange opens and all hell brakes loose. The market opens down 300 points and continues to drop. By noon, after over a thousand point fall, circuit breakers force a halt to trading. At 1:00 PM, when the market reopens, it falls another 1,000 points and trading is suspended for the day. The price of gold doubles. Lines form outside banks to withdraw cash. ATM nationwide machines are picked clean by noon.

Overnight there is a mass run on money market and depository accounts. The Fed steps in to prevent several banks and funds from declaring insolvency. DeWitt is forced to issue an emergency decree declaring Tuesday to be a bank holiday in order to give the regional Federal Reserve banks time to deliver more cash to member banks.

The networks plead for people to stay calm. That only makes people more worried. Everyone knows that what the networks say is probably the opposite of

the truth.

Internet sales of crypto currency coins soar.

In a meeting with DeWitt, Bader advises her against giving another national TV speech. Instead, Janet Shouter will go on TV. Her effect is minimal. No one understands a thing she says.

The run on the dollar in foreign markets continues Tuesday morning but begins to subside a bit by late afternoon.

However, after a brief dead cat bounce, the dollar and stock market continue their downward spiral on Wednesday until, finally, a massive, worldwide, coordinated central bank intervention stabilizes the exchange rates at 60 Yen, \$2.30 Euro and \$3.60 Sterling. The stock market for the week is down 50%.

Monday, February 1, 2021

Time: 10:00 AM

Sitting around the Oval Office, pigging out on donuts and sipping coffee are DeWitt, Bader, Black, Cooke, newly installed Attorney General Jim Hammer and White House Press Secretary Tad Summers.

Outside the windows, the third blizzard of the year is bringing official Washington to a standstill.

Looking up from some papers on her desk DeWitt says, "Any word from NOAA as to why the weather is so damned fucked up? I'm getting complaints that food shipments are beginning to be interrupted. How long is this going to last? For God's sake, there's three feet of snow in the fing Rose Garden."

"No word, Madam President, but I can check and get back to you," answers Summers in a perky yet servile voice.

"Well let me know what you find out. This is ridiculous."

Summers begins sending email from his tablet.

"Ok, now, the first order of business. I want these media attacks to stop!"

"Well, they're not really attacks," says Bader. "They're just commenting on the situation were in. Given what happened last week, for God's sake, it's a wonder they're not calling for impeachment!"

"Well, as far as I'm concerned, what they're saying is nothing but social treason. Things are far too serious at the moment for any level of negative opinion. I want something done. Tell them to find something else to write about, or else. I thought we had the press nailed down?"

"They're getting a little restless. It's hard for them to ignore the economic meltdown."

"Well, we need to be sure they don't get any ideas. Who the hell do they think they are, criticizing the government during this time of national emergency?"

"As it turns out, I've been working on exactly that. I may have a solution," says Bader mumbling through another mouthful of donut. Swallowing hard and slurping some coffee, he continues, "I think, by reinterpreting some parts of the Espionage Act of 1917, we can solve our problem. It was passed by Woodrow Wilson in order to silence his critics during World War I and it's still on the books."

"Yes, yes, that act was never repealed, unlike the Sedition Act of 1918 which was. Now the Sedition Act would have been much easier to work with but the Espionage Act has some possibilities," comments Attorney General Hammer.

"What does the Espionage thing say?" asks DeWitt.

Reading from some notes, Bader says, "It is a crime to *convey information with intent to interfere with the operation or success of the armed forces of the United States or to promote the success of its enemies*. Punishable by death or by imprisonment for up to 30 years or both. Also, it is a crime *to convey false reports or false statements with intent to interfere with the operation or success of the military or naval forces of the United States or to promote the success of its enemies when the United States is at war, to cause or attempt to cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, refusal of duty, in the military or naval forces of the United States, or to willfully obstruct the recruiting or enlistment service of the United States.* Punishable by a maximum fine of \$10,000 or by imprisonment for up to 20 years or both. And, *the Postmaster General has the authority to impound or to refuse to mail publications that he determines to be in violation of the act.*"

"Now that sounds promising. Wilson was before his time!"

"He was indeed. Now we just need to do a little re-interpretation here and there. For example, it's really not much of an extension to say that our critics during the current emergency help our enemies or that they hinder the armed forces who are helping during the weather emergency or that they encourage insubordination? I'm sure we can get a judge to accept this point of view. After all, we appointed the judges and we can unappoint them. And the bit about the Postmaster General impounding mail and publications. That already covers print media since they are all registered with the Post Office anyway. So we will have no legal problems dealing with print publications. And it's certainly not much of an extension to include broadcast media since broadcast media didn't exist in 1917 we can argue that the law should apply to them as well now. After all, they use public airwaves, satellites, government cable licenses, and so on. Again, it I don't think it will be hard to find judges who will agree with us," adds Hammer.

"Excellent! Now that sounds like what I want! Ok, now who will be the first test case?" chirps a happy DeWitt. "Nothing too splashy, just a shot across their bow to let the others know what we might do to them if they get out of line. Something with a hint of the death penalty would be nice. That should get their attention and make them think twice before they go publishing lies about me."

"How about that web site, *conservatarian.com*, that keeps running off about you violating the Constitution? Not too big but very visible to the rest of the media world."

"Yes, that's a good pick. Nail'. Bankrupt them with legal fees. Black, what do your people have on them?"

"I'll check, madam President. I'm sure we have something. We always do."

"From now on guys, lèse-majesté is a crime," she adds, menacingly. "Got it?"

"Madame President, I just got a reply from NOAA," sparkles Tad Summers in his soft cheerful press agent voice.

"And?"

"They say it's another polar vortex. The long range computer models say it will be active for at least six more weeks."

"Six fucking more weeks? You mean the middle of March?"

"Looks that way."

"What's causing it?"

"Sunspots or the lack thereof. We've been in a sunspot minimum for nearly ten years. They say it effects the atmosphere."

"Damn," she exclaims as she flops down on her large desk chair. "And I suppose the Northeast is still bitching about the not having any natural gas, electricity or food?"

"Yes, somewhat. About two million people are living in temporary shelters, there's many food shortages and electricity is being rationed. They're only getting about four hours a day right now. That is, if it's sunny and the wind blows the right way."

"Well, it's for their own good. They'll thank us later. Put out a press release saying we feel their pain, saving the planet, or something. Ok, I think we're done here for now. Hammer, lets move fast on this Espionage Act thing and keep me posted."

"Will do, Madame President."

She gestures a waiving dismissal and they rise and leave. Bader takes the last donut on his way out.

Monday, February 15, 2021

While yet another snow storm rages outside, DeWitt meets with her advisors in the Oval Office. In addition to the regulars, Bader, Black, Cooke, Hammer and Summers, she's invited the heads of Treasury, IRS, FBI, DIA, FEC, BLM, CIA, EPA, TSA, SEC, DOE, and Homeland. The alphabet soup of autocratic, federal agencies who now prowl for any whiff of opposition.

"Alright people, I want some coordination. The economic situation since the run on the dollar is deteriorating very fast and we need to be on the lookout for any signs of organized opposition. Now that we have the Espionage Act on our side, I want a fully coordinated effort from all your agencies to root out any resistance. If you find any hint, any hint, I want you to eradicate it. I want you to exploit every avenue. Nothing is off limits. Everyone is a suspect," rants DeWitt.

"What if we find unsocial sentiments but can't find anything to charge them with?" asks the director of BLM, timidly.

"If you can't convict them, ruin them financially, bankrupt them. Just keep bringing lawsuits, administrative actions, special rulings, audits, search warrants, you name it. Keep them in court. Run up their legal fees. Smear them in the press. You know the drill."

"What if they say we're using police state tactics?" asks the head of FBI.

Bader interjects, "Accuse them of social treason and racism. It always works. Puts them on the defensive. Everyone is guilty of something. It's your job to find the offense."

"Now, Summers, what about the press. How are we doing there? Have they learned their lesson?" says DeWitt turning to her press secretary.

"Well, the indictment we dropped on that little web site under the Espionage Act made a lot of people take notice. The press is a lot quieter now. Not nearly as many articles about the disaster in New England or the stimulus debacle. A couple of the TV networks even replaced their White House correspondents with even friendlier reporters as a show of good faith. I think things are moving in the right direction. But we still have a major problem with FAX NEWS and a few radio guys. We need to move more carefully there. They've started moving assets out of the country and we don't want them broadcasting from Bermuda or somewhere that we don't control. They may become much harder to deal with if they do. Too many people with satellite TV, radio and Internet connections."

"Black, can't we knock out their satellites?"

"Of course but then they would probably just switch to the Internet. Much more difficult to manage unless we hit the kill switch and shut down Internet access for everyone and that would just cause a lot of other problems."

"For the time being, we just need to wait and continue our public service ad campaign telling people that listening to those sites is social treason. It's working pretty well. We've convinced most of the country," says Summers.

"My people are nearly ready with the national firewall, similar to what the Chinese use. When that's done, we can filter out anything we want," interjects Admiral Black.

DeWitt says, "The media's job is report what we tell them to. They should view their role as nothing but stenographers. Criticism is not to be permitted. When we say something, it's their job to treat it as holy writ and publish it as is."

Admiral Black says, "We've taken a few actions against some of the more scurrilous bloggers out there. I think that the word will get around that cooperation, silence, and caution are the safe and sensible paths."

"Good. Keep me posted and I want weekly reports on how that database is coming."

Nods and yes ma'am all around.

"Now, what the hell is going on with the weather? You, NOAA guy, what's happening? Half the lights are out in New England, the Mississippi River is frozen solid, shipments are halted everywhere, trains aren't running because their diesel

has turned to parafin. What the hell is going on?"

The representative from NOAA answers, "Well, Madame President, as you said, the Mississippi is frozen, so is the Ohio, the Missouri, most of Chesapeake Bay all the way to up Baltimore, the Delaware Bay all the way to Philadelphia, Narragansett Bay to Providence and Boston Harbor. The Great Lakes are completely frozen over. Interstates 70, 80 and 90 are barely passable from the east coast to the Rockies. This is the worst Arctic outbreak since the mid-70s and the computer models tell us it will persist in the East until April."

"APRIL!?" shrieks DeWitt.

"Yes, Madame President, April. And we don't expect Lake Superior to thaw completely until August. It will be a very cold spring."

The guy from the Department of Energy raises his hand nervously.

"Yes, who are you?" says DeWitt.

"I'm Bill Sargent from the Department of Energy, Madame President. The weather situation is causing a lot of problems for us. We can't get oil shipments up the Ohio River. Freight train service in states north of Kentucky is coming to a halt due to lack of fuel and the cold. The diesel they have is turning to jelly and can't be pumped. The Bailey Yards in North Platte are closed."

"What the hell is a Bailey Yard?"

"It's the main east-west railway junction for the nation. It's in North Platte, Nebraska. With those yards closed, all shipping is being rerouted a thousand miles to the south where we really don't have the infrastructure to handle long haul freight trains. Because of the harbor closures, we can't deliver fuel on the upper East coast. About half of New England has no heat now. Our gas pipelines don't have enough capacity. Once the pressure drops to a certain level, pilot lights go out and many people can't restart them. This is leading to frozen pipes. Electricity generation is also a big problem. Again, no fuel. And things aren't getting any better."

"We all must do our part to save the planet," mutters EPA representative.

"Well, if things don't get back to normal soon, the economy is in serious trouble, not that things aren't bad enough already," interrupts Cynthia Goff, Secretary of Treasury.

"Well, has anyone got any suggestions?" asks DeWitt looking exasperated.

"At the moment, there's not much we can do," says Bader. "As you know, the Defense Department is helping clear the highways and rail lines. We're using heavy military transports to move food as best we can. The National Guard has been called out in several states. But that's about it for now, until things begin to thaw."

"Wonderful. Just wonderful. Alright people, keep me informed," she says rising. She dismisses them with a hand wave as an usher opens the door to her private office.

Monday, March 15, 2021

Time: 10:00 AM

Another meeting in the Oval Office with a full complement of advisors, flunkies, sycophants, financiers and bureaucrats.

They stand as DeWitt waddles in and takes her place behind her desk. She gestures for them to be seated. Outside the windows, wind whipped snow flurries race across the snow covered lawn. The Cherry Blossom Festival will be late this year, if, in fact, any survived the winter.

The winter of 2021 is the coldest since 1816. Millions are out of work. Transportation is at a halt. Food shipments are at a standstill. Northern seaports are iced over. People are starving and huddled in agony. DeWitt's settled science weather Nazis dither in public and pray for heat in private.

Sifting through the files on her desk she finally pulls out one and opens it.

Looking over her reading glasses she say, "Ok, Shouter, you asked for this meeting. What the hell is going on now?"

Janet Shouter, seated near the desk, nervously begins, "Well, Madame President, we have a problem. A very serious problem. The Chinese central bank has just informed us that they will be liquidating their position in U.S. Treasuries. About twenty trillion dollars worth."

"What does that mean?"

"It means chaos in the international finance markets and a probable final collapse of the U.S. dollar on the foreign exchange markets."

"When?"

"They began overnight in Asia and they are now selling in Europe and the U.S."

"Why are they doing this?"

"Because, one, they're having economic issues of their own, two, they don't think the U.S. economy is going to pull out of this depression, and three, they're royally pissed that you proposed to print three trillion for yet another stimulus. That was the last straw. They've had it with U.S. money. As far as they're concerned, it's worthless."

"Can't you just print some money and give it to them as compensation for their troubles?"

"Seeing how that is the problem, no. They don't want any more printed money."

"So, what does this mean?"

"Basically, it's national bankruptcy. Quotes from London last hour show that our debt is being sold for pennies on the dollar."

"And the consequences?"

"The dollar becomes essentially worthless in international trade. The basic Wiemar Germany scenario when the German Mark declined to four trillion to the dollar."

"Yes, I've read about that. Zimbabwe too, right?"

"Right. Last anyone checked, it was about two and a half trillion Zimbabwe dollars to a U.S. dollar. But that won't be true much longer. We might be at par in no time."

"So, why are the Chinese doing this? Why upset the apple cart? What do they get out of it?"

"Quite a lot, actually. They've basically concluded that they're never getting their money back. So they've decided to use the bonds in their own best interest. This gives them a way to buy influence. They've been securing deals for natural resources with countries all over Asia, Africa and South America as a result."

"So, how does selling their Treasury bonds help them do that?" asks Summers.

"Since most international debts are denominated in U.S. dollars, if they make the dollar worthless, they blow up the debt of lots of other countries. The Chinese are basically giving away worthless dollars in exchange for trade deals. This will let the countries in question wipe their balance sheets clean."

"Does that directly effect us?"

"Since most of that debt is owed to large money-center U.S., Canadian and European banks, that puts them out of business internationally. So, basically, by destroying the U.S. dollar as the world's reserve currency, they gain the gratitude and loyalty of many third world countries and, ultimately, cheap access to their natural resources and, at the same time, they crush the large European and American money center banks. Not a bad trade off from their point of view."

"So, then what does this mean in the long run?"

"The Chinese renminbi replaces the dollar as the primary reserve currency in international trade and the Chinese banks take over the international banking market. From now on, if you want to import or export, you will need to do it with renminbi. And since we can't print renminbi like we printed dollars, it means we can't import unless we somehow can get renminbi."

"We can borrow these renminbi things, right?"

"Probably not, our credit rating at the moment isn't very good, needless to say."

"So, what does this mean domestically?"

"Massive domestic inflation and I do mean massive. Thousands of percent per month. Dollars become effectively worthless."

"How worthless?"

"A currency is worthless when it can't be used to buy anything. After decades of deindustrialization, we don't make much of what we consume. We import most things. Electronics, oil, cars, heavy machinery, the works. Those things will become prohibitively expensive. For starters, think \$250 a gallon for gas, and gold around \$100,000 an ounce. The final value will depend on how much food,

coal, lumber and other basic raw materials we can export in exchange for renminbi. Basically, we'll become a third world economy overnight."

"What do you mean by food, coal, lumber and raw materials?"

"Those are essentially, at the moment, the only ways we have to earn foreign exchange, by selling basic raw materials. The more we sell, the more manufactured goods we can buy."

"We don't make anything? What about aircraft, computers, and heavy machinery?"

"Oh please, the only thing we make in this country is EBT cards. No, we make almost nothing. We ran off all the large, profitable manufacturing companies years ago. Confiscatory taxes, endless environmental, labor, gender and OSHA regulations, the producers figured it out and moved their factories outside the country then their headquarters moved as well."

"So, what have we been living on?"

"Mainly, we sell hamburgers to one another and print money."

"Unemployment?"

"Oh God yes, tens of millions. At least 120 million by the end of summer."

"Oh my God! Bader, looks like we'll have a lot more on welfare!"

"That's another problem," says Shouter.

"How so?" asks Bader, now getting quite sweaty.

"Well, it's the Midwest, mostly. The farmers."

"What about the farmers? I hate farmers."

"Yes, they already know that. The problem is, I don't think they're going to be happy taking worthless money for their product when they can easily sell their crops to foreign clients for real money. That pretty much goes for all federal programs. U.S. money won't be good if the counter party can sell their goods or services abroad. Anywhere producers have something they can export for real money, it will be hard for us to buy with U.S. dollars."

"We'll confiscate their damned crops!" shouts a panicky DeWitt.

"If we can't service our people, things will not go well," cautions Bader.

"What about this selling things, coal, lumber, that crap?"

"Well, we don't actually have very much of that anymore either. The EPA shut down nearly all the coal mines and the environmentalists shut down the lumber industry. Anyway, again, the government doesn't own much of it."

"We'll take it!"

"Might be hard to get people to go into a mine shaft at the point of a gun."

"What about our gold reserves?"

"The New York Fed already used all of theirs defending the dollar last month. Ft.

Knox still has some, I think. But not enough to make much of a difference."

"What about oil and gasoline?"

"Again, the EPA pretty much closed most of the refineries around the country, except for a few in Oklahoma. We have very few remaining oil wells and very limited refinery capacity. We import most of our petroleum products from Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela. But that will soon stop unless we can come up with some foreign exchange. I doubt they'll take dollars anymore."

DeWitt leans back on her large chair and stares at the ceiling for a moment then says, "Ok, thank you. I need to think this over. Bader, we need to talk."

The meeting breaks up. The crowd mummers worriedly as they quickly exit, all but Shane Bader and Hillary DeWitt.

"We got a problem," DeWitt begins.

"Yeah, I can see that."

"Find out what you can about supplies for the big cities. We need an inventory of what we control and what we don't. If we can't keep those people happy, I don't know what will happen."

"I do."

"Right, it won't be nice, especially on top of all the shortages we had this winter. We need to do something. See what you can come up with."

Tuesday, March 16, 2021

In a large conference room high atop a skyscraper in New York, Bader meets with the heads of the main broadcast and cable news networks. Also present are the principle news show anchors, the heads of the primary wire services, the editors of the largest newspapers in the country, and several of the best known commentators, web bloggers and reporters.

Bader begins, "I think you've all been briefed about the financial crisis that is about to hit. This has the potential to cause serious economic dislocations. We're particularly concerned about the flow of food, booze, and drugs to our urban clients. If they get a whiff that they won't get serviced, they may become, shall we say, unruly?"

"What do you mean about drugs? The part about food and booze, I get, but the government isn't supplying drugs, are they?" asks one of the network executives.

"Well, we do dump a lot of anti-psychotics in those communities. But, no, that's not what I'm referring to. We're talking about meth, cocaine, heroine, pot, that sort of thing."

"How is this a government matter?"

"The problem is, most of the hard stuff is imported from South America, Mexico or the far east and a worthless dollar won't buy much. That's what we're afraid of. We could see a lot of people in very serious withdrawal and very soon."

"Do you have any plans on how to handle this?" asks an editor.

"Mainly we plan to use the Army. They'll be on the streets to neutralize anything that flares up."

There is some general muttering around the room and a few side comments.

Bader continues, "But what I asked you here for today concerns coordinating the message. I know how helpful you've all been in the past but now we need an even greater commitment. Things may become very unsettled in the coming months. It's critical that the news media present the correct image of the authorities in Washington and be supportive of the way in which we're tackling the national emergency."

"What do you have in mind?" asks one of the big network CEOs.

"Each morning the White House will email each of you a copy of the main news talking points for the day. These will include what news to cover, what to say about it, possible interview candidates, discussion topics, that sort of thing. There will also be a blacklist of topics, people and ideas that we really don't want to see on TV or in print."

"I thought we were pretty much doing that already?" opines an editor.

"Up until now, it's mainly been an informal set of notes from the White House Press Office which we send to the New York Globe. The Globe uses these to set the up the day's agenda in it's print and online editions and this is, as you know, mostly followed by other papers and outlets around the country. All very informal. Now, however, we need to tighten things up a bit. We can't afford any slip ups. Things could spiral out of control very quickly. Right now, we need the media working in very close coordination with political authorities."

"So, specifically, how will this work?" asks the editor of the influential New York Globe.

"At 4 AM eastern time we will send the days topic list along with suggested spin angles to each of you. We will also provide background video footage, B-rolls, photos and a list of people available for interviews. This should be early enough to make sure that the morning shows are on message. At 10 AM there the White House Press Authority will do a squawk box conference call to discuss the points and iron out any issues. If anything major comes up, we'll do another one around 5 PM."

"What about the interviews?"

"Beginning at 7 AM we will have a rotating group of people available at our video resource studios in Virginia and New York. Access will be by Internet streaming video. For each spokesperson, we'll provide you with a script of possible questions and follow up topics. We'll also have press kits giving suggested print narratives. Again, B-roll video will be available along with recommended voice over scripts. During the day, the roster of people available for interview will change. Feel free to request anyone not on the daily roster and we'll try to oblige. At 4 PM we'll provide an updated list of talk / no talk topics and any revised narratives. These will be for the evening broadcasts. A final set, if necessary, will be sent at 10 PM for use with overnight press runs, west coast updates and late

news."

"White House presidential one-on-one interviews?"

"Two or three a week. We're not sure yet."

"In studio or at the White House?"

"Your option. We're flexible."

"Late night talk shows?"

"Not a problem. The basic theme should be *your government cares, we feel your pain* and that we're on top of the situation. A little light repartee, nothing serious or critical."

"Well, I don't really think we'll have to much difficulty with this," says the editor of the New York Globe. "We all want to do our part during this national emergency. After all, it's all for the greater good of society."

The others murmur their approval, nodding to one another.

"We thought you'd feel that way. We knew we could count on you. Also, one more thing. We'd like to see more light hearted features on the news, less serious discussion. Something to cheer people up."

"More puppy dogs and Hollywood starlets in compromising positions?"

"Exactly. Lots of feel good stories."

"Not a problem. Those are cheap features to produce. All back of the book stuff. We have a big inventory of them," says one of the network execs.

"Also, we'll be launching a national See something, Say something campaign to get people to self report any anti-social behavior in their neighborhoods. We'll have a nationwide toll-free hot line, an Internet site and special prizes for citizens that are the most helpful. There'll be a humorous mascot cartoon figure to encourage children to report anti-social behavior at home. We'll also be setting up neighborhood Homeland Security offices where people can visit and discuss their concerns in person. We would like the media to help by running PSA campaigns designed to help people identify and root out social treason when they see it."

General nods of approval.

"Well, thank you for coming and I look forward to seeing you all again very soon."

The meeting has ended but the work is only beginning.

Monday, April 5 2021

The dollar debacle went as predicted and U.S. currency becomes effectively worthless in foreign markets.

Outside, a cold wind sweeps across the south lawn. Sheets of rain clatter against the Oval Office's bullet proof windows.

DeWitt is at her desk while Matt Richards, Secretary of Defense, Gloria Marlin, Secretary of State, Steve Black, NSA, and Shane Bader sit in chairs around the

desk.

"Alright Richards. What's the situation."

"We're proceeding as quickly and as orderly as possible with the worldwide military withdrawals, from NATO, South Korea, the Mideast, Japan. Foreign governments are helping, to some extent. Air transport is hard to come by, given the currency issues, so we've taken to using Navy ships. The carriers can handle very large numbers and, thankfully, don't run on oil. In several countries, a significant number of soldiers are deserting and asking for refugee status which, for the most part, is being granted. I estimate about twenty percent will not be returning."

"Marlin?"

"Well, our foreign alliances are effectively at an end. A number of countries that depended on our foreign aid are no longer friendly territory. We expect a number of regional wars to break out soon. We have no idea what will happen with North Korea or Iran. Looks bleak at the moment. "

"Black?"

"Our intelligence indicates that Russia will soon move into the part of the Ukraine they don't already control, then the Baltics, Poland, Hungary, Austria, the Balkans. Very little to stop them. We expect an attack on Turkey and, ultimately, the annexation of Istanbul. The dream of the czars will soon be accomplished. Our analysis indicates that it is likely there will be war between China and Japan. Japan has begun to assemble it's hidden nuclear arsenal and is rearming at a breakneck pace. We expect Iran to do something soon, but we don't know what. But don't be surprised if there's a mushroom cloud over Tel Aviv. The Saudis are negotiating with Pakistan to buy nukes. For all we know, they may already have them."

"Bader?"

"The spring of 2021 was the coldest since 1816. The long range outlook for summer is not promising. Planting in the Midwest is at a standstill. There are shortages of fertilizer and pesticides. The outlook for a good crop yield is bleak. Grain co-ops are hoarding their supplies. We're seeing cutbacks in deliveries of pork, chicken, and beef. Farmers are holding back their herds and the packing houses aren't shipping what they do have. Shortages are beginning to appear on supermarket shelves. We're still getting some shipments of fresh vegetables from Florida and California but, because of currency issues, imports from Mexico and Central America have halted. With the lack of diesel and gasoline, transportation is becoming problematic. Air travel is effectively unavailable. Many airports are without jet fuel. We've introduced rationing with first priority going to the government and then needs associated with food supplies and transportation. Warehouses are running low on many basic non-food items as well. Stores in New York and Boston are short many, many items. The Midwest is the only area with more or less ample fuel supplies. Electricity production is sporadic."

"Is there no good news? None?"

"Oh, yes! Our See something, Say something campaign seems to be working very well. Homeland has been rounding up so many dissidents that we've had to open special detention camps. Pulling these malcontents off the streets is doing a lot to keep a lid on protests."

Monday, May 3, 2021

The mood in the Oval Office among the seated officials is grim. They wait in nervous silence. At last a side door opens, DeWitt enters, they rise, she gestures them to be seated. The bleak monthly assessment begins.

"Bader?" calls out DeWitt as she leans back in her desk chair.

"The shortages are becoming even more serious in the Northeast. We're hoping farmers' markets beginning in late June will help a bit. There will be some local production but just a trickle. The Midwest meat packers and farmers are no longer producing for us unless we pay them in hard currency. Most of what they are producing is either being shipped to Canada or down the Mississippi to New Orleans for export."

"We are, however, able to get some food shipments when we can get hard currency. In that regard, we're finding that a few banks, here and there, still have some Euros, Pounds or Yen. These we're appropriating. Selling overseas assets is also helping a bit. Now that we have so many fewer foreign embassies, we're auctioning off those properties. Many are in very upscale locations. And, so far, the Navy has been able to negotiate the sale of about two hundred ships to foreign governments. The Air Force is doing likewise with a number of buyers, especially in the Mideast."

"We never really needed a military anyway," mutters DeWitt.

"We've also begun a program to confiscate private gold and silver, mainly in eastern states, in the same manner that Roosevelt did in 1933 with his famous Executive Order 6102. Quite a lot of people, it appears, bought gold and silver coins in recent years. Seems they didn't trust us. We're posting notices in the media demanding people turn in their jewelry, coins and silverware under penalty of social treason. We've ordered banks in the East to begin going through safe deposit boxes and confiscating any gold, silver or jewelry they find. SecTreas will have the total but the amount may be substantial and give us a month or two of breathing room."

"Why just the eastern states?"

"Federal authority is not very strong at the moment in other parts of the country."

"And after we loot everyone's safe deposit boxes, what's next?"

"We need large emergency tax increases, new fees, increased tariffs, and we will be raising the rates on electricity from the hydro plants we still control. About 52% of U.S. hydro generation is owned by the Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps of Engineers and other federal agencies. About 133 hydro plants in total. Starting two days ago, we began requiring payment for electricity in Canadian Dollars, Euros, Pesos or Yen. Likewise, all tariffs, whether for export or import, must be paid in the currency of the nation where the product is being sent to or bought from. And we've raised tariff rates to 50%."

"Also, we're about to attempt to collect tariffs on private shipments between the states. This may be tricky since there are so many roads but the main shipping routes are the Interstates and those are our first targets. We've started placing toll booth roadblocks for trucks on I90, I95, I80 and I70. We're also hiking taxes on income, investment, financial services and so forth."

"How do we get this through Congress?" asks Gloria Marlin.

"We don't. Emergency executive order," snarls DeWitt.

Friday, July 9, 2021

Time: 5:00 PM

Bader, Table and Salazar sit at a corner table at one of Washington's more exclusive watering holes drinking scotch and bourbon in the early evening hours.

"Well, all those emergency tax increases, new fees, tariffs, and sky-high energy rates have certainly made a mess of things," muses Salazar as he nibbles on some cashews.

"Ruined would be a better term. Producers are not producing. The economic death spiral is only getting worse," adds Table.

"And, if the economy keeps going down, tax revenues will keep going down. Businesses are failing everywhere. They can't get supplies and, because of the collapse of the dollar, they have no markets for what they actually can produce," says Salazar.

"Well, I guess it's inevitable. Eventually, government devours the governed," says Bader philosophically as he swills down the last of his drink and signals for another. "Geez, I just wish we could get some real scotch again."

"Don't we all," adds Table.

'What's next?" says Salazar.

'Who knows? Whatever it is, it's not going to be pretty. Things are falling apart everywhere," says Bader. "But at least you guys are safe with your billions in a nice Swiss bank."

"I get hardly any interest there," sniffs Table. "Barely a few million a month."

"Dollars?"

"Hell no, Swiss francs. Do you think I'm an idiot?"

"Well, our real problem is that our Progressive Party is nothing but a band of parasitic *gimme* groups. For the most part, they're really natural enemies. Now they all hate one another. My question is, what will happen when they realize there's no treasury left to raid?" says Salazar grimly. "What then?"

"I guess it won't be long before we find out," says Salazar. "But while were waiting, my limo is outside. Lets hit the rooftop garden at the Vendome. They do a very nice roast beef but I have no idea where they get beef from these days,

now that the Midwest is off limits for U.S. dollars."

"By the way, I noticed there aren't as many stray dogs in Georgetown this year," says Bader with a smirk.

They rise and leave.

Friday, September 5

Time: 10:00 AM

The Cabinet Room on an unseasonably cool day for early September finds DeWitt in the center chair while the rest of the cabinet, along with Steve Black of NSA, George Salazar, and Shane Bader sit around the table.

"All right, Bader, summarize," barks a frustrated DeWitt.

"Well, as most of you will know, the income transfer payments to our domestic dependents have stopped. When the EBT cards weren't recharged, the riots began. Right now, New York, Los Angeles, Washington and Chicago are war zones."

"Seems like the core of the Progressive Party is a bit charred," wise cracks Salazar as DeWitt shoots him a withering glance.

"Well, our problems are not confined just to the big cities, the midlands are up in arms as well. They still won't ship unless we pay them with hard currency which we simply don't have. And if we don't start getting shipments, before winter sets in, the riots will only get worse," adds Bader.

The meeting drones on with more reports of shortages, transportation outages and civil unrest.

While still adored by her court lackeys and sycophants in Washington, the country is seething.

Through heavily sanitized and censored news reports, bathed in the gauzy haze of manufactured, idolizing rhetoric, a grim reality is emerging for all to see, the federal government is impotent. Support for the Progressive Party is vanishing like a house of cards in a blizzard.

At the end of a very depressing two hours DeWitt looks to Bader and says, "Any ideas?"

'Well, if we figure if we could distract the people from their real problems, get them fighting with one another, stir up envy, that sort of thing, we might buy some time. Salazar and I are working on some *Occupy Wall Street* do-over themes. The original was a big success. This time we'll introduce race and gender story lines into the class warfare meme. Maybe we can get some race riots going. Then both sides will need us. We've run the idea past some focus groups and it tests well. The networks and cable guys are all, well, almost all, on board. We're working on hiring some charismatic and photogenic ring leaders. We should be able to have something out on the street in a week or so."

"So, basically we distract, confuse, polarize, frighten and fragmentize the public? Just make sure this time they're potty trained. Otherwise, sounds like a plan. Let

me know if you need anything," says DeWitt rising. The meeting is over.

Monday, October 20, 2011

Time: 10:00 AM

Then things went from bad to worse.

DeWitt and her cabinet huddle in the cabinet room along with Salazar, Admiral Black, Table, Shouter, Army General Roger Simpson, commander, Joint Force Headquarters, National Capital Region, Mike Bunker, head of the Homeland Security Paramilitary Assault and Security Service Division, and Bader. The look on everyone's faces is ashen.

DeWitt stumbles in and takes her place and screams, "What the fuck is going on?"

"The secession movement seems to be growing, Madame President" says Gloria Marlin, Secretary of State.

"SEEEEEEMS! What the hell does that mean. How many now?" screams an unhinged DeWitt.

"In addition to the independent states of North Colorado, Nebraska, the Dakota Federation, and the Republic of Texas, over the weekend we got word that the New Confederacy and North Mexico have declared independence," answers a nervous Gloria Marlin.

"On top of that, we've pretty much lost control of a large part of southern border. The area is now pretty much run buy the Mexican drug gangs," adds Bunker.

"And several states have begun printing their own money, based mainly on gold or silver," adds Shouter. "We can't have that! It's our job to print the money!"

"Where the hell did they get gold and silver?"

"They earned it by selling their products in foreign markets."

"Some states are raising their own armies. In those areas still loyal to Washington, federal troops are struggling to keep order and they're not being paid. In some secessionist states, we're seeing whole Army units beginning to desert. Marauders are roaming large parts of the country. It's quickly becoming very unsafe to travel between cities at night," says Matt Richards, Secretary of Defense.

"And that's the good news," says Admiral Black looking up from his smart phone. "I've just been informed that a Mexican army is, as we speak, marching across the border at Nogales. I'm told they're being welcomed as liberators by the local, if not native, population. They've just broadcast an announcement declaring that they're reclaiming the lands of the Gadsden Purchase which will now be known as the Mexican State of Nuevo Mesilla. So far, they've met no resistance except from the drug cartels. We expect that they may set their sights on California as well. We've gotten word that Arizona and North Mexico are mobilizing their National Guards. Things are very unclear right now. The federal government, however, is completely powerless to intervene." "Alright, I'm declaring another national emergency, suspending the Constitution, as Lincoln did when the Confederate States seceded, declaring marshal law in Washington and nationalizing the national guard in all the disloyal states," screams an unhinged DeWitt. "I want hourly updates. This meeting is over."

Monday, November 8, 2021

Time: 10:00 AM

DeWitt and her cabinet meet as snow squalls rush across the White House lawn.

"Secretary of Defense?" says DeWitt, awaiting reports from the field.

"Your orders nationalizing the state guard units have, for the most part, been ignored in the rebel states and their units remain under state control. The Mexican army has made camp for the winter, having taken roughly one hundred miles of the U.S. borderlands."

"In answer to your threat to send a federal army to the Midwest and seize food supplies, the governors of Arkansas, Iowa, Missouri and Minnesota have closed the bridges across the Mississippi and they remain closed at this time. This, in turn, has resulted in total disruption in what little food and other supplies that were reaching the east coast. Consequently, more food riots in large, eastern cities."

"It is the opinion of the Army that any attempt to take the Mississippi bridges might result in the bridges being destroyed. We have reason to believe that they have been rigged with explosives."

"Is there no air option?"

"Very little. The rebels have National Guard air support units as well and we are not confident that Federal Air Force units will obey a command to attack the Midwestern states."

"So, our option is to do nothing?"

"That's about it unless you want to initiate an all out civil war which, given our financial and supply situation, would probably be a losing proposition."

"So, for the time being, if we do nothing, will they open the bridges open?"

"Yes. We believe so. It will be an uneasy truce but a truce nonetheless."

"Truces can only last so long but given the early start of this winter, for now, I guess we do nothing. Tell them. Maybe something will turn up," says a depressed DeWitt.

The meeting proceeds to discuss food shortages, riots, and currency issues. A dark age is descending.

Monday, November 15, 2021

Time: 10:00 PM (CST)

After several weeks of committee hearings and much discussion, at a late meeting in Lincoln, the unicameral legislature of Nebraska is ready to act.

"The chair recognizes the gentleman from North Platte."

"Mr. Speaker, in light of the usurpations of power by the federal government as amply identified and set forth in the Special Select Committee report, I move that the Legislature of Nebraska, pursuant to Article 5 of the Constitution of the United States, does hereby call for a Constitutional Convention for the purpose of proposing Amendments to the Constitution of these United States."

"Is there a second?"

Ayes are heard from all around the chamber.

"A second having been heard, and, pursuant to the special procedural rule of order, the Legislature will now proceed to a vote on the motion. Given the grave and important nature of the Act in question, the vote will be by roll call. The clerk will call the roll."

The clerk slowly calls out the names of each of the forty-nine senators. The final vote is lopsided.

"Forty-three votes in the affirmative, four in the negative and two abstentions. The Act is adopted." announces the Speaker with a crash of his gavel like a clap of thunder from a sudden prairie thunderstorm in the middle of the night.

The news from Nebraska makes a small, five line box on page thirty-one of the New York Globe and an inside back page line item in the Washington Traveler. The TV and cable news networks ignore it totally.

But with the help of the Internet, talk radio and a cable news network, the idea spreads like wildfire. Within a week, forty states ratify the call, far more than the thirty-four required by the Constitution.

Washington is dumbfounded. This is now no longer a back page news item.

Monday, November 28, 2021

Time: 10:00 AM

At an early morning session, the House of Representatives quickly passes, on a voice vote, an enabling resolution authorizing and summoning the Constitutional Convention.

Time: 1:00 PM

The Senate, still controlled by DeWitt and fearing what will come, upon receipt of the official copy of the House resolution, refuses to concur. A Constitutional Convention will not be called.

All eyes are on the relevant paragraph of the ancient text:

The Congress ... on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments, which ... shall be valid to all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof ...

The meaning of the verb shall as in Congress shall becomes the target of

discussion.

In the Oval Office Bader and DeWitt watch the live proceedings.

"Looks like we have them checkmated," say Bader. "Without the Senate, they can't get their convention and we still control the Senate."

"But for how much longer?"

"At least for now. Perhaps things will be different next Fall. In the meantime, it looks like we're safe. A Constitutional Convention would be a disaster. Do you know that in a Convention each state, regardless of size, gets one vote? We'd be wiped out. The inland states will far out vote our states. We'd be toast."

They shudder thinking of the bullet they just dodged.

Tuesday, November 29, 2021

Time: 10:00 AM

A rather dumpy and disheveled lawyer, seemingly more comfortable greeting arriving ambulances at local emergency rooms than where he finds himself today, hikes past the great white formal marble staircase of the Supreme Court building towards a much smaller and more modest entrance on the southwest side. Entering through the small door, he heads for the office of the Clerk of the Court.

Once inside the office he walks up to the counter and says to the clerk in a polite Midwestern accented voice, "My name is Robert Johanson and I'm the Attorney General of Nebraska. I have an emergency petition for a *Writ of Mandamus* which I'm authorized to file in the name of the States of Nebraska, Kansas and South Dakota."

The clerk looks a little startled as Johanson opens his brief case and places a stack of neatly stapled copies of the petition on her desk. The clerk knows her job and begins robotically stamping each with the date and time. Then she initials each copy.

She looks at the first page of the top copy and reads the title:

In the

Supreme Court of the United States

State of Nebraska, State of Kansas, State of South Dakota

Petitioners,

v.

The United States Senate

Respondent.

EMERGENCY PETITION FOR WRIT OF MANDAMUS

To the Court of Original Jurisdiction,

Pursuant to

Article III, Section 2, Clause 3

of the

United States Constitution,

the States of Nebraska, Kansas and South Dakota

Petition this Honorable Court to

Command, Order and Require the United States Senate,

Pursuant to Article V

of the

United States Constitution,

Two Thirds of the Several States Having Applied Thereunder,

to Call a Constitutional Convention.

The clerk gives a little smile and says, "That will be \$300 for the filing fee. Cash or charge?"

"Cash," says the attorney as he hand over a \$500 bill.

She hands him his change and a receipt and says, "Justice McGowan is receiving emergency petitions today. I'll take this right to her."

He thanks her and leaves.

The clerk piles the copies onto a cart with a wire basket and, grinning, pushes it down the silent marble floored hall to an elevator then up to the office area. Knocking quietly on Justice McGowan's door, she enters and says, "Got an emergency petition for *mandamus* here, Madame Justice."

"Oh, and the plaintiffs are?" as she picks up the first copy from the basket.

"Oh, yes, I guess we were expecting something like this. Will you please take the other copies to each of the justice's offices. I think we'll be acting on this today."

"Yes ma'am," says the clerk as she pushes the cart out of the office and down the hall stopping at each justice's office and placing the remaining extra copies in the large conference room where the justices meet.

Justice McGowan picks up her phone and calls one of her clerks and says, "Please contact all the other justices and tell them we have an emergency original jurisdiction petition from the States of Nebraska, Kansas and South Dakota and I'm calling an *en banc meeting* for 4 PM. Let me know if there are any problems. A copy of the petition is being delivered to each justice's office."

Time: 4:00 PM

The full Supreme Court convenes. A few justices are still going over the petition but most just sit in their chairs, hands folded and waiting. The Chief Justice enters, the others rise respectfully then take their seats again.

A few pleasantries are exchanged and then the Chief Justice says, "Well, here

we are. This is not a surprise. I think we've all known something like this would be coming and I think we know what we must do? Am I right?"

The others nod and murmur agreement.

"Fine, I've had a draft order prepared," he says as he passes out the one page order.

They study it and, one by one, when done, they lay it down on the table.

"Any discussion?"

"Well, not the order itself, but the consequences. We may need to be more careful about security. The powers that be will not be very happy," says one justice.

"True, I've asked the court police to add extra security details. We might just not want to appear in too many public places for a while and leave quickly after we're done tonight. Any other discussion? Hearing none, it's time to vote."

One by one around the table the justices cast their votes.

Finally the Chief Justice announces, "Then it's unanimous. The *Writ of Mandamus* is granted."

He pushes a button and a law clerk enters. He signs the order, hands it to the clerk and says, "Publish this and deliver copies to the petitioning attorney, the President of the Senate and the Clerk of the Senate."

Time: 5:45 PM

"This is a special news bulletin from Inter Continental Network News," the breathless announcer blurts as television programs nationwide are interrupted.

"The Supreme Court has just issued a *Writ of Mandamus* ordering our patriotic and heroic Senate to submit to the social treason of the racist partisan contitutionalist faction in the House of Representatives. Civic leaders and common sense elected officials everywhere are condemning this decision and demanding the Senate ignore it. Standing by right now at the Supreme Court is our legal correspondent Biff Torkington. So, Biff, how are people taking this bad news?"

"Well, David, most are treating the Writ as a ploy to distract attention from the real needs of the country. Many applaud the courage of our Senate leaders in resisting these demands and see this as nothing but yet another example of racism and social treason. My sources on Capitol Hill tell me that the Senate will ignore the Writ and continue to protect our country from what is nothing but an obvious tea bagger plot to grab power."

Time 6:00 PM

Bader rushes into the Oval Office where DeWitt and several others are watching the cable news networks which are all babbling about the Writ.

She turns to him and says, "How the fuck did this happen?"

"Well, it was bound to, eventually."

"How did they get to the Supreme Court so fast? I Thought they had to go through all the lower courts that we've packed with our own people first?"

"Unfortunately, no. This is an original jurisdiction case."

Pulling out a piece of paper he continues, "I looked it up. The Constitution says *In all Cases affecting Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, and those in which a State shall be Party, the Supreme Court shall have original Jurisdiction.* So, SCOTUS is the place to file and they did."

"Will it have any effect?"

"The Senate will ignore it. If SCOTUS issues any contempt citations, we, or rather you, won't enforce them. Stalemate."

"Media?"

'Well, as you can see, total lap dogs. Not a complaint. They'll just keep saying it's all social treason, racism, the usual. Hey, I just saw the line up for the morning women's shows. All our people! No, we'll do fine."

"So, basically we do have the means to thwart the convention at the federal level? All we need to do is nothing?"

"Yep, that's it in a nutshell."

"Ok, sounds good. Call the steward and order a round of drinks. I nearly had a heart attack."

All week the media are abuzz about the Writ but manage to stay on message that it is all tea bagger social treason and racism or worse.

In the Senate, one pompous ass after another rises to condemn the overreach of the court and the treasonous call for a convention. There is no movement to authorize a convention and likely to be none.

But suddenly, from some obscure, backwater district in South Dakota, the newly elected governor rises to the occasion. He challenges the Washington progressive oligarchy head on. In a series of brilliant speeches, distributed virally by the Internet, he turns the tide.

Overnight, he becomes the voice of the movement. His name is Robert Jefferson Munson.

The thrones and powers in Washington go ballistic and, through their supine state controlled media, launch a full scale campaign to destroy, defame and discredit this new leader. They fail. People are no longer listening. They've heard the character assassination routine far too many times before.

Sunday, December 5, 2021

Time: 2:00 PM (CST)

A special joint session of the South Dakota Legislature has been called. While the government controlled networks and cable channels are nowhere to be found, it is broadcast live by one brave cable news network and, despite many efforts by NSA to the contrary, by many Internet streaming video services and a large *ad hoc* network of radio stations nationwide. A national audience, numbering more than one hundred million, huddles around radios, computers and TVs.

At the front of the hall, facing the audience, are seated the governors of Nebraska, Kansas, North Dakota, Iowa, Wyoming, Utah, Idaho, Montana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Missouri.

To a round of sustained and determined applause, Robert Munson mounts the podium and begins.

"When will that out of control federal government in Washington cease to abuse our patience? How long will this madness of theirs mock us? When will there to be an end to their unbridled audacity? Swaggering about, they that call themselves our masters and rulers? You all know what the Senate has done, or, rather not done. You all know what the Supreme Court has done. You all know what the House of Representatives has done. Now it is time for us to act. I say the time has come to end this and end it now! Because of their intransigence, their refusal to follow the Constitution, and in light of the Writ of the Supreme Court, I and the other governors here and others across the country, jointly declare that the Senate in Washington is a usurper whose actions are illegal, null, and void."

"So, in consultation with the governors of Nebraska, Kansas, North Dakota, Iowa, Wyoming, Utah, Idaho, Montana, Arkansas, Mississippi and Missouri, and others, we jointly proclaim that, on Wednesday the fifteenth day of December, 2021, the Constitutional Convention will convene in Kansas City, Kansas, as far from that writhing, contemptible, corrupt, autocratic and panic-stricken federal establishment as we can get!"

The crowd leaps to its feet and cheers loudly. The nationwide audience sighs approval.

The other states, even those opposed to the convention, not wanting to be omitted from the discussions, swiftly comply with the call. Fifty duly elected delegations scurry to Kansas City.

The Supreme Court takes its revenge and issues another Writ declaring the Constitutional Convention in Kansas City legal, valid and binding and orders all Federal agencies to cooperate with it. In the resulting confusion, they quietly slip out of Washington and relocate to Kansas City.

Time: 5:00 PM

In the Oval Office DeWitt huddles with Bader.

"You have no options as far as I can see," says Bader.

"I want to send in troops, marshals, whatever, and arrest Munson," snarls DeWitt furiously.

"Hillary, at the present time, you barely control the Post Office in that part of the country," says Bader.

Wednesday, December 15, 2021

The convention convenes in a large hall in Kansas City. The delegates are credentialed and, at the first session, Munson is elected president of the Convention.

The country now has two competing power centers. The corrupt, decaying, discredited, bankrupt and impotent Washington establishment in the East and the new and growing Convention of Free States centered in Kansas City.

The popularity of the Convention soars throughout the country. Polls indicate that support for a new constitution is running high in most states. Many state legislatures happily pass bills endorsing the Convention. Even the EBT crowd is hopeful, they want their benefits back and DeWitt isn't delivering.

Munson, as president of the Convention, becomes, in effect, the leader of the opposition. A new Constitutional Party forms around him and the movement. Many members of both the House and Senate, also abandoning Washington, pledge their loyalty to the new reality.

It becomes clear to observers, that, even if a new constitution is not quickly written and ratified, the Fall 2022 elections will surely to see the Constitutional Party take complete control of both House and Senate. This will lead, in short order, to the sure and certain impeachment of DeWitt and her vice-president, to be replaced by the newly elected Speaker of the House, most probably Munson himself.

DeWitt's Progressive Party, unable to deliver benefits, is a shrunken corpse of its former self. It faces sure oblivion. It exists in few places beyond the coastal plains. DeWitt can count tepid support from only Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Maryland, New Jersey, Delaware, and California which is now threatened by Mexico.

The other states, as far as DeWitt and the federal bureaucracy are concerned, are rebel states. But she knows she has far too few loyal states, or people, to block ratification of any new constitution.

The country settles into an uneasy truce as the Convention begins its work.

The dawn of the new year finds the federal government reduced to a stuttering, bellicose, impotent theater of hack politicians lusting to exploit yet one more crisis and blame someone other than themselves for the mess.

Desperate, DeWitt needs a comeback strategy.

All this waiting does not sit well in the endless, now enfeebled, former corridors of power and their dormant, useless bureaucratic tentacles still emanating from the failed, formerly all powerful, center. But the masters of these are, by nature, survivors. They are determined to regroup. They will not give up without a fight. They will strike back.

The Convention, far from being easy, is a contentious place. Arguments about the new structure of government echo those of the earliest days of national independence.

Most agree that they want to rid themselves of a distant, unaccountable, dictatorial, and oligarchic central government.

Some passionately want a return to an organization similar to that embodied in the original Articles of Confederation, a federation of sovereign states.

On the other hand, there are those who want to preserve a federal system but with significant changes that will prevent another central government power grab.

But on some subjects, there is unanimous agreement. The ruinous excesses of the central government's money printing machine are obvious to all. So, the Convention's first order of business concerns the economy.

In the first draft of the new constitution, the Federal Reserve is abolished and replaced by the Third Bank of the United States, which becomes popularly known as the TBUS. Its new currency will be backed by gold, platinum and silver, not electrons, paper and ink. The ratio of the dollar to an ounce of each of these is written into the draft and can not be changed except by a three quarters vote of the states.

Wall Street, in a vote of confidence, promptly begins trading *when issued* TBUS currency certificates. In short order, market trading indicates that people are desperate to dump their Federal Reserve notes in exchange for TBUS dollars. The Fed Dollar to TBUS exchange rate goes to nearly a 1,000 to one.

After that general note of agreement, the real work and disagreement of the convention begins. Weeks pass. Rancorous factions emerge. The oligarchs in Washington look on each disagreement with hope and joy. They and their disciples in the media work tirelessly to exploit every opening and deepen every fissure.

As the negotiations drag on, a jittery calm settles across the country. It is a precarious peace that neither side wants to disturb. Yet.

Finally, a confidential draft of a revised Constitution is prepared. It establishes term limits on all members of the House and Judiciary, repeals the 17th Amendment thereby returning the Senate to state control, as originally intended. It requires an annual balanced budget unless two-thirds of the Senate votes to override, establishes a limit on increases to the debt ceiling unless two-thirds of both houses concur, provides that decisions of the Supreme Court can be vacated upon a two-thirds vote of both houses or by a vote by two-thirds of the state legislatures. Total federal taxes are limited to fifteen percent of personal income unless there is a two-thirds vote of both houses in any year in which the rate exceeds fifteen percent. All federal agencies and departments are to expire after five years, unless explicitly renewed. The Commerce Clause is modified to make it apply to actual goods and services and not as a wormhole to bigger government. It establishes a provision whereby any act of Congress can be overridden by a vote of two-thirds of the states. It sets requirements for honest elections including mandatory voter ID, English as the national language and, finally, the capital is moved to St. Louis.

After a lengthy debate, in mid-March the Convention adopts the draft and

submits it to the states. Munson and others begin speaking tours to explain and promote its provisions.

Not everyone is happy. DeWitt and her agents quietly try to create and support an opposition. The NSA, as usual, helps by providing material for blackmail and intimidation.

However, it appears that, despite the efforts of DeWitt and her flying monkeys, the compromise constitution is rapidly gaining support. It begins to look like it will be easily ratified. The crucial period of comment is ending and the legislatures of the several states are set to convene for the purpose of ratification.

In Washington, the federal bureaucracy is unhinged and cornered. They know they have to act and act quickly. If the proposed constitution is adopted, it will mean a final end to their rule with no possibility of regaining power.

So the heads of the major agencies of the state, the NSA, Homeland Security, CIA, Defense Intelligence Agency, FBI, IRS, and others, along with Hillary DeWitt and her allies, gather in secret at a little known leadership command bunker in the Maryland mountains to plot their path back to power.

Monday, April 4, 2022

In the mountains of Western Maryland, beneath the overhanging limbs of dense groves of Adler, Ash, Beech and Hackberry, there winds a narrow, disused, rough old road upon which slowly moves a procession of black SUVs with many tiny prickly antennas, darkened windows and obscure official federal license plates.

After several miles of travel, they achieve their ultimate destination, a large gravel clearing at the base of a high, steep, granite faced mountain.

The SUVs park at odd angles around the perimeter. Dark suited agents with ear plugs and curly wires leading under their collars jump from each. They open the rear doors out from which an assortment of paunchy bureaucrats, military officers, Wall Street, Hollywood, and union types extract themselves. They adjust their clothing, check their cell phones and converge into a group near the center of the clearing.

Into the mountainside, framed by huge quarried stone pillars, a massive arching tunnel entrance has been cut. Several armed Marines stand to attention near the entrance while an officer strides out to greet the newly arrived guests. Unseen motors drone and the steel blast doors to the tunnel slowly swing open.

The officer gestures politely and they all file into the cavern, three and four abreast.

The tunnel floor is polished concrete while the walls and the arched ceiling are inlaid with decorative, colorful stone work. Down the center of the domed ceiling runs a track of bright fluorescent tubes which emit a faint buzzing sound. Along the walls are many thick electrical conduits that look like railings. The hall echoes with each step.

Behind them, the steel doors slowly close and make a metallic thud when sealed. Ahead, several electric golf carts await the guests, each with a waiting driver. "This way ladies and gentlemen, the president is expecting you," says the bowing, unctuous, military maître d'hôtel as he gestures towards the waiting carts. The guests climb aboard and settle themselves. When ready, on cue, the carts' electric motors whir all at once and they rush further deep into the passage.

After about half a mile, the caravan reaches its destination at the end of the tunnel, a large elevator shaft cut into the stone. The elevator and operator are waiting.

"Please hold onto the railings," says the head waiter as they enter the cab.

The elevator itself is about twenty by 30 feet, suitable for heavy freight but, as the occupants soon discover, very swift. The inside is walled with polished brass framed mirrors and green leather.

When the guests are all aboard, the operator pulls down the metal gate and throws a lever.

Several nearly fall as the elevator accelerates at a speed most had not expected. Through the gate, they see the rapidly passing rough stone as they soar 407 feet up through the interior of mountain.

A few moments later, the elevator rapidly decelerates and halts with a slight lurch. The gate is reopened and their guide gestures them to exit. After the last has left, the outside gate descends and it, the operator, and the headwaiter descend in a gust of rushing air.

They are in a large circular reception hall where they are met by the majordomo of this level. He gestures to a cloak room were several deposit their coats, check their hair and clothes then return a few moments later to the reception area.

When all have reassembled, they are ushered down a hallway and into a large conference room. One wall is a window overlooking a valley far below and sister mountains in the distance. In the center is a long polished wooden conference table. At one end of the room are two tall wooden doors upon the centers of which are carved federal eagles.

They take their places at the table behind preset name cards and wait, nervously fidgeting.

Present are Vice President Robert Jennings, Senate majority leader Senator Harry Rhodes, political consultant Shane Bader, Admiral Steve Black, head of the NSA, Army General Roger Simpson, commander, Joint Force Headquarters, National Capital Region, Jane Shouter, chair of the Federal Reserve, Mike Bunker, head of the Homeland Security Paramilitary Assault and Security Service Division, Joe Bucci, Devon Jackson, and Betty Fleischberg, bosses of the three largest government unions, Bob Cutter, CEO of Inter Continental Networks representing the state controlled media, Art Goldberg, head of MegaMax Studios, representing Hollywood's interests, billionaire hedge fund managers George Salazar and Warren Table, representing Wall Street, network news anchors Chet Hinkley, Dianne Frost and George Stopel, Bob Cooke, chair of the Progressive Party Central Committee, Arvind Gable, head of the IRS and several aides, the Rev. Bo Shepard, a race baiting hack from one of the state controlled cable networks, and several assorted yes-men and political coat holders.

Collectively they are present to create counter strategy to the threat presented by the Convention.

General Simpson would rather be shooting people than here. He exudes the will to kill.

The union bosses control huge political campaign contributions from money extracted from their members' paychecks. They have a large amount invested in the progressive state and expect that the candidates they bought to deliver as promised. DeWitt understands this.

Cooke is a nail biter. He knows the political situation and knows the party hasn't much time. He sweats a lot.

The latch on a side door clicks, the door opens, they all turn. It's DeWitt's press secretary, Tad Summers. He softly takes his place at the end of the table. Summers is in charge of the daily propaganda releases.

After several minutes of silence except for the sound of heavy breathing, shuffling feet and the slow tick-tock of a large clock in one corner of the room, they hear the single metallic click of a door latch on one of the carved wooden doors at the end of the room.

They jump to their feet in unison. The side-by-side doors swing open simultaneously. Several gaudily uniformed elite presidential guards enter and stand at attention on either side.

As is often the case, the inflation of the symbols of power usually reflects a deflation in actual power. The federal executive has reached the apex of imperial symbolism as its actual power is waning away to nothing.

The majordomo enters, steps to one side, bows and announces, "Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States."

DeWitt waddles in, trailed by aides and lackeys.

The majordomo pulls back the large chair at the head of the table, she flops into it. Its cushion springs squeak their objection. The aides sit in a semi-circle behind her. The others bow and take their seats. The meeting has begun.

"Alright people, we're here to review the situation and to hear a plan to deal with it," says DeWitt.

She turns to General Simpson and says, "Alright, what's the present military status?"

"Not good, Madame President. While we have full or good control of the National Guard units in the Northeast and California, but we've lost effective control of most of the others. In California and New Mexico, the Mexican army is still a threat. The military base situation is fluid. Some of our larger bases, Fort Bragg, Fort Campbell, Fort Lewis, Fort Benning, Fort Sill, Fort Rucker, and Fort Hood, have declared allegiance to the Convention. Others have made no statement, one way or the other but we're certain that, if push came to shove, they would

defect as well. Essentially, we have control only in the Northeast and the far West."

"What about the Air Force?"

"They're playing it close to the vest. A few bases have defected but most are silent. We don't really know if they would follow orders or not."

"Missile Defense Command?"

"Loyal but useless."

"Navy?

"Not a lot of ships in the Kansas City area. Overall, I wouldn't count on the Navy at this point in time."

"So, do we have any effective military options to deal with the Convention?"

"They have all the options, we have none. Right now, to be honest, we'd be sitting ducks if they decided to move."

"Alright, where are we convention-wise? Bader, summarize." she barks, looking at Shane Bader, her long-time trusted political schemer.

"The convention has finished their document and it's been sent to the states. Ratification votes will begin in about two weeks. We believe this process will be very short and, if allowed to proceed, there will be a new constitution in less than two months."

DeWitt nods at Admiral Black who says, "That is consistent with our domestic surveillance reports as well."

Bader continues, "Once it passes, you can expect complete loss of military authority and no control over Federal agencies. They will defect *en masse*. Rats always know when it's time to disembark."

"Bunker, what's the situation in the Northeast?"

"Madame President, we're running low on bullets. But, yes, we expect to be able to keep things under control for the foreseeable future. But it is critical that we get regular food shipments started again. Another major disruption and we might not be able to handle the situation."

"Admiral Black! Anything new from your Utah hideout?"

"Nothing at the moment. Our usual methods aren't working very well here. We're monitoring their communications, at least the ones we can find. They however, have, managed to get some people to work for them who are very familiar with our methods. As a result, some of their communications are unavailable and we don't know how much."

"I thought you had every phone circuit in the country bugged," interrupts Bader.

"We do. But they've been using pay-as-you go unregistered cell phones, the ones you can pick up at any discount store with no user name attached. This makes it very difficult to locate them. Then they've been modifying the phone operating systems to include a new crypto algorithm that we haven't been able to break. Just as problematic, they're using encrypted spot beamed point-to-point satellite relays. The signals don't pass through any of the regular earth based communications routers, so we can't intercept them. Bottom line, we don't have access to an unknown amount of their internal communications. All we're getting is just the low grade material and even that's becoming difficult to decrypt. At the moment, we're flying blind."

"Wonderful. Just what I wanted to hear," says DeWitt sarcastically. "Shouter, what about finance?"

"Well, the government is effectively bankrupt, as we all know. Not much of a surprise there. The dollar effectively became worthless after the TBUS notes were announced. Our credibility is gone. We can't print any more money, because no one believes it's worth anything. We have no options short of trying to go on a gold standard but, since we don't control Ft. Knox anymore and the reserves in New York have already been used, that's impossible. Not to mention that no one would believe us anyway. I even heard reports that people were burning dollar bills in Boston last month for heat!"

"The worst situation, of course, is in the Northeast and California where the only currency available is Federal Reserve dollars. Rather than use our money, companies, the ones that haven't failed, have resorted to a barter system. But without a national currency, raw material aren't being sold or delivered. Companies are running on inventory and recycled materials. With no foreign exchange, diesel and gasoline imports have halted. We're now living off inventory. Soon, no truck or train traffic. What few food shipments there still are will halt."

"How are the Free States coping?"

"In the Free States, they've dropped the dollar and either issued their own gold backed currency through state banks or the states are printing *when-issued* script for TBUS notes. That's working. Also, they've restarted their oil wells and refineries and they're starting to fire up the old coal electric generating plants that EPA shut down."

"I don't suppose we can issue TBUS script?"

"Not likely, Madame President. It wouldn't pass the laugh test."

Salazar interjects, "If we don't get control of the situation soon, we're not going to be able to hold the mobs in check. The riots will start again and spread. Unless we get control of the producing parts of this country, and their assets, and get them to take our money, we're facing total disaster in the next few weeks."

Nods and sounds of agreement come from around the table.

"Well, you better get control of something," interjects angry federal union boss Betty Fleischberg. "My members are not happy. A lot are refusing to pay their dues and when they don't pay me, I don't pay you'se guys. You got it?"

"We got it," answers Bob Cooke, chair of the party. "We can't afford to lose the government unions. We know that."

"Then you better damn do something," barks Devon Johnson.

"Cutter, Goldberg, how did you let this get out of control? Since when do people in this country get information we haven't approved of? Can't your people just put together some propaganda package to change public opinion? Get the sheeple worked up about something else. Give them an enemy. For God's sake, isn't that what you do?"

"I don't think anyone's listening anymore. We tried all the usual focus group tested hot-button slogans, we care, the public welfare, sharing, it's for the children, the public interest, saving the planet, social justice, the 1%, racism, war on women, it's Bush's fault, tax the rich, income inequality, minimum wage, trickle down economics, they'll take your social security, change we can believe in, world peace, all the oldies. But nothing's working. We've scripted all the usual couch potato TV icons, no result. We worked the themes into the news shows, soap operas, late night talk, comedy shows, dramas, you name it. We've told them they'll lose their EBT cards, Medicaid, Medicare, all the scare lines, no sale. They've heard it all before. They don't believe us anymore."

"Not a surprise. Alright, Harry, what's the political situation, as things stand now?"

"If, or, rather, when, the new constitution is ratified, no one knows exactly what will happen but it won't be pretty. However, in the unlikely event we make it until the elections this fall, the House, of course, is lost and, this time, so is the Senate. And it won't be just a small loss. The convention people will probably take 68 seats in the Senate and 80% of the House, then they'll be able to pass anything they want. They'll be able to override any veto."

"Congress is an obsolete relic of the eighteenth century. It should have been done away with long ago. It blocks social progress," snarls DeWitt.

"That may be true Madame President but it's a reality we may need to deal with. Our first problem, however, should we get past the elections, will be impeachment. You can consider it a done deal. First you, Madame President, and then Vice President Jennings. And then the Speaker of the House will become president. And I think we know who that will be."

General nods and groans around the table.

"And to think Obama wanted impeachment!"

"And, when they take control," interrupts Admiral Black, "you can expect they will place everyone in this room under arrest. This will not be a nice, neat and orderly transfer of power. Once they start digging up what's been done for the past few years, there will probably be executions. You can count on it."

"And what if we refuse to play along with their impeachment charade?" asks Shouter.

"I'm afraid we won't have any choice unless we do something very drastic and do it quickly. It's them or you. There's no middle ground any more," answers Black.

DeWitt gives an exasperated sigh and says, "Well, then, that's where we are. We either stop this and seize control or every person in this room will be either out of

a job, in jail, or dead by January. So, we have no choice but to take action and do it now. Do you all agree?"

"Madame President, I think I speak for us all when I say that our cause is too important to let these conventioners succeed. I'm sure you know we'll do anything under your leadership," says George Cutter as others around the table mutter approval.

DeWitt, nodding, says, "Yes. Desperate times demand desperate measures. The Convention is social treason and we need to treat it as such. We cannot let the government of this country slide back into some eighteenth century, town hall democracy run by a bunch of hicks, rednecks and yahoos. If we don't act, we'll lose it all. So, Bader, tell us the plan you, Bunker, Simpson and Black have cooked up."

"Quietly and secretly, for the past few months, we've been inserting an undercover army of NSA, FBI, Homeland and other Federal police agents into all the major Free State capitals. Also, we've activated our network of moles in the command structures of the state and local police forces. Loyal army units, where available, are on standby as well."

"Munson will be making a speech in two weeks at a small state university in Iowa as part of his speaking tour on the new constitution. This is where we will make our move. He'll be vulnerable and out of touch with Kansas City."

"How will you get your people close to him? Iowa is pretty much a rebel state."

"We have people. As you will all know, we've been working closely with state police organizations since the beginning of the Obama years. We provide them training, weapons and insider information gathered by NSA. As a result, we have a lot of loyalists. In Iowa, it so happens that we've managed to place senior Secret Service agents inside the State Patrol Intelligence Division. This is the agency that will be responsible for the event security and our guys will be in charge. Additionally, DIA will also be secretly placing assets nearby, just in case."

"What kind of assets?"

"Helicopter gunships from Chicago, mainly."

"Won't they be obvious? People will see them and know something's up."

"No we'll place them in some very rural areas and conceal them in barns or with camouflage. I don't expect we'll need them, however. They're only a backup in case we need more fire power."

"So, what's the plan?"

"The plan is very simple. We silence Munson, seize control of the Free State political leadership, halt the ratification process, arrest the convention delegates, declare marshal law, suspend the constitution and take full power. And we do it quickly."

"By silence, I assume you mean kill?"

"That's the general idea."

"Sounds risky," says Salazar.

"Not as risky as being put before a convention tribunal," says Black, menacingly.

"The key to success is speed and surprise," says Bunker. "We hit them hard and fast. They won't be able to regroup. Their organizational structure is too segmented. They have no central leadership besides Munson. With him gone, there will be no coordination. It will be each state for itself. And, if all goes according to plan, we'll have state leadership in chains as well."

"How will you sell this to the public?"

"We're manufacturing evidence to prove that the attack on Munson was due to dissidents in the Convention movement and that they planned a series of coordinated terror attacks which we thwarted. The usual media disinformation campaign."

"And they'll believe that?"

"The lowfos will believe it once their benefits start flowing again. And if they don't? Who cares! What difference does it make?"

"My people," drawls the Reverend Bo. "They'll believe whatever I tell them to believe."

"What if they fight back?"

"We disrupt and sabotage their communications, command and control structure, launch ground assaults, and call in Mexican drug gang mercenaries. But I don't think it will come to that once Munson is out of the picture."

"Admiral Black, do you want to comment?" asks DeWitt.

"According to their communications that we can read, we know there is a lot of internal bickering between the states and very little internal coordination on a day-to-day basis. They have no backup plan for command and control. That is their fatal weakness. If we hit them hard, it is my opinion that they will fall apart."

"How many Homeland and other agents have we in the field?"

"About twenty thousand."

"What about the local and state police forces?"

"As you know, for the past ten years we've been infiltrating them. All those Federal grants, equipment and training programs. They won't be a problem. Many will be sympathetic or even supportive."

"National Guard?"

"More of a problem. Many units are loyal to the Convention. We will, of course, issue orders to Federalize them immediately, that may cause some wavering and give us a little time. Their main weakness is that they take time to activate and they are not trained or coordinated to respond to this type of threat. By the time they get to their bases, we should be in full control."

"Simpson?"

"It's a bold plan and I endorse it. I'm working behind the scenes with loyal Homeland commanders to be ready when the time comes."

"Right. Any other questions?" barks DeWitt.

"Madame President, where will you be when this takes place?"

"I'll be in San Francisco addressing donors and loyalists at a fund raiser. Once the events go down, I'll do the customary national broadcast. I'll charge the conventioners with crimes and show the evidence Bunker is manufacturing. The usual crap about pulling together, the threat to our nation, a brighter future. Then, declare marshal law, Black will hit the Internet kill switch, and then we roundup all the disloyal media types who supported the Convention. By the way, how's the speech coming? When can I get a copy of it?"

"It should be ready by tomorrow, Madame President."

"Good. Make it sound sincere and spontaneous," she says, standing.

"Alright, thank you. That will be all for now."

The others all quickly stand, the honor guard comes to attention.

"Bader will keep you informed. We move in two weeks."

She turns, the double doors swing open and she waddles out. The honor guard follows, the doors swing shut with a thud.

The others around the table turn to one another and whisper quietly. The majordomo reappears and ushers them back to the elevator and the waiting fleet of cars below.

Monday, April 11, 2022

Above the silent prairie, the first rosy limb of the rising sun peeks above the flat horizon igniting a blaze of pink and saffron streamers. A gentle, dusty breeze from the awakening spring farmland wafts gently past the silent, stately, red brick campus buildings. Past the stacks of empty beer cans, scattered pizza boxes, sundry multi-colored undergarments, and not a few still comatose casualties of the prior night's reveries, all sprawled tastefully about the manicured lawns and shrubs.

Across an endless spider network of concrete walkways, returning bleary-eyed all-nighters stagger obliviously past dazed early risers groping their paths either home or to a dreaded sunrise class.

Time: 7:00 AM

A tiny, beat-up, plastic calculator chirps an uncertain wakeup plea, less like an alarm and more like a gagging cricket. Tiny yellow shafts of sunlight poke through pin holes in a crumpled black plastic sheet draped carelessly over the window of an old doghouse dormer protruding from the fourth floor slate roof of the ancient dormitory.

Jim grunts and stirs slowly. A hand fumbles out from under the blanket and throttles the alarm. Several moans, rolls, and a toss later, he finally sits up,

blinks, rubs his eyes and groans yet again. Reaching to the window, he grabs the edge of the plastic sheet, tugs it down, and sunlight through stained panes floods in.

Jim lives in a disused storage closet in the attic of Bander Hall, one of the older dorms on the campus of the Fort Dodge State University. The attic is piled with old furniture, lamps, and mirrors, the cast off furnishings of nearly fifty years. From these Jim has salvaged the makings of an otherwise typical, if not somewhat antique, dorm room.

Jim's garret is near the center of the building, high above the picturesque columned formal main entrance. His window commands a view of one of the central campus quads with its crisscrossing ribbons of walkways transected by the inevitable worn shortcuts. A great red brick carillon rises like an Egyptian obelisk, glowing in the stillness of the early morning spring sunshine. Venerable campus classroom buildings, garnished in hedges, silently contour the misty margins of the quad. A few early morning joggers prance by while, in the grassy areas, the empty beer cans shine and sparkle festively in the hazy early light.

Jim gets up, grabs a robe, a towel, some soap, and steps out into the central attic area, beneath the crested eaves of the ancient building's roof. Making his way down the rough old wood floor, strewn on either side with historic debris, lamps, chairs, beds, and bookcases, he arrives, at the far end of the building, at a rickety narrow staircase.

At the bottom, he quietly unlatches the door and peeks out onto the dorm corridor. Seeing no one, he slips out and shuts the door behind him. A confirming click indicates that the latch is locked.

Darting quickly to the nearby stair case, he scampers down two floors and onto an intersecting corridor into another wing of the dorm. Walking more slowly now, he heads to the empty shower room for his morning ablutions.

A few minutes later, hair wet and dangling, he heads back to his unorthodox accommodations. Checking to see if the coast is clear, he quickly slips unnoticed through the attic access door and back up to his abode.

He finishes drying his hair, pulls on some socks, jeans and a crumpled sweatshirt. Sitting on his borrowed bed, he pauses, looking out through the dirty dormered window on the stirring campus below, and thinks back on the past four years.

Graduated from Algona High just as the economic collapse was accelerating, he pooled his savings from a high school job with the Kossuth County highway department, a government student loan, and a small legacy from a deceased great grandparent and set off ambitious and hopeful to college in Ft. Dodge.

Jim is twenty-one. He was a full time student until his loans dried up. The massive government money printing, along with zero interest rates wiped out his college fund. Then his parents divorced. After the secession movements began, Federal loans became impossible to get in Iowa and Federal dollars were pretty much worthless anyway. He was broke.

But did it matter? He and all his friends were in debt for life and the government had already spent every dollar they would ever earn.

His mother moved to California to stay with her sister while his dad just disappeared completely. Jim's assets consisted of a bike, some aging clothes and an old laptop. Getting a job was close to impossible after the government granted amnesty to another 60 million illegals.

This was not the economy to find work, especially if you had no degree and no marketable skills. While he could get odd jobs for short periods around campus, there was no way he could bring in enough money to stay in school let alone pay for his own room and board.

So Jim, considering his options, just decided to stay at school anyway, but in a less formal manner and with a somewhat reduced financial profile. He adopted his own, non-traditional, scholarship plan.

He and a friend hacked the Registrar's system so his enrollment bypassed the nominally required, but currently inconvenient, Financial Office authorization. For accommodations, the garrets of the old dorms would do fine and they even came with a ready and varied assortment of used furniture, conveniently stacked for the taking.

Back when he was a regular, fee paying student, he had worked part time for Information Technology Services (ITS) doing all manner of network related service on campus. He had pulled network cable through just about every building, office, closet, basement, tunnel and attic on campus and he had the keys to prove it.

Grabbing his old cell phone and wallet, he hitches his heavy key chain to his belt, then squirms into his backpack harness. Snatching sunglasses and a hat which he carefully puts on backwards at exactly the right angle, he returns out to the main floor of the attic, closes the door behind him and quietly top-toes off, not wanting to prompt anymore rumors among the paying denizens below that the building is haunted.

Heading this time in the other direction, he descends the other staircase at the far end of the attic. This one opens in a door at the top of the main staircase that leads to the building's entrance. Again, peeking first to see if anyone is watching, he slips out, closes the attic door behind him, clambers down the stairs and bursts through a metallic door bar with a clang and out onto the walkway leading to the student union.

Time: 7:40 AM

All around him, staggering forth from dorm doors, all along the quad, on intersecting paths, a churning torrent of students merges into a patchwork bedraggled processional, heading to 8 o'clock classes, work, or coffee at the Union.

Keys clattering and backpack bouncing, Jim is immersed in the gathering cataract, parading haphazardly across campus.

Around him, in clothing at best described as eclectic, they walk, stumble, chatter into cell phones, nimbly text one another with swift, agile thumb strokes, or fiddle with their pods, earphone cables dangling.

They wear shorts, sweatpants, jeans, t-shirts, sweatshirts, jackets, bulging multicolored backpacks, hats backwards, sandals, flip-flops, running shoes, loafers and, sadly, more than one set of fuzzy pink slippers that look like bunnies.

They have long hair, blond hair, dark hair, bright dyed red hair, no hair, tattoos, earrings, and piercings.

There are jocks, nerds, frat boys, sorority sisters, farm boys, perky cheer leader types, game boys, the fat, the thin, the dorm rats, the zombies and the lost.

They all fall in step and lumber on in a carnival-like academic cavalcade. They are destined to sleep through most of the day.

From the top of the carillon tower above, a sudden whoosh is heard as the first of several great air pistons rams a steel hammer at an unsuspecting bell, the first martyr of the choral three-quarter hour chime. Altogether, twelve consecutive gongs resonate across the campus, reverberating from one brick and stone faced building to another, annoying the cell phone addicts, agonizing the hungover, and rousting the sleep walkers traipsing far below. Another day begins.

Jim heads for the Union, as he does most mornings, to see what can be scrounged in the way of food. Because his restricted budget limits actual cash purchases, he confines himself to the charity and leftovers of others.

Entering the noisy, sprawling, multi-purpose building, he turns towards the cavernous cafeteria. From the entrance walkway he gazes down upon a sea of tables crowded with about a thousand students and a few faculty. The dim roar of early morning chatter ascends. Beyond, in the distance, around the far wall, are the serving areas, a complex of grills, serving lines, boutique specialty food outlets, vending machines, cashiers and two ATMs.

The central cafeteria area is sunken relative to the rest of the building. Around it is an elevated concrete walkway. He heads along this longer path to the coffee shop so as to avoid dodging the maze of tables in the central area.

The walkway is where student zealots set up tables. The lineup of tables today is the predictable collection of leftist student organizations, staffed by a ragged assembly of festively attired special snowflakes, each touting their club, literature, meetings, events, mixers, parties, contests, and assorted loony left, prêt-à-porter, politically correct, hashtag causes.

In an age where there are few real causes to fight for, the left seeks to vanquish microaggressions. They are ever vigilant for offenses only they seem to detect, chasing dog whistles which only they can hear. They recast opinions of those they don't agree with as evil and reject the free exchange of ideas as social treason. They are the inquisitors and witch hunters of the modern campus.

He recalls Churchill's definition that a fanatic is someone who cannot change his mind and will not change the subject.

First he sees a Gender Diversity Office poster presentation to raise awareness about several newly minted gender identification options.

The campus Hate Speech Alliance has a large banner with a quote from Herbert Marcuse: *The restoration of freedom of thought may necessitate new and rigid restrictions on teachings and practices in the educational institutions.* They're gathering signatures to ban speakers and remove books from the library by those whose works are contrary to the progressive canon.

The Wiccan Club is passing out tickets to their Black Mass, the LGBTIAQO (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgendered, Intersex, Asexual, Queer, Questioning) Club is selling sex toys. Progressives against Climate Change has a life-sized cardboard Al Gore. The New Marxists have a collection of Soviet era red propaganda posters for sale. NAMBLA isn't allowed to pass out literature but they have a poster presentation and web site. The Alternative Energy and Sustainability Club is demonstrating solar powered trash compactors. Another group wants to ban military recruiters from campus. Technophobes against GMO products in cafeterias are screaming about frankenfoods and showing cartoon pictures of deformed corn cobs. One group is handing out copies of Mao's Little Red Book while another demands body and gender self-determination to be paid for by the university health care plan. The Black Student Union passing out fliers demanding race segregated classes. The Free Thinkers Club is touting their annual All Campus Religious Book Burning Festival. Numerous would-be victim groups demand trigger warnings, and, finally, there's a club passing out candy flavored condoms.

About typical for the campus neo-left. Apparently, no one told them that *1984* wasn't a *how-to* manual.

Jim is reminded that FDSU, like most of its peers, is a haven of inverted reality, a safe space for progressive looters, an inclusive, sensitive, tolerant, and ambigendered place, opposed to classism, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism, ableism, speciesism, and gender norms while maintaining a welcoming and supportive atmosphere for collective, within the context of a rigorously enforced authoritarian social consensus.

Its curriculum is rooted in the generally accepted cannon of leftist orthodoxy with peculiar stress on womynism, recycling, racism, technophobia (special emphasis: GMOs and a gluten free lifestyle), opposition to hegemonic white privilege, climate change, recycling, veganism, sustainability, eco-fundamentalism, trigger warnings, and other advanced forms of thought police paranoia.

At the far end of the tables, away from any traffic, past the gender neutral space and the lactation station, in a dark corner, he spots the campus *free speech zone*.

He pauses for a moment to see who the victim is today.

The *free speech zone* is a tiny postage stamp of floor space where students whose opinions the administration dislikes are theoretically allowed to speak as they please, if they can get through the labyrinthine official approval process and

five month waiting list. Then, hypothetically, they can, at last, but only briefly, say or advocate what they want.

Otherwise, throughout the other 300 acres of campus, the university speech and thought police enforce the rigid and uncompromising campus speech code which is intolerant of dissent from established fundamentalist progressive orthodoxy.

Once, he thinks to himself, the whole country was a free speech zone, but not now.

Within the tiny box, he sees a lone figure vainly trying to pass out little tiny green covered booklets He is surrounded by a chanting, angry, jackbooted, neo-McCarthyite mob of mixed feminists, neo-Marxists, Free Thinkers and two drag queens. The usual Orwellian thuggery.

A pajama boy from the FDSUSG, the Ft. Dodge University Student Government, monitors and records the speaker's every word and, when possible, taking the names of people brave enough to seen accepting the clearly subversive and dangerous literature being distributed.

At the end of the day, FDSUSG observer usually files charges in the student court, a marsupial group of administration approved Christophobic rent-boys, suckups and vigilantes that will obediently declare the free speecher guilty of the usual package of thought and hate crimes that are, at the same time, deviationist, reactionary, offensive, harassing, marginalizing, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, bullying, misogynist, racist, hurtful, emotionally distressful, victimizing, intolerant, libertarian, inconsiderate, and contrary to established neofascist fundamentalism.

The university speech code has many traps, so everyone is probably guilty of something. The person convicted will be officially declared outcast, required to publicly and humiliatingly recant, ordered to undergo mandatory sensitivity training including a reintroduction to the university's established viewpoint on issues pertaining race, gender and ethnic quotas, environmentalism, recycling, sustainability, political choice, and sexual orientation. He (the victim is rarely non-male) will probably also be diagnosed with an anti-social psychiatric disorder, given meds and placed under observation.

Once you get a taste for shutting people up, it's hard to stop. Why bother winning the debate when it's easier to shut it down and punish dissenters? The authoritarian left ascendant: "We have already decided what we think. Do not challenge us with any foreign and dangerous ideas." The faculty and administration are only too happy to help keep student minds tightly closed.

Like its peers, FDSU is refuge to a dappled collection of tenured, beemer and hybrid driving aging 70s flower children, a motley troupe with pulled-back frizzy, gray pony tails wearing shabby, retro 60s clothing and sensible shoes. The vending machines sell kale chips, wheat grass, and organic goat's milk. FDSU, and its peers, are destinations where a culture goes to suffocate. Dissent is frowned upon.

Today's sin? OMG, the poor little bastard is passing out small green Bibles!

Certainly one of the worst crimes anyone can commit on this or any other progressive campus. Religious advocacy, Satanism and Wicca excepted, are not acceptable!

Shaking his head and musing about the Torquemada-like torture to come, he moves on to the vending area.

Avoiding the elaborate but expensive flavored specialty coffees, he invests in a low grade blend with unlimited refills. He picks up a large donut on a plate wrapped in tightly stretched plastic and heads for the checkout counter.

The signs says that the coffee and donut should be US\$52.45 but, after some haggling over the exchange rate, he pays Nebraska\$2.25 instead. While U.S. dollars are rarely used anymore, price tags still refer to them. Every transaction becomes an exercise in exchange rates. Nebraska and Kansas dollars are the most popular.

After his morning bout with high finance, he strolls out into the mottled sea of tabled students.

Scanning for someone familiar, he spots several groups of friends scattered around the floor. He heads towards one group where about eight guys and five gals are seated at a great round table covered with backpacks, tablets, laptops, stacks of serving trays, and paper wrappings.

One of the guys sees him and does and exaggerated grimace while the others notice and laugh.

"Hey Ben," says Jim. "Glad to see me?"

"Hide your food guys, the human vacuum cleaner is here," replies Ben.

"I thought you'd be happy to see me," answers Jim. "So I'll just sit next to you then."

Jim puts his coffee and plate next to Ben, grabs an empty chair from the next table, and squirms in next to Ben.

"So, what are we having for breakfast?" asks Jim.

"I'm having eggs, bacon and toast," says Ben.

"Hey, works for me," says Jim as he snatches a piece of toast from Ben's plate.

"Can't you bother someone else for a change, I'm hungry this morning?"

"Nah, you're an easy target. Anyway, with your trust fund, I know you won't go hungry."

"I suppose you want the bacon too?"

"Look, over there, is that Coach Jackson?" says Jim.

Ben turns quickly. Jim scarfs up the bacon. Ben, realizing he's been had, turns back slowly with an exasperated look.

"You fancy anything else on my plate?"

"Nope. Not now."

"Hey, you want this cereal?" asks Phil from across the table. "I don't know why I picked it up."

Everyone at the table knows why he picked it up. Phil hates cereal. Jim loves it.

"Yeah, don't mind if I do," says Jim. "First, I need to get a refill on this coffee. BRB."

As Jim walks off towards the coffee shop, one of the gals, Mary, asks, "What's he majoring in?"

"Well, technically, he's not actually a real student, in the normal sense," says Ryan with an exaggerated emphasis on the word *technically*.

"But he takes courses?"

"Oh, yeah."

"So, what, how can that be if he's not enrolled?"

Ryan says, "Well, that depends on what you call enrolled."

"Ahh, how many ways are there?"

"Well there's the usual way, you go pay your tuition at the Financial Office and they send a message to the Registrar's Office who places you in *enrolled* status on their computer system. Bingo, you're enrolled."

"And there's another way?"

"Yeah, when the assistant Registrar is out of her office, I enroll you. I work over there. Actually, I can do it from any terminal on campus. We hacked the system and I have the passwords but I like to do it from her terminal in case someone checks the audit trail to see which terminal was used."

"Ohh. And no one finds out that he's not paying his bills? Don't they check that or something?"

"Nope. Data flows to the Registrar's Office, not the other way around. The system was never designed to check if everyone enrolled also paid their bills."

"So he's taking courses, getting credit, but not paying?"

"Yep."

"Where does he live?"

"Lets just say his accommodations are also a bit non-traditional."

"And free, too?"

"Yep. Like his meal plan."

"What meal plan?"

"We're the meal plan. He grazes the cafeteria."

"We need to talk sometime, Ryan," says Mary.

Jim returns with a fresh coffee and digs into the cereal, toast and bacon.

"So why is Sean over there in a cast?"

"You need to ask?"

"Fell off the bike again?"

"You bet. He's not very good at it but he keeps trying."

Ryan, looking over the Fall schedule of classes on his laptop, asks, "Ok, I need to pick some crapstone GenEd class for Fall."

"What's on this year's list of horrors?"

"Here's what I found so far:"

SOC 103 Zombies in Popular Media

PSYC 233 Drag: Theories of Transgenderism and Performance

PHYS 099 The Science of Harry Potter

GEO 199 Metaphysics and Ontologies of Global Warming

WYM 321 Porn Chic: Exploring the Contours of Raunch Eroticism

"Anyone know anything about these?"

"What? no basket weaving?"

"Too close to a real job skill."

"Wear an aluminum hat if you take the GEO course. The outpatients are out in force in that one. That course should count in the religion and world beliefs category."

"The moonbat version of creationism, if you ask me."

"Hey, I got a trigger warning in my math class yesterday. It seems the term hypotenuse triggers sexual issues in sensitive people."

"I did the *Porn Chic* course last semester. It's ok is you don't mind an overweight, gravel voiced lesbian in combat boots stomping around the room for 50 minutes three times a week ranting about her dildo collection. When's it scheduled?"

"MWF 9"

"Definitely not a class to take with a hangover. That's the legendary Ms Cupcake's course from the Womynist and Gender Studies Department. But if you take it, just make sure she thinks you're gay, otherwise, you won't pass."

"How about if I gender self identify as a womyn and say I'm interested in womyn?"

"That'll work!"

"She preaches a lot about gender parity but it sounds more like parody."

"Hey, parody is the sincerest form of envy!"

"How come there's nothing about her course in the online student reviews?"

"They're sanitized. She'd be all Title IX on them if they told the truth then she'd witch hunt the idiot crazy enough to say anything honest. Since there aren't any positive evaluations and they're afraid to print the real ones, they just print a

blank space."

"Did you see ENG 201 Elvish, The Language of "Lord of the Rings"?"

"I already took that. I think I'll go with *PHIL 300 Star Trek Epistemology*. Always best to stick with the classics."

"And we're borrowing a bazillion dollars a year to pay this crap?"

"Yep. But, hey, it gives these moonbats something useless to do. Otherwise, they'd be just be street people pushing trash filled old grocery carts. This way, they're distinguished academics."

"You are all guilty of thought crime. Go to one of our conveniently located, gender neutral restrooms and wash your mouth out with a bar of fair-trade, organic, hormone free, vegan friendly, non-GMO, hypoalergenic, non-comedogenic, gluten free soap made from brown rice, quinoa, amaranth, millet, tasty flax, chia seeds, and virgin coconut oil."

"Don't forget the organic sea salt."

Looking at the time, Ben says, "Enough groupthink. I better get on the sound board at KRAP, I'm supposed to do some interview setups today."

"So, you still working for campus radio?"

"Yeah, sorta. If you can call finding the crappiest classical music in the library and playing it work. More like audience torture, if you ask me."

"Well, what's not to like with programs like Drive Time Shostakovich?"

"Don't forget *The Tibetan Chant Anger Management Hour* or *Marxism Looks at the News*."

"Why do they play that trash?"

"Mainly to out-trash the other state school radio stations, that's why. They don't need to worry about an audience since they get state money. So each campus tries to out weird the other. Anyway, they pay me so I'm outta here."

"Yeah, I need to get moving too. Catch you later," says Ryan as he and the others get their things and begin to head off.

Jim, now alone, gets another cup of coffee, picks up a copy of the school paper, returns to his table and begins scanning the help wanted section. He circles a few ads but the pickings are not good.

Bored, he starts listening to the guys at the next table.

"So, I called my mom about my tutoring."

"You mean that girl you paid 100 bucks to have sex with?"

"One time."

He decides to go back to reading his paper.

A few minutes later Scott, a tall guy in shorts and a sweatshirt printed with the text, *You read my shirt*, walks over and says, "What's up, Jim? Any luck?"

"Nope. Not a damned thing."

"Well, maybe with the presidential visit you can get some work, I'm sure they'll be hiring a lot of people."

"What presidential visit?" says Jim looking up and a bit annoyed suddenly realizing this could be a problem.

"President Munson is coming to campus for a speech next week. Didn't you know?"

"Nope. He's not really president, yet, ya'know."

"Hey, president of the Convention, same thing for most of us. I even got an invitation to be in the audience," says Scott beaming. "I'm sitting on the risers right behind the great man himself."

"So, you're a prop person?"

"No, I'm a supporter."

"Figures."

"Awww, you didn't get an invite," says Scott with mock sympathy. "And you're jealous!"

"Must be in the mail."

"By the way, how do you get mail?"

"I use a dorm address."

"Ohh. And no one checks?"

"Yeah, really? So, when is this event?"

"Next Monday afternoon. Big speech, all the networks, the full deal."

"Where?"

"On the quad."

"Oh shit!"

"Why, what's wrong with that."

"It means the place will be crawling with security people, that's what. I may have to move."

"You still in the attic of Bander Hall?"

"Yeah, I have the penthouse suite there. All the comforts of your basic five star resort."

"I'll bet."

"Well, the rent is cheap. But it sounds like I might need to move. What's your space situation these days?"

"Crowded, I got friends coming in from some other schools. They got invites too so I'm full up at the moment."

"Geeez, more political groupies, just what this place needs."

"Keep it up dude. When the revolution comes, I'll see that you're one the first up against the wall."

"I thought you hated guns."

"I'll make an exception in your case."

"So exactly where on the quad is this speech-fest gonna take place?"

"Right in front of Bander - they want the picturesque main entrance as a backdrop and it will look real nice with a late afternoon, low sun angle."

"Crap. So I really need to find alternative accommodations."

"Why?"

"Why? Because the security people will lock down every quad facing window in Bander, that's why."

"Oh. Yeah, I guess you're right. So, what will you do?"

"Well, I'm not to thrilled about going back to live in the steam tunnels again. I guess I'll go crash in East Gym. Hardly anyone goes there since they closed it."

"I guess you'd know."

"Yep. Well, I guess tomorrow I start moving. In the meantime, I'm heading over to campus police and see if I can get a job doing crowd control or something," says Jim as he chugs the last of the coffee, folds the paper, and stands up.

"Ok, good luck. You sure you don't want me to try getting an invitation for you?"

"No way, dude. I don't want to be anywhere around when that guy begins speaking. He gives me a headache."

"You don't know what you're missing."

"Yes I do. Catch you later," says Jim as he heads off towards one of the exits.

Time: 10:00 AM

Jim jogs over to the campus police office located in the basement of one of the many administrative buildings. He passes through endless corridors that host the elaborate suites of assistant, vice assistant, special assistant and deputy assistant vice presidents, provosts, deans and directors. In the modern university, the number and salaries of administrators far exceeds those of the faculty.

For most students, their four to five years in college are an exercise in the accumulation of debt. For most, it is debt that will follow them to retirement. While degrees in mathematics, science and engineering lead to lucrative careers, most are lured into worthless majors by seductive promises of easy grades and little work.

So, they enroll in droves into psychology, art history, womyn's studies, sociology, fine arts, and general studies, unaware of the of the Faustian bargain they have struck. Their prospective incomes will scarcely pay the unending interest. But four years of beer pong is a lifetime of memories.

The rising tide of easy student money did not, however, go unnoticed by empire

building college administrations. They swiftly siphoned this flood of gullible cash to build ever larger, palatial administrative offices, elaborate hierarchies of assistant and associate administrators, meaningless programs of outreach, sister schools (in resort climates), lavish travel and entertainment budgets, ever ballooning salaries, opulent recreation centers, and luxurious theaters to entertain faculty and administrators alike, at discounted, below market rates.

After working two or three part time jobs and selling a pint of plasma every two weeks, students seldom find time for these questionable amenities.

At last Jim locates the administrative directory and scans the list of offices. Each, he knows, is headed by a flunky drone making a small fortune for a no-show job at student expense.

Office of the Chancellor

Office of the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor

Office of the Vice chancellors

Office of the Assistant Vice chancellors

Office of the Vice provosts

Office of the Assistant Vice provosts

Office of Academic Affairs

Office of Academic Counseling (Undergraduate)

Office of Academic Personnel

Office of the Academic Senate

Office of Accounting & Fiscal Services

Office of Administrative & Business Services

Office of Administrative Policies & Records

Office of Admissions & Relations with Schools

Office of University Advancement

Office of the Alumni Association

Office of the Bookstore

Office of Campus Billing Services

Office of the Campus Counsel

Office of Campus Recreation

Office of the Career Center

Office of the Career Center - MBA

Office of the Center for Educational Partnerships

Office of Child Care Services

Office of Community College Relations

Office of Strategic Communications Office of Counseling Center (Faculty & Staff) Office of Counseling Center (Students) Office of the Cross-Cultural Center Office of the Dean of Students (Student Life & Leadership) Office of Design & Construction Services Office of Discrimination and Harassment Office of Labor Relations, and Organizational and Employee Development Office of Disability Services Center (Students) Office of Distribution & Document Management Office of the University Editor Office of Silly Walks Office of the Employee Assistance Program Office of Environmental Health & Safety Office of Environmental Planning & Sustainability Office of Equal Opportunity & Enforcement Office of Extension Office of Facilities Management Office of Financial Aid & Scholarships Office of Financial Services Office of Food Services Office of the FDSU Foundation Office of the Graduate Division Office of the Graduate Student Resource Center Office of Health Education Office of Human Resources Office of Faculty & Staff Housing Office of Information Technology Office of Institutional Research Office of Internal Audit Services Office of Internal Controls Office of the International Center Office of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center Office of Loan Services

Office of Material & Risk Management (Purchasing) Office of the Mediation Program Office of Meditation and Yoga Office of the Medical Center Office of the Ombudsman Office of Organization Charts Office of Parking Office of FDSU Partnerships Office of Planning & Budget Office of Public Relations & Publicity Office of FDSU Police Office of FDSU Fire Department Office of Policies & Procedures Office of Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor Office of the Registrar Office of Research Office of Research Administration Office of Safety Escort Services Office of the Center for Service in Action (Volunteer Center) Office of Sexual Harassment/Title IX Officer Office of Special Event Parking Office of Staff Assembly Office of the Student Center & Event Services Office of the Vice Chancellor Student Affairs Office of the Student Center Office of Student Health Services Office of Student Housing Office of Student Life & Leadership (Dean of Students) Office of Sustainability Office of Organic and Vegan Food Services Office of Teaching, Learning & Technology Center Office of Technology Alliances Office of Transfer Services Counseling Program Office of Transportation & Distribution Services

Office of Division of Undergraduate Education

Office of the University Club

Office of International Alumni and Development

Office of Diversity, Inclusion, Multiculturalism, Speech Code Enforcement, Equity and Quota Management

Finally finding the building and corridor coordinates for the *Campus Police*, *Administrative Personnel Subsection*, he soldiers on.

After several minutes of walking through administrative maze, he finds and enters the office. There he sees a woman he knows and asks if there are any jobs available for the convention president visit.

She's an older woman who was always friendly to him from his days in ITS. He used to spend hours fixing her computer and showing her how to use the software which she would promptly forget and he'd have to start all over again. She appreciated it.

"Yes, Jimmy, there are a few. Mainly putting up security barriers, parking cars, directing pedestrian traffic, that sort of thing. Can you work twelve hours each day?"

"Terrific! I sure can, Mrs. Wells."

"Good, here fill out these forms and then come back Thursday for a security pass. You won't be able to move around here next week without one of those. It's gong to be crazy but I'm looking forward to it."

Jim goes to a table and fills out the forms then returns to Mrs. Wells desk and says, "How many people are there going to be at this party?"

"Oh we're not completely sure but it may be as many at ten thousand if the weather is good."

"Wow! That's a lot of folding chairs!"

"No, the seating will just be for the invited guests, only about a thousand of them. The rest will be standing."

"Will there be concession stands and all?"

"Oh yes, the university is having a big tailgate party over in the G lot behind Coleman Hall"

"How does President Munson get to campus?"

"He'll fly into the airport in Des Moines then he'll fly here in a helicopter. They're going to cordon off the roof of the parking garage on the north side of Bander for a landing zone. Then they can bring him over through the back entrance of Bander."

"I'll bet that will be a sight!"

"Yes, indeed it will be!"

"Ok, see you Thursday," as he hands her the filled-in paperwork.

Happy at the chance to make some money, he wanders towards a classroom building to sleep through the noon class in thermodynamics where an aging, hippie physics prof rants for fifty minutes about genetically modified foods or anything else that enters his mind, other than thermodynamics.

Time: Noon

Today's lecture topic is a surprise! A hackneyed oldie but goodie: *Communism didn't fail in Russia, It was just wrongly implemented.* This one is a campus staple, it makes the rounds every few years like clockwork. The faculty never came to grips with the loss of the Soviet Union. Jim wonders why no trigger warning? He's heard this one three times this month already. Surely that requires at the least a terminal boredom warning?

Midway through the rant the lights start flickering. He and the other students' eyes wander apathetically to the failing bulbs above. Not enough wind, so the electric grid is failing, yet again. A common occurrence since the progressives closed the baseline coal, oil, gas, and nuclear power plants. Until the projects to reopen the coal fired stations is done, most of the electricity comes from windmills, solar panels and wood chips which means blackouts on cloudy, windless days.

After a few minutes, the power totally fails. The inmates of the blackened lecture hall groan and, with the light of small LED flashlights, which they carry for these occasions, they pick up their things and thread their way out of the dark building past the muttering physics prof mumbling that this would never have happened in the Soviet Union.

In the Quad, a few thousand students mill about. Most classes are canceled. Running in what appear to be random patterns, a large herd of guys chase a soccer ball. Another group has attached a line of polyester rope between two trees and begun precarious displays of slacklining. Another group has chalked in and begun playing Four Square. Others, further out on the lawn, are organizing team frisbee matches. A few mimes dressed as Harry Potter and The Doctor wander about. Three jugglers in joker costumes mingle with the crowd. Some cluster and text message one another. One actually reads a book. Someone is selling handmade beaded jewelry on a black felt cloth draped across a bench. More than a few drug deals go down. Several guitar players strum. Some guy with a Pan flute bobs and weaves among the crowd. He is tracked by a gal in a multi-colored dress banging on a tambourine. A distinct odor of burning rope pervades all.

Eventually the wind picks up and the lights flicker back on. The circus slowly dissipates.

Jim wanders to the student union where he spots Ben sitting at a table drinking coffee and talking with Scott. Grabbing a cup of coffee, he walks over and joins him.

Time: 2:00 PM

"Radio show over?"

"Yeah, they didn't have much for me to do today, once the power went out. Kinda hard to broadcast without electricity."

"I thought you had a backup gerbil on a treadmill or something?"

"He called in sick."

"So, Scott, you're a big fan of all this political stuff. What do you know about this Munson visit? Is he for real? Will it make any difference?"

"He looks like the real thing and it certainly looks like there'll be a new constitution soon. I guess then we'll see."

"Are the old, big states gonna permit it? Won't they fight back?"

"No one knows. If enough states line up behind the convention constitution, which is what it looks like right now, and if the military signs on, DeWitt's states won't have much choice but accept it. If not, things could get messy."

"Like they're not a mess right now?"

"True, but more gunfire type of messy."

"Well, I hope there won't be any at the speech, I just got a job working security for the event."

"How many hours?"

"Not sure yet, mainly setup, ushering and tear down, as far as I can tell."

"Every bit helps."

"Sure does. So, what do the people at the station think of Munson?"

"Oh crap, Them? They're all moonbat Hillary addicts, just like the rest of the faculty. And Munson? They loathe him. He represents a threat to their whole system of beliefs. Libertarians scare them too. They can't comprehend living in a world where people get to do what they want, where every move they make isn't micro managed by some bureaucrat in Washington. I think they can't sleep at night worrying that somewhere, someone is making his own choices and living his own life without state supervision. It scares the crap out of them."

"Yeah, I guess the campus is pretty much a lefty regressive, monoculture echo chamber. Conformist groupthink run amok. The dysfunctional group dynamics of academic inbreeding."

"Well, what do you expect they way they hire people? Nothing to do with qualifications, just ideological screening coupled with race, sexual preference, and gender quotas. It's just one big political nut house. But, hey, they all sing from the same hymnal!"

"Totally orthodox."

"Yeah, I overheard some prof talking to another about some hiring committee he was on and how they were disqualifying all the straight white guys so they could fill the candidate pool with quota people."

"Probably explains some of the losers around here."

"How did things ever get so out of control in this country?"

"Well, first there was Obama and his people. After all the scandals, wasted stimulus money, losing Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, and Iraq, Iran got a nuclear bomb, the Crimea, the Ukraine, spying on the AP reporters, the NSA scandals, using the IRS to attack opponents, the Mexican gun running, the health care fiasco, the VA disaster, all the bankrupt crony green energy companies, he was just a lame duck. He lost control of Congress, even most of the Dems, so he started ruling by decree. To make it legal, he needed the courts to cooperate so he packed the judiciary with a bunch of lefty hand puppets. Once he controlled the judges, he could get away with anything and he did. He became the president Nixon always wanted to be!"

"Yeah, what a mess."

"But the public backlash grew worse and worse. The Dems knew they were going to lose the Congress so they came up with a plan to keep their grip on the White House. They started the mass immigration and legalization decrees. Millions of aliens flooded in and there were millions here already. His *dreamers*. Then the amnesty in the lame duck session. The Dems packed all their *new Americans* into a big city ghettos and loaded them up with welfare goodies. And then the epidemics started. Millions died."

"Yeah, that was a disaster."

"But they regrouped, started a new party and got their billionaire boys club to finance a huge end run around the Electoral College. They suckered Connecticut to sign onto what they called the *majority electoral vote* scam."

"Basically, they disenfranchised most of the country as a result. Sounded like a good idea at the time, lots of people bought into it. It seemed so fair. They said that each state should give all it's electoral votes to the candidate with the largest national popular vote, even if that candidate didn't win in that state."

"Bingo. Election over. With big city political machines counting the votes, and 60 million newly minted welfare dependents voting as told, they owned the Electoral College."

"Don't forget Internet voting and how they hacked that."

"True. Now six or seven mostly coastal states can control the outcome of presidential elections. The rest of don't count anymore. By the time people figured out what happened, it was too late, the progressives in the state legislatures could block repeal."

"So, now LA, New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C, Cleveland, Atlanta, New Orleans, San Antonio, and a few others, totally control the result. That's why they spent all those millions busing in people from Mexico and Central America. They knew what they were doing. In reality, Progressives only have majorities in about six states, not nearly enough to take the presidency under the old rules but guaranteed with the new scheme." "It's all part of the of the *poverty-industrial complex*, swarms of bureaucrats whose sole goal is expansion of the welfare state. They define success by how many people are put on welfare, not how many people they help get off welfare. A giant dependent pool of reliable robovotes. Progressives are looters. That take from people who produce and use the loot to keep themselves in power and paper it all over with focus group tested slogans. The progressive oligarchy sees the untamed productive classes as their true enemy. They don't control them, yet. They will or they will destroy them."

"So, now the other states are out of the picture?"

"Yep, as far as electing a president is concerned. And since a president can rule by decree, without Congress, we've became a nice, friendly, progressive, neofascist dictatorship."

"Didn't the Romans try importing foreigners too?"

"Yeah, Vandals and Goths. That worked out well."

"And don't forget Obama's war on the energy companies, hence the blackouts we have every few days. The economic mess he created just kept snowballing. Big companies fled to Mexico, Canada, Brazil, everywhere. Now the food shortages. Then the implosion of the dollar when the Chinese decided to bail. So, now Fed dollars are nearly worthless and we have to negotiate everything in Kansas or Nebraska dollars."

"And now we have DeWitt, DeWittless, is more like it, and her band of regressives."

"And her damn spy agencies."

"And the state run media and their nightly brainwash sessions."

"Hey! Don't talk about my network crapcasts that way! That's my main source of creative writing material you're talking about!"

"They just do what they're told."

"It would be nice if we had some real journalists."

"Don't hold your breath."

"Well, there's FAXNEWS But it's social treason to watch that channel, you know that. You can be reported to the Equity and Enforcement Office if they catch you."

"Didn't these people used to be liberals or something? Haven't they become what they opposed?"

"I wonder about that. In reality, when you think about it, they're the political descendants of the old southern Democrat party. Owing and controlling people seems to be in their DNA. They're just another group of control freaks with saccharine platitudes on the outside but an anti-democratic authoritarian core inside."

"Just remember that the massive immigration push, huge increase in welfare enrollment, and the obvious efforts to destroy the economy during Whitman's

administration was part of their plan was to overload the system, to cause it to collapse and then replace it. And it worked, up to a point but not the way they expected. They didn't factor in that their dystopia would be so geographically concentrated and that the rest of the country would rebel. They never factored in the possibility of a revolt. To progressives, disobeying government authority is unthinkable. It wasn't in their rule book. They always trust government. But, if Munson and his people don't win and run these fascists out of town, it's over. The country will totally breakup in civil war. But, until the apocalypse, I've got to go check out a book at the library."

"Book?"

"Yeah, a rectangular thing with pages and writing on them. It's how people upload software to their brains."

"Retro!"

Time: 4:00 PM

Crossing campus, he dodges the 3 pm all-campus protest march. Today's Orwellian themes, scrawled across large campaign banners, is, *Tolerance Is A One-Way Street* and *Diversity Through Conformity.*

Safely crossing to another set of walkways, Jim heads for the strip to scrounge for a shopping cart to facilitate his move to East Gym.

Passing by a building entrance a perky saucer-eyed acolyte jumps in his path.

"I'm from the Coffee Party, wanna join?"

"Maybe, what's it about?" he replies, knowing this is going nowhere good.

"We're getting big money out of politics."

"What big money?"

"The Koch Brothers."

"How about Soros, Buffet, Gates, Steyer, Harold Simmons, SEIU, NEA, and that sort?"

"Oh that's good money."

"How will you do this?"

"We need to repeal the 1st Amendment. Will you sign my petition?"

"That doesn't sound good. Then people won't be free to speak."

"But people will still be able to say what they want as long as the Department of Truth approves. Only people who lie have anything to fear."

"Perhaps some other time," says Jim as he turns and walks on his way.

"At least come to our teach-in," she shouts as he walks away.

The strip is a motley collection of bars, fast food joints, laundromats, tanning salons, copy shops, liquor stores, bars, pizza parlors, book stores, Mexican food, Chinese food, Thai Food, fast food, karaoke, coffee shops, mini-marts, comic book shops, new age tea rooms, and two tattoo & piercing parlors. Pretty much

what you see at every campus. A block further down is a decaying old supermarket. Jim grabs a shopping cart from the edge of the crumbling parking lot and starts pushing it, wheels wobbling, back towards Bander Hall.

As he passes one of the liquor stores, the guys he had breakfast with step out, each carrying two 24 packs of cheap beer, 144 cans in total.

Jim does a theatrical double take. "Got enough for the rest of the day?"

"Hey, we're not alcoholics. We don't drink to get through the day. We get through the day to drink!" says Phil with a smirk. "Come on over later, Ryan's got a new video game."

"Yeah, and whata ya' gonna do to it? Baptize it in beer?"

"Yep, something like that. See you around nine," says Phil.

"What's the cart for?" asks Ryan.

"I need to move. Seems my abode may be a security issue next week."

"Ahhh, right. The great one is gonna speak to the unwashed," says Ben.

"Correct and right under my window. So I need to clear out before security starts nailing things down."

"Ohh, I get it. Where to?"

"East Gym. Unless you guys want to put me up?"

"Ahhh, no. We got occupancy issues as it is," says Phil.

"Thought so. So, how about helping me move then?"

"When?"

"Tomorrow morning around 9:30, when the maids are on break and the dorm is mainly empty. I need some help carrying stuff and some lookouts."

"Sure. We'll be there," says Ryan.

"Right, see ya' later," says Jim as he pushes the cart towards Bander while the rest head in the other direction.

Time: 4:30 PM

At Bander, he hides the cart behind some overgrown shrubs near the west entrance knowing that the grounds crew only comes by twice a year. He ducks into the building and walks quickly down a long, many doored corridor. Near the end, he pauses, checks that no one is looking, then snatches the big key chain from his belt.

Fumbling quickly through the collection, he locates the prime candidate and fits it into the slot. He's in.

Inside the dark room, he feels the wall near the door until he finds the light switch which he flips on and begins searching for the stash of big, heavy duty, black plastic bags they use to haul trash from the building. He'll use a few of these to pack his stuff for the move.

Spotting his target, he grabs several, flips out the light out, and, peeking first to see if anyone's watching, exits unnoticed and retreats quickly up to his attic garret.

Once there, he begins packing his clothes, some books, a radio, and other odds and ends. After a while, the important stuff is in a couple of bags. The rest he hides in the drawers of an old dresser to await his return. If anyone discovers them, they'll just think they were discards along with the dresser. His wardrobe isn't very new looking.

Having stashed everything away, he goes back to the Union to scrounge for supper. It's all-you-can-eat Mexican Fiesta night so that means his friends will get extra plates for him.

Most nights he makes do with the DoR soup which isn't really that bad. It's all the leftover veggies and meat from the day before that they dump into a great stew pot and let simmer all night. It has the thickness of beef stew and they usually let you get refills. Along with it, he can also get a couple of slices of bread.

He picks a table over near where people bus their trays so, as they pass, they can give him their extra tacos, burritos, cookies, puddings, chips, milk, you name it.

Time: 9:00 PM

After supper, he hangs out in the Union talking to people and watching a big screen TV. A little before nine o'clock he leaves and walks across the dark campus to Phil, Ryan and Ben's apartment on the other side of College Ave.

The three guys live in an apartment above an old laundromat. The building is constructed of uneven, red brick, about eighty years old, once a small department store but long since divided into dumpy student apartments. The first floor is the laundromat and a collection of shops. Above, old, tall windows, from the age before air conditioning, look out over the street. There's a popular bar with live entertainment nightly directly across and the noise goes on most of the night.

Access to their apartment is by an ancient and rickety fire escape that clings uncertainly to the side of the building. As Jim clangs his way up the metal steps, it sways a bit under his weight. At the top, he sees that the door is open.

Through the screen door he shouts, "Anybody home?"

In return he hears, "Yeah, come on in."

"Hey guys, did ya' hear that I got a temp job with campus police!"

"Haha, you? Campus cop?" laughs Ben.

"Yep, for the big visit. Gonna have a security pass and everything."

"But you loathe politics?"

"Well, I need the money. So, where's this new video game?"

The apartment is a shambles of old furniture, empty beer cans, crumpled potato

chip bags, paper plates crusted with dried food, a ramshackle array of bookshelves, a 60 inch HDTV, a crate of instant noodles, surround sound speakers, two bicycles, stacks of empty pizza boxes, a line of empty liquor bottles, a couple of beet up sofas, an easy chair, a coffee table piled with video game consoles, one with a large plastic guitar attached, magazines, old campus newspapers, a couple of desks with computers, piles of books, folders, stacks of CDs, several plastic storage containers on top of one another, filled with even more junk, a pile of old clothes in a corner, a vacuum cleaner (still in its original box, unopened), a large bulletin board with endless scraps of paper, pictures and stickers, posters on every wall, unmatched curtains of various lengths and colors on every window, a dart board, a makeshift beer pong table made from a closet door, and some uneven bar stools.

Ryan points in the middle of one of the heaps and says, "There it is."

"Ya'wanna a beer?" says Phil.

"You have to ask?"

"In the fridge," Phil replies.

Jim goes to the kitchen where he finds counters piled with unwashed dishes, several half empty cat food tins, and a nearly full large, black plastic bag lined trash barrel. Opening the refrigerator, he sees that except for some old pizza, it's packed from top to bottom with beer.

He grabs one and says, "Anyone want a refill?"

The voices in unison reply, "Yep."

Returning, he passes around the beer and takes a seat on the end of one of the couches facing the big screen TV.

"So, security guy, when's the Munson fest begin?" asks Phil.

"Next Monday, don't you listen to the news?" says Ryan.

"Not if I can help it."

"It's gonna be a mad house, I heard they expect about ten thousand people besides the usual campus crowd. It'll be like a football weekend, including tailgate parties," says Ryan.

"So, what'a ya gonna be doing?" asks Ben.

"Directing traffic, setting things up, not sure yet."

"Why the hell is he coming to Podunk U?" asks Phil.

"Munson? He's out pushing the new constitution and annoying the crap out of DeWitt. Needs some photo ops with a lots of happy, adoring, cheering fans, I guess. Where better than a college campus for a lot of roboplause? Beyond me getting paid, it doesn't concern me one way or the other. So, lets see this video game, what is it?" says Jim.

They waste the next five hours in animated game playing and drinking, until around 2 o'clock, when, finally, Jim says, "Ok, I think I better get going. I'll see

you guys around 9:30 tomorrow?"

"Yep, see ya then," says Phil.

Jim clatters back down the metal stairs and staggers aimlessly across the darkened campus to his rent-free garret.

Tuesday April 12, 2022

Time: 6:30 AM

Jim abruptly wakes and freezes. Footsteps and voices, in the attic, not far away and getting closer.

"Holy shit," he panics.

Then the footsteps pause, but the voices continue. Male voices, but they're not the voices of any of the university maintenance crew, all of whom he knows. He raises his head slightly from the bed, holds his breathe and strains to hear. They're in the next storage room, a few feet away.

"Well, what'ya think?" says one voice.

"You think this window will work?"

"Yeah, perfect angle. Pity we can't just blow Munson's head off from here."

"And then launch a few grenades into the crowd? That would be quite a show."

"Not this time. I guess they have their reasons."

A cell phone chirps.

"Who is it?"

"The chief."

"Yes sir, we're checking out the dorm right now. Yes sir, good angle on where the podium will be and a lot of trees to keep the window hidden from the audience and TV cameras. Yes sir, no sir, not yet. Shouldn't be a problem. Thank you sir."

Jim hears an electronic click as the call ends.

"He wanted to know if everything looks ok."

"Lets get this camera installed and then get back to the security trailer."

Jim lays there very, very still, wide eyed and barely breathing, terrified they may find him. He listens carefully while they talk and install a tiny web cam in the window looking down on the front of Bander Hall. They are definitely part of the security detail and they are not alone. Others are involved but how many? Who are they?

A few minutes later, as he hears their footsteps retracing the way back to the end of the attic and down to the staircase, Jim sits up. Slowly he creeps silently out of his room and peeks down the length of the attic area to be sure the coast is clear. Then, as quietly as possible, in case their camera has a microphone, he tip-toes to the wall separating his room from the room where the camera was installed.

Peeking through a small hole in the wallboard, he sees the tiny device facing out

the window. A green LED light indicates that it's active. Behind it is a small network wireless transmitter connected by a long cord to an outlet at the other end of the room.

Jim, still on tip-toe, slips into the room and carefully makes his way to the camera, staying in the shadows so as to prevent his reflection in the window from being seen by the spy cam.

He examines the camera and recognizes that it's just a cheap, generic WiFi security cam with microphone. No easy way to trace its origin.

Time: 9:30 AM

Waiting outside the dorm at the east entrance, beyond the field of view of the web cam high above, he spots Ryan and Phil walking up the hill and waves to them.

"Where's Ben?" asks Jim as they near.

"He wasn't feeling too well."

"You mean he passed out."

"Yeah, and we kinda buried him in a pile of empties. He should be coming around pretty soon. Should be noisy"

"What, no pictures?"

"Oh we got a lot before we left and my laptop camera will capture his return to earth. Should make a nice video post. Real embarrassing. Now, whata 'ya want us to do?"

"Ryan, you watch the stairwell and door, Phil, you watch the corridor, I'll go get my stuff. I'll text you when I'm ready. Let me know if the coast is clear."

"Will do," they reply as Jim and Phil slip into the dorm. Ryan lingers in the stairwell. Phil and Jim scamper up to the top floor.

Just as Jim predicted, the maids are on break and the corridors are deserted. Phil takes his position at one end of the hall as Jim runs back up to the attic.

Checking one more time that there is nothing anyone would notice, Jim slips on his back pack, grabs the four bulging trash bags and bounds down the creaky old attic staircase. At the hall door, he texts his lookouts who reply that he's in the clear.

Dashing the length of the hall, down the east staircase and out the side door, he dumps the bags into the shopping cart and steers off towards East Gym, just out of sight of the campus security cameras. Ryan and Phil tag along on either side.

At the rear of East Gym, concealed by trees and overgrown bushes, Jim pulls out his famous chain of keys. Flipping through them he selects and proudly displays one prominently embossed *Do Not Reproduce -State Property.* He uses it to quickly open the old, disused, secluded, windowless entrance. Three guys and four bulging trash bags quickly disappear within, while the shopping cart is sent careening down the concrete path towards a cluster of solar powered trash cans in the distance. The old door squeaks shut behind them. The lock is bolted from within.

In the dark, musty, old vestibule, at the base of a dingy staircase, dim light filters in from above. Suspended dust floats in a beam of light from an unseen window on a landing several floors above.

"Geez," says Ryan. "What is this?"

"It's the old access stairs to the rafters and roof. I found out about it when I was installing the building wireless routers. Come'on, I'll show you," as he starts up the stairs, two at a time.

The others quickly follow.

They reach the fourth floor breathless, pausing while Jim pulls out another key that opens an old wooden door to a darkly lit, musty cavernous interior.

Beams, two foot wide, slant above, supporting the roof. The rough wood floor ends at a railing that forms a rectangle all around the attic. In the center they see the basketball court far below.

Suspended across the open area are metal scaffolds from which hang lighting arrays, speakers and a large four sided electronic score board.

"This area is above the press old box," says Jim pointing as he and the others peer over the edge.

"You can see the wireless routers I installed hanging from the scaffolds," as he gestures at several small boxes with blinking lights and tiny aerials at regular intervals around the building.

"So this is your new home? Where's the bed?" asks Phil.

"On the second floor mezzanine," says Jim.

"What?"

"There's the old physical therapy clinic down there. They have cots, mattresses, blankets, towels, showers, you name it. I'll haula a cot up here later."

"They closed the place last fall after they opened the new rec center so it's pretty quiet here most of the time. A guard checks the doors every night but that's about it. The janitors sometimes check out the first floor for a few minutes in the morning, but that's all. The university wants to either tear it down or remodel it into an office building but they've been undecided for years.

"Aren't you worried someone might come in and find you here?"

"Nope. I put a motion detectors on the main doors and on the back staircase that we came up. It's the only way up here so I'll know if someone's coming. I can make myself invisible pretty real quick."

"Sweet."

"Ok guys, lets go. I can unpack later. Anyway, it's your turn to buy me lunch, right?"

The other two give him a sour look as they all double-step back down the old staircase.

Time: 10:00 AM

Scott joins them at the Union and four guys hit the serving lines at once. They load up on muffins, pastries, coffee, bacon, eggs, toast, jam, hash browns, creme cheese and bagels. Jim pulls out a few Kansas dollars and actually pays, which stuns the others.

Spotting a round table in a secluded part of the building with no one near by, they unload their trays. Ben joins them, looking a bit worse for a night of wear.

"Thanks for the tin can burial shroud, guys," he says.

"We thought we'd send you out like a Viking warrior on a bier of your own empties," says Ben.

"Some of them actually still had real beer in them."

"Beer baths are good for the skin, I hear," says Scott.

"Not good for the couch, however."

"I need an aspirin," says Ben. "The beer bath was bad enough but I ran into Father Stiff Dick Feely on my way over here. If that prick asks me one more time to ride in that red SUV pimpmobile of his, I'm gonna personally castrate the fucker."

"Nah, he just wants to be your pal."

"He's a creeper."

"Don't they have a bishop or someone who's supposed control those guys?"

"You mean that dude with the \$12 million mansion and all the gold jewelry? Nope, he's just another fat guy in a red dress."

"Not to change the subject, but does anyone know anything about all those security trucks near the Dome?" asks Jim.

"Oh, you mean Fort Truck? That's where they're setting up the TV pool and security center. There's a couple of big state police trailers, and several more with a lot of convention agency names on it and a few smaller ones with no names," says Scott.

"How'd you know all this?"

"Oh, I got an email from the convention press office. They're recruiting people to work as ushers, gofers, whatnot. Seems this Munson speech is a big deal. They think he's gonna announce something important. Any of you guys want to volunteer?"

Crickets.

Scott rolls his eyes and finishes his coffee.

Standing, Jim crumples his paper plate, coffee cup, napkin and plastic utensils into a ball, tosses the wad into a nearby bin and says to Ryan, "Lets go take a

look at those trailers."

"Sounds good to me. My eleven o'clock got canceled. The dude's at another white person privilege conference," says Ryan.

"So your aging hippie can't get enough group think around here?"

"It's in Hawaii, all expenses paid."

"Your tuition at work."

"Don't remind me. That course is bad enough as it is. How do they find idiots like him? And he's tenured! I'd rather gouge my eyes out than take another course from him!"

Shimmying into their backpacks, shutting down their laptops, attaching their earbuds, all rise and go their separate ways. Jim and Ryan leave in the direction of the Dome parking lot. The Dome is an indoor football stadium used for football and other events.

Time: 10:45 AM

As they walk across the mall towards the Dome, Jim leans over and, in a hushed voice, tells Ryan what happened in the attic of Bander Hall this morning. Ryan listens in hushed, speechless attention. When Jim finishes, Ryan says nothing but the just stares at him wide-eyed until he finally mutters, "Holy shit!"

Jim puts his finger to his lips as they merge with a group of students walking across the crowded pedestrian bridge over Highway 72 which bisects the campus. The Dome area is on the other side. Jim and Ryan carefully study the scene ahead.

They walk around the side of the Dome towards the VIP parking lot now cordoned off with temporary chain link security fencing.

Within the secure enclave they see many large, white, unmarked vans with official license plates, lots of antennas, satellite dishes, Yagi masts and a spaghetti farm of thick cables connecting one trailer to another.

A camouflage painted National Guard field generator chugs away off to one side. The power draw from these trailers must exceed the university's electric allocation. The generator is connected by heavy gauge cables on temporary utility poles that radiate to each of the vans. A/C units protruding from the roofs buzz and whine under the hot late spring sun.

Jim and Ryan easily blend in with the crowd of students wending their way obliviously past the security area on wide bleached white concrete walkways. These connect to the main campus from the acres of commuter parking lots beyond. Ryan begins snapping pictures with his cell phone while Jim walks up to one of the doors of the Dome to get a better look at the Ethernet cable bundle going into the building.

Clang! Behind him Jim hears the doors' metal panic bars clatter as two of the Dome's huge, double doors swing open. Out stride four crew-cut guys in baggy dark suits, each sporting wraparound opaque sunglasses, earpieces with

dangling curlicue cords, and noticeable weapons bulges. They talk seriously to one another and unseen parties by radio.

As they pass, Jim cringes as he recognizes that the voices of two of them were his Bander Hall wakeup call. Waiting a moment until they get a bit ahead of him, he shadows them until they cross out into the VIP lot and then pass into the security perimeter. From a distance, he watches them climb into one of the large vans.

Circling back to Ryan, Jim says, "That was them. I recognized their voices."

"And, I got their photos," says Ryan. "I realized something was up from the *I'm* gonna shit a brick look on your face."

"That obvious?"

"Seriously obvious. Good thing they didn't look at you. They would have seen it too."

"Well, at least now I know one of their names, the taller one is named Mark. Now lets get out of here. I need to check some things. Come see me late tonight and bring Ben and Phil."

Time: 11:30 PM

Ryan, Ben and Phil walk past the dark math building then diagonally across a large lawn until they approach the rear of the hulking, ancient, sandstone East Gym, a remnant of the original campus, now more than a century old. Ryan sends a short text message from his phone. They wait hidden in the shadows as small groups of students pass until they see a small flicker of light in a window above.

They make their move. Carefully avoiding the walkway lights and the roof mounted security cameras, keeping close to the large ornamental shrubs, they dart across the last stretch grass to the old, now unlocked, back entrance and slip unseen within. Behind them, Ryan flips the door's rusted locking bolt.

From above, a tiny LED beam signals briefly down the center shaft of the squared spiral staircase. They clamber quickly up, their way dimly lit by the pedestrian walkway lamps weakly penetrating the dirty windows. At the top of the staircase, they see Jim's faint silhouette.

Jim, bending over the staircase, says, in a loud whisper, "Any problems?"

"None," Ryan replies just as he reaches the top step.

Using the small led flashlight, Jim leads them over the creaking, rough wood floor to his new rooftop raftered abode. Plucking four beers from the tiny dorm-style fridge, he flicks on a few strands of LED lights recessed in one of the rafters above and they take seats around a large, decrepit wooden table, long ago relegated to a forgotten attic demise.

Wednesday April 13, 2022

Time: Midnight

Ryan turns on his laptop and says, while waiting for it to boot, "I told them what happened on the way over."

Jim says, "I got Scott to send your names in as a possible ushers and prop people for the Munson event. He says you should get an email tomorrow with forms and instructions. You need to fill them in ASAP and get it back so security can do a quickie background check. Since I'll have police clearance, that means we probably can all get near the platform. Scott says they may use you as ushers or as one of the roboplause stage bots. He says they're looking for photogenic, perky, college types who won't doze off during the speech when the cameras are rolling."

"Also, I did some checking and found out they'll be erecting some giant screen TVs in front of Bander. There'll be three cameras, all on remote control, two mounted on the press platform behind the audience and one near the podium to shoot crowd reactions. The control booth for everything is in the AV center in Burris Hall. FDSU is doing the pool coverage for the press. All the feeds will go through there and then out on fiber optic to the networks. The TV nets will just do chroma-key green screen talking head overlays, FDSU will do the main broadcast."

"How many people will be at the event?"

"Maybe ten thousand, according to Mrs. Wells in campus security."

"I'm guessing a bunch of gun shots will create a real nice panic in a crowd that large."

"Probably part of their plan. That much chaos will cover a lot of tracks."

"We need some way to figure out who's behind the plot and why. Just nailing a couple of low level agents isn't enough. We need to know who they're working for," says Jim.

"Maybe we should call the cops?" says Ryan.

"I don't think that will help. I got nothing to prove that what I'm saying is true and I don't know if I want to answer a lot of questions. Anyway, those guys are the cops. We might be the ones who ended up in jail. They'd probably just switch to plan B, be more careful, and succeed next time. They probably know what they're doing and just got very unlucky that someone was living in the attic of the building they intended to use for an assassination."

"I guess so."

"Now show Ben and Phil the pictures we got over at the Dome and lets see if we can spot anything we missed this morning."

Ryan pulls out a portable projector, attaches it to his laptop, aims it at the wall, and begins the slide show. They carefully study and discuss each shot and make mental notes on the layout of the trailers and the communications equipment Jim points out the agent he heard called Mark.

After about an hour, Jim says, "Now is there any beer left at your place?"

The affirmative being established, they head for the apartment after making a stop at the quickie mart for some chips, cheese dip and frozen pizzas.

Time: 11:00 AM

At the Union, Jim gets coffee, a bag of chips and surveys the sea of tables. A hand in the distance rises and waves, it's Ryan.

"What's up?"

"Well, I got something," says Ryan.

"Oh?"

"Yeah. Ben sent me some texts. He was parking his car out near the Dome when he saw Mark hop into a really big, black SUV. So he tailed him."

"Oh? Where to?"

"Some kind of big restaurant just north of the I35/US20 intersection."

"And?"

"He followed him in. He says that Mark got an outdoor table away from the crowd. The place has a pond and some historic markers. He pretended to be interested in these and took pictures of the markers but really was able to get a lot of shots of Mark."

"Anyway, he's still there. After a while another guy showed up then they both got food from an outdoor counter. While they were in line at the counter and facing away from the table, Ben dropped that tiny MP3 recorder that he uses in class instead of taking notes behind a big rack of ketchup, mustard, relish, and sugar packets on a counter right next to their table."

"Did it work?"

"I don't know. He's still there according to his last text message. But he thinks they're almost ready to leave."

"Geeez, we may have hit the jackpot. Let me see the pictures he sent."

Ryan swivels his laptop around towards Jim. The pictures are in a group of thumbnails. Jim begins opening and scanning the full sized images, one by one.

"Uh-oh, I think I know one of these guys. I remember him from some story on TV. He's DeWitt's spokesman or something, I think."

"Huh?"

"Yeah, here let me do an image search."

He opens a search window and drags the image into it. After several moments he says, "Yep, there he is. His name is Shane Bader. He's a political consultant, a special assistant to the to the president."

They compare the pictures and nod in agreement.

"I wonder what all this really means," says Ryan.

"I dunno but I don't think it's very good," says Jim.

Ryan says, "Ok, Ben says they're leaving. He's gonna grab the recorder and follow them."

Time: 12:30 PM

As his prey leave, Ben, pretending to be getting a packet of salt, snatches the recorder, quickly switches it off and follows them out to the parking lot. Mark gets in his SUV while the other guy gets in a black sedan. He snaps a picture of it and it's license plate. Both cars pull out towards the I35 South ramp.

Ben, back in his car and following them, turns on his phone and calls Jim. Jim answers and puts it in speaker phone mode.

"I'm following them. We're heading south on I35, back towards Highway 20. As they were getting up, I heard one of them say they needed to get going because the plane was due pretty soon. I heard them say something about a small air strip near Vincent. Do a search and see what's there."

A moment later Ryan says, "Yeah, I got it. It's an old abandoned airstrip off some county road south west of Vincent. I'm looking at a satellite picture of it now."

Turning to Ryan, Jim asks, "See any place hide without being seen?"

"Looks like a thicket of trees at the west end of the runway. The wind here is from the west so, assuming it's the same over there, the west end of the strip where the plane will probably come to a stop. Looks perfect," answers Ryan.

"Well, lets get the hell out there and watch. We can probably be there a lot quicker from here then they can," replies Jim.

"You catch all that Ben?"

"Yep. I'll try to hook up with you guys when I get there. Don't get caught."

"You neither. We're on our way. "

"I'll keep you posted," says Ben as he hangs up.

Jim say, "You heard him, lets go."

Ryan says, "My car's nearest. I parked it in the faculty lot."

"Haven't you got enough tickets?"

"I have a fake license plate on it. Don't worry. And I've got my camera bag in the trunk."

They get up and dash to the parking lot.

Ryan hops in the driver's seat, Jim gets in on the passenger side. Jim calls Ben and says they're on their way.

Leaving town, they head east on 1st Ave, North on 32nd Street east on County Road D18 then north on Vincent avenue. After about 20 minutes, they turn east onto an unpaved road that winds through the corn fields.

New the air strip, Ryan pulls off onto a disused, unmarked gravel road overgrown with weeds that they spotted on the satellite image. At the end of the road, near the runway, is the grove of trees.

Ryan drives slowly so as not to kick up a dust plume which would be visible for miles in the flat terrain. Spotting the thicket of trees, he parks the car under a thick canopy of maple on the west end of the runway. A small hill is between them and the runway.

Ryan grabs his camera bag and they scramble up the small hill. It has a commanding view of the air strip but they are hidden by the dense thicket of shade trees and bushes.

Ryan mounts his camera with a long telephoto lens on small tripod. He checks the camera focus. They're ready. Jim calls Ben to let him know.

"According the GPS we're real close to the airfield," says Ben. "I'm still on the paved road but they turned onto a dirt road abut five minutes ago."

"Ok, says Jim. "I can see a dust plume now. I make it at about a mile from here."

"Ok, I'm gonna take this next cross road and circle around behind you guys and wait on the blacktop. They're all yours now."

"That's them," says Jim to the others, pointing, as he catches the reflection of afternoon sun off one of the windshields approaching from the east. Jim and the others lie flat.

The SUV and sedan come into view at the far end of the strip They cross onto then drive down the old cracked concrete runway and stop at a wooded area not far from Jim's position where there are some old picnic tables.

Mark and Shane Bader get out and walk over to the tables. Mark sits on one, Shane lights a cigarette and paces. Ryan focuses his camera and begins taking pictures.

They hear the sound of a distant jet engine. They scan the horizon. A moment later a large private jet roars overhead at low altitude, banks steeply into a 180-degree turn, and begins a landing approach. It touches down a moment later. Engines reversing loudly, it rumbles to a stop in a cloud of dust, only a few hundred feet away from Jim's position. The plane's door quickly opens and a flight of metal stairs descends. Two guys exit.

"Who are the guys in uniform?" asks Jim.

"One's an admiral and they other appears to be an Army general," says Ryan looking at the camera display showing the telephoto lens images. "I can probably enhance the images later and read their name tags."

Mark and Shane Bader jog over and shake hands. The general, first looking furtively around, takes Mark aside, leans over and speaks to him. Mark nods and signals to Bader, now standing a few feet away. Bader turns and enters the jet.

"This seems like a lot more than your basic, simple assassination," says Ryan, taking off his earphones.

After about fifteen minutes, they see movement at the plane's door.

Bader emerges but remains on the top stair as he turns to shake hands with shadowy figures inside the jet.

Sucking wind he says, "Holy shit!"

Bader turns and walks down the remaining stairs, the stairs retract, the door closes and the jet engines roar to life and the plane taxis full circle.

Slowly rolling to the other end of the strip it turns again. The engines thunder and it begins its takeoff roll. It rises into the air only a few hundred feet from the grove of trees, rocketing above them in a deafening blast. It shoots into the sky, banks steeply and disappears to the south.

Jim says, "Ok what did you see?"

"Vice-President Robert Jennings and, in the background, it looked like Senator Harry Rhodes, you know, the majority leader from the Fed Senate, DeWitt's pal."

"Holy shit!" exclaims Jim.

They watch as Shane and Mark drive off, now heading in the direction of Ft. Dodge. Ryan and Jim quickly pack up and rendezvous with Ben and then, likewise, return to Ft. Dodge.

Time: 2:30 PM

Jim drives while Ryan copies the pictures to his laptop. Then he calls Ben and Phil and turns on the speaker phone.

Ben says, "Well, I listened to the recording from the restaurant while you two were out plane spotting. You're right, that was the VP and Senator Rhodes you saw. The brass you saw were Admiral Steve Black and General Roger Simpson. Black is the head of NSA and Simpson is commander of Joint Force Headquarters National Capital Region also known as JFHQ-NCR."

"This doesn't sound good," says Jim. "The damned NSA is a political cancer eating away at this country."

"It gets worse. It seems they have a completely coordinated attack in mind. And this guy Bader has all the details, he's the ring master. This isn't a simple assassination. It's a coup d'etat."

"Oh nice," says Ryan. "Details?"

"None. I expect that's what they were discussing on the plane," says Ben. "Looks like we gotta work on finding out what this Bader guy is up to. He's got all the details and he kept mentioning his laptop. We better start with him. I'm sending the pictures I took of Bader at the restaurant. Anyone recognize him?"

"You don't think he'd be stupid enough to have it all on something that insecure?" says Jim.

"Sure, why not? But it'll be seriously encrypted, I'm sure. Not much use to anyone without the password," says Phil. "Better than writing things on paper."

"Is there anyway to break into it?"

"Yeah, might be possible, if we can get at it. But it won't be easy," replies Phil.

"It would help if we knew where he's staying," says Ryan.

"Hey, wait. Now that I see his picture, I know who he is. I should have recognized his name from the charge tickets," says Phil. "He's at the Carrington Motor Lodge where I work part-time. He has a big suite with a private balcony overlooking the indoor pool area. You know, big pool, some tropical gardens, a lounge and bar area and dining tables all around the pool. Like a Caribbean resort in the middle of lowa."

"You've seen him?"

"Yeah. I see him a lot. And he always has a laptop with him."

"If we could get hold of that laptop, we could might be able to do something," says Ryan.

"Everyone meet at the Union at 5 pm. I think I got a plan."

"Will do," acknowledge Ben and Phil as they disconnect.

"I need to call Andy. He's the one we need. He's hacked even more systems on campus than I have," says Jim.

"Right, he's the one."

"Call him, fill him in and see if he can meet us at the Union."

Ryan calls Andy. He explains to him what's happened. Andy says he'll help and agrees to meet them after he gets off work from DiscountMart.

Andy signs off and they call Phil.

"Tell us more about what you know about Bader."

"He's a big celeb at the lodge. He comes down for a few drinks every night around 7 pm. I've served him. Tips pretty well."

"Brings his laptop?"

"Oh yes."

"How does he connect? WiFi or a 4G rig?"

"WiFi, with an encrypted VPN."

"How do you know?"

"He told me. He needs to get a password to use the house WiFi at the bar. It has a different password than the rest of the hotel and they change it every day. I was talking to him and I asked if he was worried about security using a public WiFi hotspot."

"Where is the WiFi router?"

"In a small room behind the bar. It connects the bar area to the hotel Ethernet backbone."

"I'm thinking we should try to hack it. Is there anyway to get Andy in there?"

"Well, he belongs somewhere, I guess. But yeah, No one ever goes in that closet, I can sneak him in when no one's looking. Have him dressed up as a repairman in case anyone asks questions."

"Will do. Ok, see you at the Union."

"Catch you later."

Time: 5:00 PM

Phil joins Ben, Jim, Andy and Ryan who are already at the at the Union. They explain the situation to Andy.

Phil says, "Andy, you got any clothes you could use to pretend to be a network repairman?"

"Sure, from my summer job. I was an installer for comcrap."

"Good, you need to blend in."

"Whata'ya have in mind?"

"We're gonna try to hack Bader's laptop via the WiFi link."

"Hell, that's no problem."

"He uses a VPN."

"Again, not a problem."

"We can get you into the network closet behind the bar. When Bader comes down to supper, he'll connect through that node."

"Are you really sure he'll have his laptop?"

"Oh, yeah, he always does," says Phil. "And he's always on it."

Phil explains about the special router password for the bar area and Andy nods, smiling deviously. Then he explains his plan. They all grin and nod approvingly.

Finally, Jim says, "Ok, we better get going if we're gonna get set up by the time Bader goes to dinner. Andy, have you got what you need with you, tool-wise, that is?"

"You think there's anything missing from my traveling electrical engineering lab slash love van? You gotta be kidding!"

"Love van?" smirks Ryan.

"It could happen."

"Lets go, I'm getting nauseous," says Jim rising.

Phil says, "I gotta get going. When you guys get there, park out back near my car. Text me when you're there."

Time: 6:30 PM

Ryan, Ben and Andy drive in Andy's van to the Carrington and park in the employee lot next to Phil's car which is located behind some tall, decorative shrubs. They text Phil who scurries out. Just in time, Ryan slides open the van door and Phil hops in.

"Ok, Bader will be down in a few minutes, if he keeps to his pattern."

"So, Andy, you got everything?" asks Phil.

"Yep," says Andy pointing at his laptop bag.

"Good, lets get going."

"Ryan, you and Jim go in the lobby and wait a few minutes until I get Andy setup. Then come to the bar and sit at the stools at the far end. From there, you can watch both the floor and Bader's balcony," says Phil.

Andy pulls back the van's window curtain and peeks out to see if anyone is watching. The coast is clear. Andy and Phil head towards the rear service entrance.

A few minutes later Ryan and Jim walk to the front entrance and then wander around the pool area giving the place a good looking-over before heading to the bar.

Phil gives Andy a quick walking tour, pointing out the balconies above the huge glass covered central atrium. In the center is a large swimming pool together with several jet baths and hot tubs. Around the outside are tropical plants and trees arranged in small groves with bubbling waterfalls and tiny fairy lights in the branches. In these groves are tables, couches and chairs for dining or casual conversation. The Tiki themed bar area is near the center where the pool ends and the tropical rain forest begins.

Above are three levels of guest rooms facing the center with balconies overlooking the forest below. The priciest of these, the penthouse suites, are on the third level. Each of these has a private balcony with a sliding glass door that opens out onto the atrium. Entrance to these suites is from an inside corridor. On the lower two floors, however, the rooms have no balconies. They open onto a corridor with a railing that overlooks the atrium. Bader's room is one of the penthouse suites.

Returning to the bar, Phil opens the inconspicuous door to the network closet. Once inside the cramped room, Andy flips on the light and looks around.

Outside, Phil ties on his apron just as Ryan and Jim arrive at the bar area. He nods towards some stools at the far end where they go and seat themselves. He walks over to take their order, pours a couple of drinks, places them on the bar then leans forward and whispers, "Bader's suite is the one near the middle on the top floor."

As he speaks, the sliding door to the balcony in question opens. Bader strides out and surveys the forested pool, restaurant, and bar area far below. Ryan gestures and Phil turns to look.

"Yep, that's him. He should be down here in a minute, if all goes according to schedule."

Bader turns and retreats back into his room, leaving the balcony door open. A few minutes later the elevator dings and he strolls out into the atrium where he selects a secluded table with a thicket of ficus trees behind him but in full view of the bar. He opens his brief case.

At once they see the laptop.

"Win!" whispers Ryan.

As the laptop powers up, Bader plugs in the external power brick to a wall socket just behind the table. Then he nods to Phil who reaches beneath the bar for a WiFi password card.

Circling around the bar, he walks over to Bader's table and, handing him the card, and politely asks, "What can I get you sir? The usual?"

"Right, scotch and soda and some peanuts."

"Yes sir, coming right up," says Phil as he heads back to the bar.

Phil pours the drink then goes behind the bar and scoops up a bowl of peanuts. He takes the drink and bowl on a tray back to Bader's table.

Bader looks up and says, "Ahh, thanks, that looks good."

He returns to the bar where Ryan has texted Andy that Bader has started his laptop.

Inside the closet, Andy has attached his own router in place of the hotel's. He connects it through his laptop to the hotel's Ethernet backbone. Ryan's text message appears on the screen. Now he carefully watches the network display graph. A moment later he intercepts Bader entering his WiFi password. Andy strikes.

His system authenticates Bader's laptop and begins capturing all it's signals. At first, nothing unusual, a few web queries about news, weather, the stock market, nothing encrypted.

Andy starts inserting driveby malware into the browser data stream. Soon he has his own software running on Bader's laptop.

Then Bader calls up his email service. Andy strikes again, simulating the email service. By now Andy's software has replaced Bader's laptop's security authentication certificates. Andy can now use a standard *man-in-the-middle* hack.

Bader thinks he's talking to his email service but he's really talking to Andy's laptop which, in turn, is relaying the messages to the email server but copying each of them as well. Andy has now captured Bader's email password which, if Bader is like most people, is probably the same password he uses on many other services.

Next Andy initiates a port scan on Bader's laptop looking for any running services that are listening to the Internet. He finds many and several are easy hacks. Jackpot: unpatched OpenSSL: heartbleed! Yeah! He injects more malware.

Then the gold mine! Bader initiates the VPN circuit, his encrypted virtual private network. Again, relying on hacked security certificates, Andy captures the logon data.

Bader starts his decryption software which opens the laptop's encrypted file system. Andy is running a keyboard logger which promptly records Bader's password. Bader is totally pwned.

The encrypted file system is actually a large file on the laptop within which are many hidden files. Andy initiates transfer of the entire encrypted file collection from Bader's laptop to his. It's big and it will take some time. He texts Jim and tells them it may take a while so keep Bader happy and stationary.

Jim and Ryan order another round of drinks and watch Bader type away, oblivious that his life, by now, is an open book.

The elevator dings. Out walks Mark. A paranoid by nature, he repeatedly looks around as if he expects to be attacked. He walks over to Bader's table. Phil grins and texts Andy. Andy turns on Bader's camera and microphone. Double pwned, total pwnage!

Andy sends the audio from Bader's laptop to his phone and conference calls Jim, Ryan and Phil.

Mark slips into the chair that he's moved next to Bader's. Instinctively, his eyes continue to nervously dart around the room looking for threats, oblivious to the laptop which is now a mortal enemy. Bader signals to Phil for a round of scotches. Phil puts down his phone, gets the drinks, a wicker basket of pretzels, peanuts and chips and makes his delivery.

After Phill returns to the bar, Bader, smiling blandly moves his hand over his mouth and asks, "How are we doing? Are we all ready to pull this off?"

In a low voice, Mark, also with his hand over his mouth, says, "I just talked with Washington and everything's go. The weapons, the ammo, the agents they've secretly moved into the rebel states, all are in place and ready."

"I guess all those constitutional types who wondered why we were buying bullets by the billion will soon get their answer?" chuckles Bader as he takes another mouthful of scotch. "DeWitt wants this done fast, no survivors."

"So, what set her off? Why now?"

"She had no choice. Either move now or it was all over. As long as the Convention was split, there was still time. But when they finally came to an agreement with the confederationalists and finished their constitution, no more time. Now they're ready to ratify it. We can't afford anymore delays. We've ran out of options. Once they ratify it, DeWitt is toast. The military, what's left of it, the civil service, the courts, even the fing Post Office will desert her. She can't allow that."

"But couldn't she just run to be president of the new government?"

"Yeah, she's real popular. Like that will happen."

"She won before?"

"The results were rigged. The new constitution makes it impossible for her big city political machine allies to fix the vote as they've did. If she runs under the new constitution, she loses. Her only alternatives are to strike now or secede with a rump country consisting of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Maryland, New Jersey, Delaware, the District of Columbia, the only places other than California, that still support her. And those places are all welfare basket cases. No, she needs the inland states to keep things afloat. Her states don't produce any food, industrial goods, raw materials. Just nutty left wing moonbats and, God knows, she has enough of them already. She knows that if she doesn't retain control of the inland states, it's all over."

"What about California? They support her."

"California is too far away. It would either be forced to go it on its own, become part of Mexico, or join the Free States. Or the state could split up and different parts go different ways."

"So, that's why she's going for broke?"

"Yep, that's about it. Strike while she can. Once the new constitution is approved, it's all over. She's already begun losing control over the military. Every day, it seems, another base defects."

"But she still has NSA, FBI, Homeland, DIA?"

"Yeah, but the days of running the country on blackmail, intimidation, bogus IRS audits and midnight battering ram raids are over. And, obviously, she's got no leverage over the convention crowd. They're not scared of a SWAT team in the middle of the night. Now they shoot back! Things have changed. We either act now or Munson and his crowd will be running the show and that means jail or worse for a lot of us."

"So, everything needs to go right, no fuck ups. But, if everything does go right, we cut their communications, decapitate their leadership, round up the rest and finish this convention crap, once and for all. It's risky but worth the risk, given the alternatives."

"Right. But I don't think it's that much of a risk. They have no idea what we're up to but I'm sure we know everything about them. They know nothing about our plans. When we act, they're toast. They haven't a clue what they were up against."

"Don't be so sure. I'm told they're using some new encryption tricks and NSA is worried. But we still need to act, regardless. This window won't last long."

Bader, now on his fourth scotch whines on, "The time has come to end this charade. What we need now is a government of leaders. Not this constitutional crap. The country's too big to be hamstrung by some ancient set of gentleman's rules. We've wasted too much time letting them have their say. Now we end it."

He gulps down the remainder of his glass and waves to Phil for a refill.

"How the hell did things get so out of control so fast?"

"We moved to quick. Too big a power grab. We tried to change things too fast. We should have been more patient. We woke the damned yokels up. And then, all the class, race and gender warfare trash talk just polarized the crap out of the country. It backfired. We ended up with a few miles of the coast and while the opposition ended up controlling the other 95% of the country. It seems that the fools had some backbone after all and some weren't as stupid as we thought. We didn't count on that. Anyway, this will be all over in a week." They talk a while longer and then, finally, Bader says, "It's getting late. I'm heading upstairs."

Bader powers down his laptop, packs it into it's case and staggers towards the elevator. Mark swills down the last of his drink, looks suspiciously around, then heads through the lobby out to his car.

Andy unplugs his equipment, slips out of his closet and joins Ryan, Phil and Jim and the bar. They simultaneously gasp, "Holy shit!"

After a few moments of stunned silence Jim asks Andy, "I'm guessing from the conversation we just heard that you got what you wanted?"

"Totally. The mother lode."

"What'ya got? What kind of files did you capture?"

"Crap! Email, memos, voice mail recordings, pictures, address books, cypher codes, you name it, what didn't I get? Holy shit! This is a big operation. There must be nearly six thousand emails in here and they go back a couple of years. They've been at this for a while. I need to start sorting through this stuff and see what I can find."

"Wait, he's getting a phone call."

"How do you know?"

"Oh, I hacked his cell phone too. He had it attached to the laptop to copy some picture files. So I went in and loaded a few apps of my own. Like *partyline*. Here, I'll put him on," says Andy proudly.

They hear a slightly cell phone distorted voice coming from Andy's laptop and listen intently.

"Calm down Mark, I can't hear you."

"Then shut the fuck up and listen, asshole. I said, someone was in your room."

"What? How do you know?"

"We installed some cameras, that's how."

The guys go "Huh?" and look anxiously at one another.

"When?"

"When you were with me at the bar."

"Oh, that's probably just housekeeping."

"Nope, this was some college kid and he went over the place pretty carefully."

"Did you get a picture of him?"

"No, he had on a hoodie and a Halloween mask. He knew what he was doing."

"Richard Nixon," says Bader. "I see the mask in the trash next to the door. Prints? I'm guessing no since there's a pair of latex gloves in the trash too."

"Right. We'll take things from here." says Mark as the phone clicks dead.

Phil blurts out, "Security cameras! They'll check the security cameras!"

"Not to worry. When I was in your closet I fixed the camera system too. They won't show anything. It will look like an electrical problem." comments Andy. "But maybe it's time we should get out'a here and now before Mark comes back? I'll drop you guys back at East Gym."

They agree and quickly exit leaving Phil to finish his shift.

Watching their huddle from the other end of the bar is a young guy with a gym bag out of which a small bit of a gray hoodie protrudes. He follows them back to campus.

Time: 8:30 PM

Back in town, Andy parks his van in a dingy parking lot behind a bar on College Street. One by one they cross over to campus and slip into East Gym through the shrub shrouded back entrance. Their hoodie tracker from the Carrington lurks in the shadows watching until he too makes his move into East Gym.

Breaking open a round of beer, they wait while Andy uploads a copy of Bader's decrypted files through an anonymizing proxy to a foreign cloud server using an account he opened under a fictitious name. Then he places the files into a hidden folder within another encrypted folder in case anyone captures his laptop. The outer folder is a decoy. Next he transfers the encrypted folder to the other guys' laptops and tells them the two passwords, one for the outer volume, one for the inner.

As they start their second round of beers, Andy begins a series of text analysis programs that will detect unusual word usage patterns, phrases and repeating concepts and index these using techniques he learned in an Information Storage and Retrieval class that he really enjoyed. These will take an hour or more to complete so they decide to head out and buy snacks and more beer.

While they're gone, their stalker with the hoodie, who has been lurking in the shadows of the attic rafters, makes his own copy of the files. He heard the passwords. He attaches a wireless mic, out of sight, topside on one of the ceiling beams next to one of the wireless routers Jim installed when he was an ITS employee. He plugs it into the power strip nearby and leaves only moments before the others return.

Time: 9:30 PM

By the time Ben and Phil arrive, Andy has started piecing together the full picture of the conspiracy.

"Well, that was fun," announces Phil as pulls off his tie and grabs a beer. He flops onto an old char, one leg over the arm.

"What happened," asks Ryan.

"About half the security people from Fort Truck were there asking questions about who was in Bader's room."

"What'd ya say?"

"I told them I knew nothing which, oddly, happens to be true, more or less."

"Did they buy it?"

"Maybe. Dunno, really. They didn't get anything from the management who were clueless, as usual."

"Did they get your cell phone?" asks Andy.

'No, why?"

"They could see your text messages and that may be a problem."

"Ahh, I see."

"So let me have all your phones so I can clear your text and call histories. In the future, minimize usage and don't text anything important. I'll also need to clean your laptops too."

"So, what did you learn? Did we get anything worthwhile?" asks Phil.

"A lot," says Jim. We're still piecing it together."

'So who's really behind this? It's not just Bader."

"Nah, it's all the moonbat true believers, the neo-fascist lefties and, ironically, the big money boys that have been financing DeWitt, running the media, the Hollywood moguls, currency speculators, that crowd."

"What's their plan"?

"Their plan is to kill Munson, coordinated attacks in Free State cities, send in the Homeland goons to arrest the Free State governors, seize Convention delegates. The lowfo sheeple will scream for DeWitt to save them. DeWitt the savior! She'll say it's all the work of radical convention confederationalist types plotting a coup. She'll shut down the Convention, declare martial law, suspend the constitution, and march in the Army to occupy the rebel states. Then she'll write her own constitution that pretty much cements her people into permanent power and have it ratified by her hand picked state governments. President for life, banana republic stuff."

"What about Congress?"

"Her opposition will be jailed on day one. It will be reorganized as an appointed National Legislature."

"What about TV, radio, the press? Will they support her?"

"Of course. The network news casts have been nothing but political porn for the past twenty years anyway. Their corporate bosses depend too much on the government to give any push back. Anyway, she's placed her people in all the important network power centers. Didn't you ever notice that the network news people are all former government employees? Dude, they had 'news' broadcasts in Germany in 1938 too. Once she revived the Espionage Act it's been illegal to criticize her. But, in the unlikely event she actually does have a problem with coverage, they've already got special teams ready to take control of network operation centers. NSA will take down wire service operations. Then all the

'news' feeds will originate with her people. She can control the main satellite news network uplinks so she can cut anything that gets out of line. FCC will issue emergency orders granting her access to make it all look legal. NSA has already set up mock news studios in their underground facility in Utah, just in case. They've even co-opted several reliable network news dupes to make everything look authentic. Any opposition will be gone in a minute, starting with a certain cable network and a few talk show hosts they've wanted to gun down for years."

"But people will organize and fight back once they find out what's happening."

"They won't find out and if they do, they won't be able to talk. NSA's already hacked the key Internet hubs and when the time comes, they'll take control of all main trunk fiber optic connections. NSA Central in Utah is ready to monitor and filter everything, total censorship. Anything they don't like will be blocked in an instant and the perps arrested. People will see only what DeWitt wants them to see."

"And the courts?"

"Suspended and replaced by specially empaneled *People's Courts* to handle the 'unprecedented' emergency."

"How about the local police? Won't they be a problem for her?"

"Nope. They're ready to roll. That's her fifth column, given all the money Washington dumped on them over the past 10 years. Tanks, armored personnel carriers, high powered weapons, body armor, special forces training at government bases and so on. They're all wannabe robocops now. She owns just about all of them. State police, city police, big and small. They're all pretty much paramilitary units now and run by her handpicked guys, biding their time, waiting for the word. They got themselves a regular corps of storm troopers out there, ready to follow orders, her orders, just so long as they get to play soldier and brutalize the population. Washington made a good investment there. It's a wonder no one realized what was happening. Local control? Ha! What idiots thought it was normal for local police to have armored tanks, high powered military ordinance, spy cams, and drones? To collect traffic tickets? Now they'll know. Pay off time. They won't know what hit to them!"

"So, they get power, then what?"

"They implement the moonbat dream. Draconian laws. No more free speech or, God forbid, gun rights, no political parties, no freedom of the press, nationalize large corporations, slash the military, end the carbon based energy economy, establish a 'green republic,' open borders, write a new constitution turning most of the power over to appointed agencies. Become a country governed by committees of benign overlords appointed by a super Senate of experts who, in turn, are appointed by the new president. Ya'know, just the neo-fascist basics," says Jim.

"So, in other words, the country will be run the same way college campuses have been run for years?"

"Yep."

"And this is their Reichstag Fire?"

"Well, yeah! And besides a few urban bombs, they were even toying with a plan for an environmental crisis. They were playing with the idea to make the Indian Point Nuke, about 45 miles north of New York City, go all Fukishima. Millions of people exposed, massive relocation, commerce disrupted, demonstrates the great need for a strong national executive. A crisis is a terrible thing to waste!"

"And, given her greenie-weenie policies, DeWitt to the rescue?"

"Yep. Salvation sister to the rescue. They were gonna say it was a bunch of tea party types who did it with the intent of blaming it on the radical enviros. They were even ready to produce some faked footage and a few dead bodies."

"How long have they been planning all this?" asks Ben.

"From what I can make out, quite a while," says Ryan.

"Who's in on it?" asks Phil.

"Well, the Indian Point gambit, only a small group but, overall, just about every major left wing, progressive, moonbat organization, politician, movie actor, feminist studies professor, juiceboxer media exec, academic stink tank and Wall Street banker in the country. They all want something done and most aren't too squeamish about details. I got lists of names. At the top, however, there are only about 25 real insiders who know everything, but they're the *crème de la crème* of the movement. The ultra-orthodox fundamentalist lefties."

"How did it start?"

"Well, the seeds seem to be back when Gore lost. It sent a bunch of them over the edge. They began to theorize that a country this size, in the modern age, couldn't be run as an eighteenth century republic with a constitution that permitted what they thought were wrong outcomes. A modern state, they figured, needed a centralized authority without meddling from a lot of yokels, archaic state governments, the Electoral College and messy popular elections. The modern world, they said, is too complicated to let ordinary sheeple have a say in how it's run. So, they set out to change the game."

"First, they tried Obama. Nice guy, inspiring speaker, worked well with a Teleprompter, did what he was told, a regular moonbat's moonbat, but an empty suit. But you know what happened. Their first big power grab, Obamacare, inflamed the public and gave rise to the tea party movement. Then his lame economic policies screwed the economy, then the money printing, the collapse of the dollar. The foreign policy debacles. Total disaster at the polls. They were nearly wiped out. If it weren't for the staggered six year terms in the Senate and the rigged Electoral College vote, they'd have lost everything."

"But Obama did make one important gain, from their point of view. He established the precedent that a president could rule without Congress, by decree, enforce only those laws or parts of laws he agreed with, ignore some, and re-write others. The last two years of his regime, it was all rule by decree. The courts were politicized and supine, the Congress was impotent." "To the neo-fascist progressives, the rejection by the public of Obamacare, their global warming hoax, print and spend economics, open borders, and crony capitalism was proof to them that you couldn't trust the people to understand what was good for them. They went crazy over gun control and campaign financing, radio talk show hosts and that cable network. It drove them nuts, totally paranoid. They became convinced that to accomplish anything, they needed complete and total control."

"So, using their billionaire boys club, they started the Progressive Party and bought their way into the media they didn't already control. Then the big time funding of candidates with secret contributions from shadowy interest groups, public employee unions, and phony PACs. They built up a network of Internet front groups and captive think tanks to grind out propaganda and orchestrate the army of true believers. There was also a big push and a lot of big time funding to get their candidates elected as secretaries of state, the people who supervise how the votes are counted. Ha! Remember when people used to complain about low voter turn out? Now, lots of precincts regularly have way more than 100% turnouts! Need I add, Progressive precincts?"

"That's how DeWitt sailed to her nomination, much of behind the scenes manipulation, undercover fund raising, illegal voting, vote fraud. She was going to be their ticket back to power."

"But the social chaos her people caused during Whitman's year as president came back to haunt them. Things were too far gone. The economy was in shambles. She didn't know what to do. And worse, the social chaos she started was taking place mostly in the areas she controlled and not in the rest of the country, the producing part of the country."

"The producers started going all Ayn Rand on her, refusing to play her game. Refusing to cooperate. Refusing to produce. The producers went on strike."

"That's when the secession movements started and then the state currencies. Then came the big bombshell, the libertarian push back, the Constitutional Convention."

"They didn't see that one coming. The Convention scares the shit out of them. They know they need to act quick or else. No second chance. So, next week they'll roll the dice, kill Munson and execute their coup. No more strategies, no more playing the game, just the iron fist."

"Is there no one we can go to blow the whistle on this?"

"Who? Not really, except to the people at FAXNEWS but from what I can tell from these files, everyone at FAX is under 24x7 surveillance and the NSA has the kill switch. If FAX starts broadcasting anything about this, their satellites go dead. And a lot of their people, too."

"Crap!"

"Well, it does sound bad, I'll grant you that," says Phil. "Your basic revolution thing but lets look on the positive side. Any chance this means I could unload my student loans?"

They glare at him.

"Just kidding."

"And if they get control, what then?"

"The usual. One party state. Governed by an oligarchy of moonbats. Like Central America, a small ruling oligarchy at the top and a massive oppressed, exploited underclass below. Southern California and Silicon Valley are pretty much that way now. The filthy rich rule the place and live in estates at the beach while the underclass live in squalid tracts and are their gardeners, pool boys, factory and ag workers."

"How will they do all this?"

"They want to replace capitalism with a 'shared' economic system, basically a socialized command and control economy a fair share scheme where the fat cats don't need to compete and are guaranteed their profits, then they close the churches, make Gaia Worship the state religion. The basic Peoples Republic stuff that worked so well in Cuba, Zimbabwe, and Venezuela."

"I don't think I like the sound of that. So, what are you doing now?"

"I'm indexing the whole collection, doing a statistical analysis on each document. From there I can do some document clustering, phrase analysis, topic identification. In a few hours I should have a full map of all their people, who talked to whom, clustered on what topics they spoke about and a full hierarchical organizational breakdown," says Andy.

"In the meantime, we need to get Andy's clothes and other stuff from the van, he's moving in here. We should also set up a communication system that can't be hacked and alternative drop points we can hide out or meet at if this place is discovered," says Jim.

"Yeah, and make sure no one can find out what we know," says Ryan. "We don't want get caught ourselves."

"I'm working on that," says Andy. "Give me your phones again. I'm gonna install an app that will make it possible for us to text one another in a very encrypted mode. I'll give each of you a separate key that I can disable if one of you becomes compromised. I've uploaded backup copies of the Bader database to several cloud platforms. That way, if one gets found, the others will still be there."

"What if you get caught?"

"I'm setting up a doomsday event. If my network of servers don't get my password signal for more than three days, they go all Wiki-leaky and start sending the whole collection to a bot network around the world that will fire hose the contents to news networks, newspapers, and just ordinary people. It will be a data storm the likes of which no one has ever seen, thousands of emails and voice recordings starting with the one we captured tonight."

"Say, Jim, you mentioned a lot of cables from Ft. Truck leading into the Dome. What kind of cables?"

"Some power cables and some fiber optic Ethernet."

"Any idea where the Ethernet terminates?"

"Yeah, in a network closet in the Dome."

"I think we should mosey over there and take a look. Got your keys?"

"Yep. I always have the keys."

"Let me get some things together and then we'll head over there."

"Next question. How much beer is there?" asks Ryan.

"Not much, while we head over to the Dome, you better make another run to the quicky mart. And get some food too," answers Jim.

Andy gathers some cables, tools and connectors into his laptop bag and then announces, "Ok, I'm ready."

As the others head for beer, Andy and Jim head for the Dome.

Time: 10:00 PM

It is a clear night and the campus is brightly lit as they walk towards the Dome. Many students are about, returning from late classes, the library, study sessions, the Union or, more likely, heading to the bars on the strip. One guy is sitting under a tree practicing guitar, some others are slacklining between two trees.

They cross the bridge over the main highway and pass Ft. Truck. They follow the bundles of cables which link the trucks to telephone and Internet sources inside the Dome. The bundle passes through a special hatch door built into the wall. The hatch's usual function is to provide access during football games or other events for broadcast trucks normally parked where Ft. Truck is located now.

Jim pulls out a key and quickly opens a door near the access hatch. Once inside the Dome, they are in one of the utility corridors surrounding the central field and seating area. They can hear a crew cleaning and readying the field for the Spring Home and Garden Show. This involves laying down a hard floor over the artificial turf, removal of the goal posts and installation of utilities to the area where the exhibits will be placed.

They follow the communications cables to the telcom closet whose door is propped open. Inside the closet, Jim flips on the light and they closely examine the cable connections.

Andy spots the main Ethernet fiber optic line which plugs into a special fiber optic router that, in turn, connects to the campus backbone. Wearing latex gloves, he pulls out a small box from his bag along with a plug in power adapter. He plugs the power adapter into a wall socket and attaches it to the small box. The then he connects a short strand of fiber optic cable which he plugs into an open port on the fiber router. Next he pulls the fiber going to Ft. Truck and attaches it to his own box. The lights on the router momentarily go dead but then resume blinking.

"Made it myself!" crows Andy.

"What is it?"

"It's monitoring all the signals passing down the fiber so I can see all the traffic." "How do you access it?"

"It has its own network address. I can access it from anywhere."

He pulls out his smart phone and makes a few swipes until a busy screen appears.

"See, that's a summary of what's going through it right now. Not much actually."

"Do you think they noticed the interruption?"

"Nope, wasn't long enough."

Jim says, "Lets go, I think we're done here."

They exit the Dome and walk back to East Gym and the replenished beer supply.

Thursday April 14, 2022

Time: 4:00 AM

Many hours and six-packs later, having gone through hundreds of emails filtered by Andy's computer programs, Jim says, "Ok, I'm going to bed. I've read so much email I'm seeing @ signs in the air."

"Any idea what we do now?"

"Maybe something will come to me. Andy and I will meet you tomorrow at eleven in the Union, after I get my cop ID."

The others quietly slip out and back to their apartment, crossing the deserted quiet campus, dark except for a few dorm room windows whose owners are pulling all-nighters. On College Street an empty beer can clatters as it rolls down the gutter. A few stragglers, mainly guys, stagger home.

Time: 11:00 AM

At the Union, Jim joins the group at a large round table and flashes his new security pass tethered on a lanyard around his neck.

"So, with this I can get just about anywhere on campus next week. Seems they trust me over in campus security and my name cleared the security check. And guess who the clearing security agent was?

"Your friend Mark?"

"The one and only! If he only knew!"

"Ha! Somehow, I don't believe he really cares about security."

Ryan, sitting next to Jim, tugs the lanyard for a closer look and says, "Not quite as good as getting your picture at a post office but close."

"Well Officer Jim, got any ideas on our little problem?" asks Ryan biting into a slab of pizza.

"Andy wants to try to collect more information. He and I went up on the roof of East Gym with some binoculars to get a look at Ft. Truck," says Jim.

"Yeah, and guess what we saw?" continues Andy, as he sits down with his tray. "Bader was there, going into one of the trucks, along with a couple of other guys. I would so love to be able to hear what was being said."

"Did he have his laptop?" offers Ryan.

"Yep," says Andy. "I want to get a mic over there attached to one of the trailer walls. A good sensitive mic should be able to hear what they say inside."

"You do know that's impossible," says Phil. "The place is totally guarded."

"Not from all sides," says Jim.

"How so?"

"Not from beneath."

"So, you tunnel under the dome and pop up under the main trailer?"

"Something like that."

"Ok, how?"

"When I was up on the roof I took a long look and noticed something I didn't see the other day."

"What?"

"The main campus steam tunnel runs right under them. They parked the trailers in a neat little row right above the frigging steam tunnel!"

"What steam tunnel?"

"The one that runs under the campus to all the buildings from the steam plant and heats this place all winter."

"Really? I didn't know that?"

"Yep, and all the main Internet fiber optic, phone lines, and power cables run through there as well."

"Cool!"

"And the trailer Andy wants to bug is right above one of the access covers."

"And I suppose you have a key to this steam tunnel?"

"Need you ask?"

"Thought so."

"When?"

"Now. Andy has a mic with a magnetic mount but duct tape might work if the magnet doesn't."

"What do we do?" asks Ryan gesturing at himself, Phil and Ben.

"Act as lookouts. Phil, you go up to the roof on East Gym. We left the binoculars there. Ryan and Ben, you be at either end of the lot. Once we're in place in the tunnel under the trailer, we'll text you. Tell us if anyone is out and about watching and if it's safe to make our move. I figure we need to do it around noon. That way

they'll probably be eating and the sun will be straight overhead. With all the white concrete and the white trailers, the glare should make the shadowed area beneath the trailers too dark for anyone to see us anyway. So, lets get into position, it's quarter after 11 and it'll take a while to get set up."

"I'm ready," says Ryan pushing the last of the pizza into his mouth.

The guys get up, bus their trays, then head off in different directions. Jim and Andy walk quickly towards Bander Hall, Phil slips into the back entrance of East Gym while Ryan and Ben head for the Dome.

Time: 11:30 AM

Inside Bander Hall Jim and Andy, after checking that the janitor isn't around, duck into the basement and quickly walk towards a bolted door at the end of a long, dingy, poorly lit corridor. Jim pulls out his keys and opens it. Inside, it's pitch black but Jim and Andy are prepared. They each pull out the LED flashlights they use during power brownouts. Jim closes and bolts the door behind them. A few feet away is a metal ladder descending into the depths. They climb down it.

At the bottom, it's hot and musty. They're in the main steam tunnel, about 30 feet below the surface. All around them are pipes and cables. Jim finds the light switch and an array of bright ceiling mounted metal caged bulbs springs to life in a chain extending far into the distance. A few startled mice scurry out of sight.

"Are there any rats down here?"

"Nah, the alligators eat'. Lets go."

"Crap, I hate tunnels," groans Andy as they quick walk through the domed passage.

"How will you know when we're there?"

"See those code numbers on the wall? That's how. The master map is on of the Facilities Administration web site. They're a coordinate system."

About ten minutes later Jim says, "Ok, we're almost... Wait, that's it," as he points to a code on the wall. Above them they can see tiny, pencil thin shafts of light piercing through a metal cover. A steel ladder is fixed to the wall leading up to it, about ten feet above the ceiling of the tunnel.

"We're not as deep over here as we were back at Bander. This part of the campus is a bit lower. They made the tunnels more or less flat so they can push equipment through. I'm texting Phil, you text Ben and Ryan."

A few minutes later Andy says, "All clear."

"Ditto from Phil. Here we go," says Jim as he starts up the ladder. Andy follows a moment later.

At the top, Jim carefully and quietly pulls a locking bolt and slowly raises the metal door. A beam of light descends into the shaft.

Jim whispers, "Bingo, we're right under them."

He very carefully and silently raises the metal door to the vertical position and

locks it place. Cautiously he climbs higher and looks around.

Beneath the trailer it is dark, but all around the sandy white concrete in the midday sun glares brilliantly. He crawls out. Andy climbs up and joins him under the trailer.

Stealthy, they crawl in opposite directions and, about one third from each end of the trailer, they affix Andy's microphones. While most of the trailer floor is wood, parts are steel, the magnets will work perfectly. Steel is a good conductor of sound.

Andy creeps back into the shaft and then down into the tunnel as Jim affixes a final microphone beneath the center of the trailer then slips back into the shaft. He closes the hatch above him and slides the bolt back in place.

"Where's the Ethernet?" Andy asks.

"Right here," says Jim pointing to a covered metal outlet cabinet. "They had these installed at all the entrance points since so much of the HVAC system now is computer controlled. The Facilities engineers all have laptops and can control just about any heating, ventilation or A/C system on campus with them but they need hardwired access down here. The campus wireless network doesn't reach this far."

Opening the outlet cabinet, Andy sees the RJ45 socket and a power strip. He pulls out a small device, plugs it into the power strip and connects a short Cat5 cable between it and the campus Ethernet port. He pauses until a small LED glows green.

"Working! This will grab the weak signals from the wireless mics and resend them over the network," he says.

As they turn to leave, Jim says, "No, this way. We'll go out through the dome. Just in case anyone spotted us back in Bander."

The dome exit is only a few hundred feet away. The door from the tunnel opens to a sub-basement. Jim turns out the lights in the tunnel, locks the door behind them and they climb the stairs to the main floor. From there, the leave via one of the many doors designed to accommodate large crowds.

Outside they wave to Ryan and Ben who join them. From about 100 yards away they survey the trailer. All is still. Andy pulls out a very rooted smart phone. He taps and drags at its screen.

"Everything's working fine, I'm getting data streams from all three. It's all being captured on a server."

"Can you hear anything?" asks Ryan.

Quickly attaching a Bluetooth ear piece and tapping the screen again he pauses, listens and says, "Wow, better than I thought! I can hear them talking as though I were in the room!"

"Are they saying anything important?"

"Nope, just a lot of crap."

"We better get lost. We don't want to seem too popular over here. I say we head back to the Union," says Jim.

"Good, I'm hungry," says Ryan.

"Didn't you just have a pizza?" asks Ben.

"Yeah, but that was a whole hour ago," says Ryan as they head down the wide walkway towards the main part of campus and back to the Union.

Friday, April 15, 2022

Time: 1:00 PM

Gathering in the Union for another lunch, the guys sit among the fast food debris, wrappers, cups, paper plates. Andy fiddles with his smart phone. Ryan is on his laptop, Ben and Phil are texting. Jim is leaning back and staring at the ceiling.

Ryan finally looks up and say, "Alright, guys. What'a we do now?"

Jim, still staring at the ceiling says, "Expose them."

"How?" asks Phil.

"Hold that thought, Mark's here," says Ben.

They look towards the main entrance. Mark and another agent are at the far end of the dining area.

"Quick, Phil, follow me. After the Carrington incident, we don't want him to see you with us, in case he gets any ideas," says Jim.

They dash out a nearby exit into the underground pedestrian corridor that connects to Langly Hall and, from there, into another underground corridor. A moment later, they emerge from the Physics Building and walk calmly across a small quad of buildings towards the bush shrouded back entrance to East Gym.

Back in Jim's loft, Andy begins looking over the logs on his computer. He flips through screens of text intently and then turns and says, "I think I got something." "What?"

Bader got an encrypted message with the time table and the final details. Now I know where the command center is."

"Where?"

"A farm, about half way between Mason City and the Illinois line. NSA has taken over the place. They're secretly sending in Apache helicopters. Here, I have a satellite map."

"How old is that picture?"

"A year or so."

"Can you get something current?"

"Maybe, I know a geo-mapping database site that might have something current. I'll check." A few minutes later he announces, "Yep, here's one. Taken in the last 12 hours."

They study the picture and see the area has several trucks poised near the farm house and a few satellite uplinks. Several large dark areas can be seen in the farm yard.

"Where are the copters?"

"Probably under camouflage nets, those darker areas. Let me work on this and see what I can piece together. I'll meet you guys back at the Union around 5."

"Ok, see you then," says Jim as he leaves for class.

Time: 5:00 PM

They gather back at the Union. Andy has his laptop. He plugs the power brick into a wall socket and turns it on.

"So what's the schedule?"

"Well, from the Bader intercept, and what I was able to extract from the other files, Munson gets to DSM then takes a helicopter at about 1:30 PM that lands out on the roof of the parking garage. They escort him across 23rd Street at about 2:45 PM which will blocked off from both ends. He enters Bander from the north side, up the elevator to the first floor and then a bit of prep time, makeup, cold drink, whatever. Then in the lobby, he does a meet and greet with President Alec and some locals. Then they walk out the main entrance and onto that platform they're building in front of same. There will be risers behind them. Munson and Alec will take chairs behind the podium and the other dignitaries will be seated in front of the platform with the rest of the crowd."

"Risers?"

"Yeah, full of the student prop people, who will be expected to look raptured by every word he says."

"Nice."

"Allec will make the introduction, Munson takes the podium, cue the networks, set for 3 pm. DeWitt is at a fund raising conference for moonbat political action groups in San Francisco along with her billionaire boys club who finance them."

"At 3:05 a bomb goes off under the podium killing Munson. It's all broadcast live on the networks and cable TV."

"Then bombs will go off in Kansas City, Saint Louis, Atlanta, Columbus, and other places. Main feeder power lines on the Midwestern ISOs are next, cell phone and land line communications are cut."

"In the confusion, DeWitt's Homeland goons strike and round up the convention delegates, governors, and so forth. The convention is decapitated."

"How does she get the Homeland people into the state capitals?"

"They're already there. Thousands of them. They're in hiding, waiting for the word."

"A 'shocked' DeWitt is informed within minutes that Munson is dead and that

there have been bombings across the country. About an hour later, at a quickly arranged press conference, she gives an 'impromptu' stem winder of a speech blaming the assassination on confederationalist radicals in the Convention movement and their tea party and the state rights supporters."

"She says that she's discovered that this is all part of a plot to take over the government through the Convention. She'll say she was working with Munson on a compromise. She'll say that Munson was going to expose the radicals in the convention and renounce them and, for this, he was assassinated by his own people. She'll claim to have proof that these same radicals were also ready to commit terrorist acts elsewhere and she'll describe the plan to sabotage Indian Point."

"She'll claim that the Convention movement has been subverted and that it's now a threat to the country. She'll declare marshal law, hit the Internet kill switch, and order a shutdown of all non-approved communications nationwide, saying that she's doing it to protect the country from a radical, anti-progressive coup."

"Then she'll say that, in the name of national security, she's dissolving the Convention and Congress, canceling the Fall elections, taking control of the rebel state governments and ordering a roundup of the opposition leadership."

"The military will be called out to enforce her decrees. She'll appoint a commission of national leaders, mainly her billionaire boy friends, as an emergency national cabinet to manage the government until the traitors can be fully identified. New elections will be held once the traitors have been dealt with and a new constitution written. A new People's Court will be established and the Supreme Court disbanded. All this is done by presidential decree, as usual."

"Wow!"

"Yeah, wow."

"So, who does Mark work for? Homeland?"

"No, he and his guys are Secret Service. They're undercover. They've infiltrated the Iowa State Police who are in charge of security for the speech. No one knows that they're really Feds."

"So Mark and his pals who took over my garret in Bander, they're not shooting Munson?"

"No, that's a backup plan."

"So, did the plan say where the Mark's Secret Service guys would be?"

"Yeah, the location of everyone is outlined. There'll be the two sniper nests, a couple more just inside Bander, in the lobby, and others milling around in the crowd, but they won't be very close to the stage, obviously. There'll be the usual collection of other state and local cops. More SS agents at the entrances to the cordoned off area and some on the north side of Bander. Oh, yeah, an ambulance will be standing by on 23rd Street."

"How many prop people?"

"Not many, about 100. Just enough to create a TV illusion."

"Who are they?"

"Students, mainly. Expendable as far as DeWitt is concerned."

"How's the bomb getting planted?"

"Mark's guys will control the stage area. They can do it anytime they want but it doesn't say. Most likely, the morning of the event is my guess."

From across the sea of tables a young guy in a hoodie slouches, pretending to fiddle with his phone but, in fact, is photographing the meeting at Jim's table. His phone chirps with an incoming call. He answers it, and, after listening for a few seconds, says, "Yep, you got it, right away."

Hitting end, he turns off the phone, slides it into his pocket, closes his laptop, gets up, and walks over to Jim's table.

Leaning deep over the table, he says to them all, "You'all got a plan?"

Startled, they tilt their heads back a bit, and eye him very suspiciously. Then look to one another. He turns a chair backwards and sits astride it. Leaning forward, says in a very low voice, "You got a plan how to save Munson?"

A small wave of panic shivers through the guys as their eyes dart nervously at the new comer and one another.

He continues, "My name is Mike. Yes, I know everything. Your gym loft is wired and your computers are hacked. Don't worry, I'm not with the SS."

"You're the hoodie guy from Bader's room!" exclaims Andy.

"Bingo. Now lets go someplace where we can talk without being seen. I got a car out in the visitors lot," says Mike gesturing towards the exit nearest parking lot.

They look to one another and, shrugging, stand up, gather their things and follow him.

In the lot, he points to a large but dated SUV, they hop in, and he drives off. Turning west from campus, they drive out into the countryside and, eventually, down a dirt road towards a solitary farm house where they see another car.

He parks under a great maple tree, they alight, and, in single file, walk up to the house and take seats set in a semi-circle on a great veranda which faces south. A tall, lanky guy in his late 20s comes out of the house with a case of beer and a couple of bags of chips which he places on a table in the center of the circle. They avail themselves of the offerings.

"So, you know about us, who are you?" asks Jim.

"This is David."

"How did you find out about all this?"

"We work for the Convention. We got wind that something was brewing here so they sent us to check things out. We're in cyber security. We used to work with NSA but we quit working for the Dark Side some time ago and joined the Convention. The Convention sent us because they figured we'd blend in with the college crowd."

"And you found us how?"

"We had the Carrington under surveillance because of Bader. We detected your hack of the wireless router. I was at the bar when you were listening in on Bader." "How?"

"We hacked the router too."

"Oh."

"And I followed you back to campus and, while you were on a beer run, and I wired your loft."

"Oh? Now what?"

"Looks like we work together. We could use some help. You know the campus, have all the keys, and we have a plan to stick a wrench in this and make it boomerang."

"Keep talking."

"You know about the steam tunnels?" asks Mike.

"Yep."

"Do you know that one runs underneath where they're building the platform?" says David.

"Oh, yeah, that's the one that feeds steam into Bander Hall. I've been down there, stringing Ethernet cable. Oh, wait! Wait! I see. There's an entrance shaft under where the platform is being built!"

"Right. They plant the bomb, we take the bomb. They won't see us at all. Then we move it, or deactivate it, whatever, before it goes off."

"Ok, that's good."

"And, at the appointed time, we take over the TV feed, splice in a bomb detonation video, set off some stun grenades and smoke bombs, turn on some cell phone jammers, kill all fiber network communications leaving Ft Dodge, and grab Munson. After we get Munson away from danger, then we insert our video feed to the networks, one with Munson narrating and telling the whole story. He reveals the plot, shows pictures of the bomb that we've captured, your video of Mark and Bader, some audio we got of DeWitt talking about the Indian Head thing, plus anything else we can get hold of in the next few days."

"How do you hijack the TV feed?"

"It's a satellite uplink. We've hacked the satellite. It will take our feed, not theirs, when the time comes."

"So, Munson in on this?"

"Yes. He, the Convention and the Free States all know about it. He'll do the narrative for the video before he gets here."

"Why let him come at all if there's danger?"

"It's the only way to smoke out DeWitt. He knows the risks. And this time, the networks won't be able to suppress it like they usually do. Munson will have the full attention of the country. Munson believes it's worth the risk."

"What about the marshal law and Homeland and all?"

"The governors of the Free States know this is coming and they've quietly ordered National Guard units into key positions. They've also put together special state police units that aren't infiltrated by DeWitt's moles."

"When the time comes, they'll take out the DeWitt people and neutralize her fifth column. About the only SWAT team she'll have left is the one at the Library of Congress."

"How'd you get this information?"

"We hacked Homeland and been tracking their goons for the past few months. We know who and where the Homeland guys are. As soon as the false bomb report goes out from Ft. Dodge, the Homeland guys will be rounded up."

"The Army is another problem but it's spread too thin and, anyway, more and more units are defecting every day. We don't expect any trouble. They won't move."

"Air Force is another matter. Some bases will defect, others may not. The Air Force is the wild card."

"Why do a fake bomb explosion? Why not just deactivate the bomb and let Munson do his speech as planned?"

"We need for them to tip their hand and because they control security at the speech. We'd be sitting ducks. Remember the sniper's nests in Bander? But this way, they won't know what happened until it's over and we've gotten Munson out and crushed their coup attempt. If they don't think they have a shot at Munson, they won't move. We've got to play along and let them think their plans are working."

"So, how do you get Munson out of here? Once they see we've hijacked their plan, they'll be after Munson like a pack of wolves. He's probably safe as long as he's on TV, but not afterwards when they realize the bomb was a hoax. They've got Ft. Dodge surrounded. You have a plan?"

"You bet."

"What is it?"

"Tell'ya later. It's a secret right now. The fewer people that know, the better."

"Did you know we attached microphones under what we think is their main SS truck? There's an opening to the steam tunnels right under their trailer. We attached magnetic mount mics and an Internet connected receiver in the tunnel below."

"Yes. We tracked your lookouts. Do they work?"

"Uh-huh. We're recording everything going on in the trailer."

"Can you tell how they do their communications?"

"Through the Internet by way of the campus fiber optic connections. We hacked the fiber connection."

"What's in the data stream?"

"Some of it is high grade military encryption. Most is porn."

"How can we access it? I know some people who might have some luck cracking it," asks David.

Andy writes down an IP number, a URL and a password.

"Here, that's the IP number of my device and the instructions are in a PDF at that URL. Use that password to get in."

David says, "We want to try inserting a drone in the trailer. We only need a few seconds, but we will need a diversion. Something to get them to open the door, and get out of the trailer."

"What kind of drone? Aren't they kinda big? They might notice something the size of a small private plane."

"A small one. About the size of a dragonfly. And we'll need to put a transponder beneath the trailer to pickup and retransmit the drone's signal, it's not very powerful."

"I hope the trailer doesn't sink under the weight of all the crap we're hanging from it," jokes Jim.

"It's a risk we need to take. And we need to launch the drone very close to the target."

"Where'd you get the drone from?"

"You don't want to know."

"We can attach the transponder anytime you want. How close do you need to be for the launch?"

"Oh, about 50 feet."

"The trailer is nearer than that to the security fence."

"How about the diversion? Any ideas?"

"Hmmmmm, how about a marching band?"

"Sure, and a parade of clowns, chimps and elephants too?"

"Sorry, the faculty aren't available on short notice and they take too long to rehearse. But, I have a friend who's student manager of the band. I think I can get him to do it. The band practices in the parking lots out there and this week they're practicing for Munson's visit. I'll see if I can get him to march the band over near the trailer and do a performance. That should get their attention."

"How is the drone powered?"

"Solid oxide fuel cell."

"How long will they last?"

"On their own, up to a week, depending on how we use it. If we can get it perched on a transformer or power line, it can draw power from that."

"How about 4 PM tomorrow afternoon? My friend just said he can have the band there then and that's a time when there should be a lot of student traffic, there's a women's basketball game letting out around then."

"Did he ask why you wanted the band there?"

"I told him it was a publicity idea from University Relations and that there might be a TV network filming at the time. He bought it. No big deal really, just a few hundred yards from where they normally practice anyway."

"Good. This might work. Beats plan B."

"Which is?"

"Setting fire to a car or something."

"Oh, that would work too."

"Ok, we meet tomorrow at 3 at the Union. Now we better get you back to town."

Saturday, April 16, 2022

Time: 3:00 PM

While Jim runs through the tunnels on his way to place the drone transponder, David, Mike and Ryan park in one of the student lots near Ft. Truck with a full view of the security area. There they wait and watch. Ben and Phil go back to their apartment.

After a several minutes, Jim texts that the transponder is attached and connected into the university network. Mike reaches around to the back seat, takes out his laptop and powers up.

"The software on the laptop controls the drone and that's how I communicate with it. I'm logged onto the transponder. It will communicate my instructions to the drone. Looks like we're ready to roll. Cue the band!"

David and Ryan get out of the SUV, Mike stays in the SUV to control the drone. In his pocket, David is carrying the small cylinder containing the drone. They walk casually towards security area and take a seat on some benches near the Dome. In the distance, from a parking lot at the back side of the security area, they can hear the band practicing.

As the sound becomes noticeably louder, David removes the small, dark, tubular device from its container.

"Where are the wings?" asks Ryan.

"They pop out when I release it, says David.

"How will it know where to go?"

"Initially, it will rise up about 30 feet and wait for instructions. Then Mike will take control of it from the SUV."

"How will he know where to fly it?"

"Camera, he'll see what the drone sees as well as get data on altitude, speed and direction."

Time: 4:00 PM

A moment later, the full marching band, complete with cheerleaders, rounds the corner at the far end of the security area and fires up a rousing fight song. It attracts much attention as people within the fenced area migrate towards the show.

The door to Mark's trailer opens and he and another guy step out to see the commotion, leaving the door wide open behind them.

David tosses the drone high in the air. The wings immediately pop out. It does look like a dragonfly. It hovers waiting for instructions.

Mike, watching the video feed from the drone, quickly targets the open door to Mark's trailer. The drone, now about thirty feet above, darts in that direction.

Mark and his companion, their backs to the trailer, listen to the music as the drone slips silently inside unnoticed. Within, it hovers and does a slow 360 turn, scanning, recording, and transmitting everything it sees.

Mike, watching the feed, spots a high tubular fluorescent lamp fixture with a panoramic view of the room below. At his command, the drone delicately lands and positions itself above the ballast from whose magnetic emissions it will draw power. The wings retract. With the bright fluorescent tube beneath, the camouflaged drone becomes invisible. It enters a low power surveillance mode. Mike starts a server back in Kansas City to record the data stream.

A few minutes later, Mark and his co-worker return to the trailer, unaware they have an intruder lurking above.

Time: 5:00 PM

David, Mike, Jim and Ryan return to East Gym. Ben and Phil join them. Mike starts bringing up the images they captured from the trailer which they study carefully, looking for any revealing details.

David says, pointing at an area on the screen, "Hey, look! In the corner, that's the decryption box."

"How do you know?"

"We did mention we used to work with NSA, didn't we?"

"Oh, yeah. Right."

"Holy shit! Is that a wireless router?" shouts Mike. "Oh ... My ... God! It is. Those idiots have their decrypt box plugged into a wireless router. Look, they have cables coming out of it. They're freaking using it as a hub. I wonder if they know the wireless part is still running?"

"Is it?"

"Yeah, I just had the drone start scanning wireless frequencies. It's running. And it only uses WPA encryption! Holy shit! No problem hacking that!"

"How could they be so stupid?"

"Well, wait a minute. Look at the trailer walls, the ceiling. All wire mesh. They're isolated. A Faraday Cage. The wireless signal can't get out."

"So how is the drone signal getting out?"

"No mesh in the floor. Our transponder is beneath them. Not normally a threat vector. They never thought of that."

General nods and grunting agreement all around.

"So, can we hack into their data stream?"

"Yep. Doing it right now."

A moment later they see an NSA logo with a clock.

"That's the feed coming off the decrypt box via the drone!"

"Very nice!"

They adjourn to a local bar to eat and drink for a few hours while the drone quietly records the NSA feed and the view from above.

Time: 10:00 PM

Returning to Jim's loft, Mike brings up the recording of the NSA data feed. He quickly finds that there was a video conference of some kind that lasted about fifteen minutes. They gather around to watch.

The NSA logo dissolves and an unidentified man calls out names of sites that should be participating. Voices of unseen participants squawk their presence. Having determined that everyone is online, he tells them all to stand by.

The screen now shows the seal of the president. After a moment it dissolves to a tight shot of Hilary DeWitt seated at a desk. She begins:

"As you all know, we're reached a critical juncture. The collapse of the currency, the economy, and the international situation, all these gave rise to the convention movement and the effective secession of many inland states."

"At present, the federal government maintains the full allegiance of only Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Maryland, New Jersey, Delaware, the District of Columbia, and California. Tax collections have all but ended in most other parts of the country."

"The Constitution Party effectively controls the House and, if elections are held this Fall, they will have an unstoppable majority in the Senate as well. At that point, they will begin dismantling the progressive state we have all fought so long and hard to build."

"Things are rapidly spinning out of control and growing worse by the minute. We must act and we must act decisively. If we do not, the country will devolve further

into popular mob rule."

"We've learned that Munson intends to formally declare independence from Washington for the Free States of America at a speech next week. We have reason to believe that his people will launch attacks in several loyal large cites. We cannot and will not permit this. The traitors must be brought to task. The debate is over. If we are going to fundamentally change the country, we must act decisively and quickly."

"Consequently I, and the Central Committee of the Progressive Party, have decided that we must take stern and decisive measures to destroy these treasonous anti-party counter-progressive factional elements that have caused all this turmoil. "

"The decision has been made for a do-or-die battle to put an end to the Convention. This will lead to the opening of a new Progressive era, free from opposition. Our decision reflects the determined will of the party to annihilate our enemies."

"We have decided to take the following actions:

- 1. Terminate and disband the Constitutional Convention;
- 2. Eliminate the traitor Robert Munson and decapitate the Convention leadership;
- 3. Arrest and imprison the delegates;
- 4. Occupy and neutralize the power centers in the Free States;
- 5. Suspend the U.S. Constitution and declare marshal law;
- 6. Dissolve Congress, suspend the Fall elections, and incarcerate the congressional traitors;
- 7. Appoint a new, progressive, National Assembly to take replace Congress;
- 8. Disband the Supreme Court, vacate its recent acts, and appoint a Peoples Court in its place;
- 9. Nationalize all state militias and National Guard units."

"Our first target, obviously, is the traitor Munson. Once he and his co-conspirators are gone, the movement will be leaderless and powerless."

"Munson will be making a speech next Monday at a college in Iowa where we will effectively control security."

Smirking, she continues, "Sadly, things will not go well and he will be the victim of a bomb attack."

"After the event, we will say that we have evidence that it was the work of radical subversive elements that have taken over the Convention and, on that pretext, we will act. The mainstream media will back us up, I've already spoken their corporate offices, and they assure me of full support. Media outlets not in agreement will be silenced. I assume you know whom I mean."

"Once the Convention leadership is decapitated, we strike across the board. I've

ordered Homeland Security, NSA, FBI and other loyal agencies to begin secretly moving people and assets into the rebel states and to be ready. Also, the Joint Chiefs have been informed and, despite the defection of some disloyal units, they have taken steps to be ready to move on these centers of social treason."

"Finally, I want to thank you all for your support. It means a great deal to me and I'm sure our efforts at common sense reforms will be successful. It's time for unity! We need to be one people, one nation, with one leader! Thank you for your support."

The presidential seal reappears. Then the next figure to appear is the Secretary of Homeland Security who begins giving an overview of the operational details, communications protocols and a hierarchy of command.

"Well, isn't that interesting," says a stunned Mike to the others.

"I think we got our PSA insert?"

"Yes, this will make a nice little revelation," says David.

Sunday, April 17, 2022

Time: 10:00 AM

At the farm house on the outskirts of town David talks with his colleague Todd back at Convention headquarters in Kansas City by means of an encrypted satellite link. Todd confirms that the video files of DeWitt's conference call as well as the recording of Bader's meeting at the Carrington with Mark have been delivered to Munson who, in turn, has passed this new information along to the Free State governors. Munson has updated his narrative for the video to be broadcast after the bombing.

The governors have begun a final series of state police security sweeps to locate any nests of DeWitt's Homeland, NSA, DIA and SS agents in their states that they missed. The senior command structure of the state militias are on alert as well as select officials of local and state police. They are ready to pounce when DeWitt's *coup d'etat* begins.

They discuss the plan to get Munson out of Ft. Dodge and to the Free State of Nebraska. Clearly the roads and airport will be locked down but they have a very unorthodox plan. Todd says he's made all the arrangements but secrecy is paramount.

Monday, April 18, 2022

Time: 10:00 AM

Jim is in his East Gym loft watching video feeds while the others, on the roof and around Bander Hall are looking for any sign that the SS has planted the bomb. David and Mike are watching the feed coming from Mark's trailer.

At the site of the event, many delivery trucks come and go, many people are moving chairs, lamps, equipment, all the items needed for a major televised speech. Bunting is hung, flags are positioned, signs are placed, plants are set in decorative arrangements.

Jim spots Mark walking behind the platform from the camera feed from his former attic abode. The area is empty, no prying eyes. Mark has a rather large suitcase. He looks suspiciously around then disappears beneath the raised platform.

Another tiny security camera, installed late last night under the platform, shows Mark carefully counting off the steps from the side of the platform to the point directly beneath the podium. He lays the suitcase flat, opens it, examines it, closes it and leaves. He reappears on the attic cam as he emerges from under the platform.

Jim tweets an innocuous message. The others know that it means the bomb has been found. They quickly converge on the East Gym loft. He shows them the video.

Jim and David duck down into the tunnels and, very quietly, emerge under the platform. There it is, a few feet away.

Ever so carefully they creep toward it. David examines it warily. Gingerly, he opens it. Inside, carefully packed, are many bars of high explosives and, on either end, dual radio controlled detonators. He takes a photo of it with his cell phone then closes the case and they retreat.

Back in the tunnel David says, "They'll make a final check on it, just before the speech. I spotted the activation switches. It's not armed yet. We need to leave things as they are for the moment."

They return to Jim's loft and tell the others who were watching on the security camera the details. From now until the event, someone will always be watching the suitcase.

Time: 1:30 PM

The security camera detects Mark making his final inspection. He once again opens the case and, with a tiny LED flashlight, examines the bomb then flips the two activation switches. Green lights on each detonator begin to flash. Satisfied, he shuts the case, looks furtively about, and leaves.

Moments later, the access door to the tunnel rises. David and Mike scurry out. While Mike plants the flash, stun and smoke grenades, David opens the case, flips off the activation switches, closes the case and hands the case down to Jim below. Retreating into the tunnel, the access door is quietly lowered and bolted.

After its contents are again photographed under better light, the case is hurriedly stored in a side tunnel near East Gym. The two videos of Mark with the suitcase, and the one of the suitcase and its contents, will be edited into the program that will be broadcast later.

Ben leaves and takes the flash drive with the images and videos to the farmhouse. There, beyond the reach of NSA surveillance, he spot beams the data by satellite to Kansas City where it will be edited into the final video. Afterwards, he returns to campus where he is scheduled to be one of the prop people on the risers.

Time: 2:45

While Andy and Mike wait in East Gym to act as lookouts, the others are waiting in a steam tunnel near the Bander Hall tunnel that leads beneath the stage. Andy and Mike are monitoring the Internet, the video feed, radio communications, watching the remote cameras and viewing the scene in the distance from the high windows atop East Gym. They will join the others as soon as the dignitaries begin walking onto the stage.

"Oh crap! Oh crap!" screams Andy.

"What?"

"They're onto us."

"How?"

"The fucking NSA is all over the place. Should'a seen that. They've been port scanning every computer and packet on the campus backbone. They must have detected us capturing the DeWitt video. Now they're hunting for us."

"How'd you find out?"

"I can see it in the network traffic."

"Do they know where we are?"

"No, I don't think so, but we better get out'a here. They might eventually trace the IP numbers we used."

"I thought we did a proxy?"

"We did but if they get hold of it, they might have been able to find our digital fingerprints. Ok, now it looks like all the outside Internet links are cut. They know something."

"Yeah, well Bader just got a text talking about a building by building search. They're in Physics right now. They'll be here next."

"Ok, we're out'a here. To the tunnel!"

They grab their few things, check for anything that might personally identify them, then scamper down the stairs three-at-a-time to the basement. As they reach the tunnel access door, they hear from the corridor above the banging echoes of someone forcing the large entrance doors at the other end of the building. Then the echoes of distant voices.

Andy and Mike tip toe up to the tunnel door and very slowly pull it open. Once inside, they close and latch it, very, very quietly.

As the run towards the Bander tunnel, about 50 yards from the East Gym door, Andy spots the bomb and says, "Wait a second."

He opens the case, reactivates the bomb, then runs with it a third of the way back towards the East Gym tunnel door.

"It's their's. They might want it back."

Turning the corner to the Bander tunnel, Andy flips out the lights to the East Gym

passage. They jog towards Bander where the others are waiting. Breathlessly they explain what has happened.

Time: 3:00 PM

University president Alec, several administrative flunkies, a few big donors and some local politicians proceed out from the palladian portico of Bander, up the short flight of stairs and take their places in front of the prop people on the platform where Munson will soon speak. The band plays patriotic music. The crowd numbers nearly ten thousand.

Among the prop people are Phil and Ben, ready to move when the time arrives.

Munson is the last to arrive on the dais. The crowd breaks into enthusiastic applause. The network commentators babble meaninglessly.

When the NSA guys check the basement, their LED flashlights reveal footprints in the floor dust, evidence of recent use. They call their backup and prepare for a co-ordinated sweep of the subterranean tunnel labyrinth.

First the provost takes the podium. A short, fat woman of well renowned incompetence from whom little is expected. She meets expectations. Happily her speech is brief. Next Alec rises and rambles on for a few minutes. Like most university presidents, he was chosen mainly for his ability to look like a university president. He is otherwise clueless. Finally, Munson is introduced. Phil and Ben unobtrusively insert earplugs.

The band breaks into a spirited tune, the crowd rises and cheers. Munson futilely raises his arms in an attempt for silence. Eventually, the applause peters out and his speech begins.

The NSA paramilitary unit enters the East Gym tunnel in force, assault weapons drawn.

Andy remotely switches on the powerful cell phone jammer which is perched high in the campus bell tower, not far from the scene of the speech. Its coverage radius is about one mile which includes Ft. Truck.

"President Alec, Provost Mullen, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. As you know, these past few months have been very difficult for us all. Our country is disintegrating and strife is everywhere."

Mark, in the trailer, watching the network TV feed going to the uplink, hits the button on the bomb detonation remote.

The bomb explodes. The NSA paramilitary unit in the tunnel is now but a red stain on the walls. A few delayed rounds sputter and severed body parts jerk. A few moments later, some grenades, their pins dislodged by the blast, time out and rearrange the debris.

As Andy hears the roar of massive explosions echoing through the tunnel chambers from far behind, he hits his own button and starts the pyrotechnic show under the platform. Explosions from flash, smoke and stun grenades burst convincingly into the TV pool coverage.

The TV video erupts in billows of smoke, an occasional indistinct blur of a person running, and screams from all sides. All appears to be chaos. A garbled voice over attempts to narrate the scene.

DeWitt, watching from California with her money barons is ecstatic. She jumps up and begins a little dance, squealing with joy. Her fat cats slap their thighs and applaud the overweight, aging hoofer's antics.

Finishing with a flourishing finger to the TV, she says, "At last, the convention is totally fucked!"

Network announcers, not actually at the scene, begin falling over one another to make up a story. They babble incoherently bouncing from one standard set of focus group tested, approved, talking points to another. Must have been the Tea Party. This is what happens when you don't have gun control. We need more state security. War on women. Income inequality. Global warming.

On stage and off, the smoke, flash and stun grenade detonations envelope the audience in a blinding fog. Panic is general.

Before anyone else can react, Phil and Ben grab Munson and swiftly lead him under the platform, where Jim, waiting, has opened the tunnel access door. Munson quickly descends the metal ladder to where Ryan is waiting. Phil and Ben quickly follow.

"Ok, where to?" Munson asks, shouting as his hearing is still affected by blasts.

Jim, likewise shouting, replies, "That way," as he closes and bolts the access panel above.

They all climb onto an electric service cart, basically a golf cart converted for tunnel maintenance. Jim, in the driver's seat, flips it on and they race through the subterranean network towards the steam plant.

"Where are we going?" says Asks Ryan.

"Omaha."

"How? They'll have all the roads blocked and the airport closed. Don't think the bus station would be much help."

"We're taking a train."

"And this is the subway to Omaha?"

"No, surface rail."

"Since when is there passenger service around here?"

"Since about 10 minutes from now."

Their electric cart whirs through the dimly lit tunnel. At several intersections they veer one way or another. The air grows perceptibly warmer as they near the steam plant.

Finally, skidding to a halt, Jim says, "We're here," pointing to the final door.

"And what now?" asks Ryan.

"This is where we get the train to Omaha."

"You want to explain that?"

"There's a spur of the main train line outside. It's used to deliver coal to the steam plant. There's a train there now waiting for us."

"And we're taking a coal train to Omaha?"

"Nope. Just the lead locomotive. It's all been arranged."

Time: 3:10 PM

Back in his trailer, Mark waits and watches the network feed, which, unknown to him, is now being controlled from Kansas City. The minutes tick by and he still sees nothing but smoke and confusion. He's desperate for word from his agents. They should have checked in by now. He tries calling them on his cell phone, no signal, now he knows something is wrong. What the fuck has happened?

Suddenly, one of his agents rips open the door of the trailer. Breathless, gasping, bending over, hands on knees, he screams, "It was a fake. Our bomb didn't go off. It was theirs. They staged it. Munson is gone."

"Gone? Gone where?"

"No idea. The place is pandemonium. The cell phones don't work. Too much smoke to see anything. Somehow, they got him off stage. We don't know how or where. We've been all over it. He couldn't have gotten through the building, our guys were there. We're fucked."

Panicked, Mark tries to contact NSA for instructions. The Internet is out and still no cell phone signal. Nothing. He's blind. Another agent arrives running, this one was at the Bander Hall sniper nest.

He says. "We're searching now. Everywhere. We have no word on how Munson got away. We've totally blocked all the roads leading away from campus."

Mark turns and asks one of the agents at a console, "Any word from the security chopper?"

"None, but I do have radio contact. They say they were hovering about half a mile away when they saw the smoke and explosions. They're above the site right now."

"Ask if they saw and cars leaving, any way Munson could have gotten away."

"Negative, they didn't see any car movement at all. All the roads over there are blocked anyway."

"Any aircraft?"

"Negative."

"We need to shut down every possible way out of here."

All at once, all the cell phones ring, chirp, tinkle, buzz, sing and vibrate.

One agent, looking at the incoming stream of text messages, says, "They found a cell phone jammer and disabled it. It was on top of the bell tower."

"Start calling all agents and tell them what's happened. Tell them to put up road blocks and halt all out bound traffic. Call the local and state police and tell them the same. No one's getting out of here, no one. Get the rest of the choppers in the air and have them start searching for any vehicles trying to leave Ft. Dodge. Tell them to concentrate on the west and south side. They may be heading for Nebraska. Set up a search pattern for each crew. Tell Ed I'm going up with him and hold his chopper until I get there."

With that agent Mark grabs his satchel full of guns and ammo and dashes towards the parking lot where several SS security copters are preparing to take off.

Bowing, he ducks under the spinning rotor of one and into the cab giving a thumbs up signal. With that the engine thunders, the dark machine rises and veers to the west. Two others follow to their assigned sectors.

Time: 3:20 PM

The controllers in Kansas City feed several minutes of the smoke and mayhem TV feed in order to give Munson time to start his escape as well as garnish the largest possible national audience. Within ten minutes, ninety percent of a shocked country is either watching or listening.

Desperate network executives in New York try to regain control of their TV signal in vain. The hacked satellites won't yield.

A desperate network executive, an ardent supporter of the progressive coup, in tears, calls her White House minder and tells him the bad news, "We've lost control of the airwaves. No one knows what to expect. Alert DeWitt. Something big is up."

"What the hell do you mean? I'm watching the coverage right now," replies DeWitt's commissioner from the Department of Broadcast News Regulation and Enforcement.

"It's not ours. Someone else has taken control of the network, all the networks. They've somehow hacked the satellite distribution systems. We have no control. We don't know where it's coming from but my best guess is Kansas City."

"Holy shit. Is there anyway to turn the whole thing off?"

"None."

"Oh crap! Now what?" says the commissioner as he drops the phone on its cradle and gapes at the TV screen.

The video has abruptly switched to the logo of the Constitutional Convention set against a backdrop of the skyline of Kansas City. A calm but authoritative voice announces an urgent, special message from Convention headquarters.

The controllers in Kansas City start the pre-recorded video to the satellites, the Internet, and the cable news services.

Munson introduces the video saying, "Today, there was an attempt to murder me and many others in Ft. Dodge. This was part of a plot to seize control of the

Convention states by Hillary DeWitt. You will now see and hear, with your own eyes and ears, proof that this plot originated and was authorized by Hillary DeWitt for the express purpose of taking dictatorial control of this country and eliminating all opposition, most particularly, the Constitutional Convention."

The entire country is watching, mesmerized by what they see. Tempers flare. Telephone switch boards at networks, TV stations, congressional offices erupt. DeWitt and her movement are about to be exposed for all to see.

Time: 3:45 PM

The electric carts squeal to a halt at the end of the warm and musty tunnel. Jim points towards a steel door.

"Is that the door to the steam plant?" asks Munson.

"Yes," answers Jim.

"Anyone likely there right now?"

"No, this area is out of the way. The main control rooms are on the other side of the building."

"Where's the train?"

"There's another door about twenty feet from here, it leads out to the tracks. That's the line they bring coal in on."

"We're no longer underground?"

"No, the back of the steam plant is below the grade. This tunnel connects at the lower level on the side where they bring the coal in. It's piled up outside and they use front loaders to bring and dump it onto conveyor belts for the boilers which are upstairs. They're bringing in a load in now."

"What's the plan?"

"We go to the lead locomotive. The engineer will be expecting us. Jim, unlock the door," says David.

"Yep," says Jim as he unlocks the door to the steam plant then carefully peeks in, just in case someone is there.

"The coast is clear. The door to the track is just over to the right."

They all file out, Jim leading the way. Opening the door that leads to the track, he looks around again. Likewise seeing no one, they exit through the door.

To their left is a long, long line of coal cars and to their right, three huge diesel locomotives. David points to the lead engine and they run for it.

The door to the lead locomotive's cab swings open and an engineer steps out waving. Gesturing, he points to the ladder at the rear of the diesel electric engine. The ladder leads up to a walkway along the side of the locomotive and ultimately to the cab. Another engineer steps out of the cab and heads the other way down the walkway at the end of which he hops onto the second locomotive. He waves back as he enters the second engine's cab.

Without warning, they hear a loud blast of air pressure being released followed by a clanking sound. The locomotive lurches a bit. The engineer directs them into the cab and says, "Take a seat, guys. We're uncoupled and on our own."

Munson sits in the chair next to the engineer and the others vie for the two remaining while the rest sit on the floor, backs against the walls.

In a shuddering, grinding rumble the diesel engines rattle to life, followed by billows of sooty black smoke that the wind disperses across the front and side windows.

"So, ya'wanna go to Omaha?" say the engineer loudly as he works several controls.

"That's the plan," replies David.

"You bet. Just got the orders on the computer from network operations in Omaha. *EMERGENCY DIRECTIVE... EXPECT SEVERAL PASSENGERS YOUR LOCATION APPROX 15:45 CDT... DEADHEAD WITH SAME ALL POSSIBLE SPEED OMAHA UNION STATION... EMERGENCY PRIORITY. DO NOT, REPEAT, NOT STOP.... ALL TRACK FT DODGE - OMAHA CLEARED....* You must have some fucking pull, guy! You've shut down the busiest rail junctions in this country."

With that, he flips a bank of switches and swings a lever all the way to the right.

Screeching wheels spin, steel on steel, and the locomotive, detached from the train, lurches forward.

"So, I guess we're goin'ta Omaha. Hang on guys."

Picking up speed, it swings around the long loop used by the coal trains to off load their contents before returning to the main line.

Coming to the end of the loop, the engine joins a track west. About two miles later, continuing to pick up speed, now about 40 miles an hour, it merges onto the primary east-west line.

All the signals ahead are green. The engineer flips more switches and the engine roars louder. The pace of the undercarriage clicking increases.

Shouting over the engines, David says, "How fast can you go?"

"Not sure, never tried!"

"How about the track? Its it ok for high speed?"

"Oh, yeah, it's new, made of that new steel. It'll take it. Nice, flat, straight and smooth. Pity we can't get anymore since that the progressives seized the steel plant."

The diesel engine is at full throttle. The roar slowly changes to a uniform thrumming. The track clacks away, faster each minute. The speedometer reads 50, rising.

Long, deafening blasts on the air horns and the Doppler rise and wane of passing clanging signal bells herald their clattering charge through the urban

grade crossings.

After a few minutes, they rumble beyond the last outskirts of Ft. Dodge and out onto the flat, endless prairie. The speedometer now reads 70, rising.

Unseen network controllers in Omaha instruct switching tracks ahead to slam into place and a cascade of westbound signal towers turn green. The engine rattles through one and veers left, southwest, on the Omaha line. The track before them is a straight line disappearing in the horizon. As the engine rushes across the land, they see little but plowed fields and an occasional farm house, barn and silo.

Now pushing 90 miles an hour, the engineer shouts, "We should be there in about an hour and a half."

"Good," says David turning to Munson, thumbs up.

Time: 4:00 PM

The radio in Mark's copter crackles and shrieks and a distorted, scratchy voice says, "We got a report of a locomotive seen leaving Ft. Dodge at high speed, deadheading west out of Ft. Dodge."

"Where is it now?"

"We're not sure exactly. We're trying to locate it following the train tracks. According to the map, this line passes north of Lake City and then straight onto Omaha. If it's them, they're probably heading for the Nebraska Free State."

"Roger that. Keep me posted. Let me know if you spot it," replies Mark.

He checks in with his agents on the ground and in the other copters. No other leads. No sign of them.

Marshal law is declared in Ft. Dodge as brutal house to house searches begin in the University area. Multiple SWAT teams with battering rams bash their way up one street and down the next. They ransack each hose and apartment with cunning efficiency, leaving a trail of debris in their wake. Being extra destructive always impresses the locals. But they find nothing.

Mark gets through to NSA via satellite radio and explains what's happened. NSA, in turn, contacts DeWitt and alerts the other agencies. The NSA Utah domestic spying headquarters goes into full DEFCON 5 mode as do the other agencies.

In San Francisco, DeWitt is, by now, in a state of total panic. She screams orders at underlings and demands answers that none of them have. Homeland security is flummoxed. They've lost contact with their prepositioned agents. No one is answering. The coup is collapsing and Munson is missing.

Munson's exposé is being transmitted to a shocked nation. DeWitt tries giving her preplanned speech to a small nervous TV pool but Munson's narrative has control of the airwaves, her press barons are now hedging their bets that she won't be around much longer. She declares marshal law and orders the Army and Air Force to full alert.

No one is listening. No one cares.

The Free State governors, having known that this was coming, were fully prepared. At noon they began quietly rounding up Homeland, NSA, SS and DIA goons while their National Guard troops fanned out and began occupying the federal buildings in major cities. Once disarmed and their phones confiscated, DeWitt's people are herded into sport stadiums pressed into service as temporary jails.

A few DeWitt loyalists in St. Louis, getting wind that their plot has been exposed, barricade themselves behind the thick stone walls of the old federal court house. They attempt to fight back but a few National Guard artillery rounds extinguish their brief resistance in a hail of crushed stone.

While a few military bases claim to remain loyal to DeWitt, most hoist the rebel Free State flag.

NSA resorts to form and furiously attempts to disrupt communications and to blackmail or bribe anyone they can contact. Chaos rules in Utah. Their efforts are useless. Senior agents begin discretely erasing the records of their most heinous crimes.

DeWitt knows she needs to get back to her power base in Washington and orders Air Force One to be prepared. She and her entourage run like rats from their \$10,000 a night luxury suite up to the hotel roof. There, a waiting Marine One helicopter is waiting to ferry them to Travis Air Force base.

As her copter rises, she cringes as she sees celebrations breaking out in the streets below. She's even lost the moonbat Peoples Republic of San Francisco!

Time: 4:15 PM

The radio in Mark's copter rasps, "We've found it. It must them. It's going nearly 100 MPH."

"Just a locomotive, nothing else?" replies Mark.

"Yep, just the locomotive, like the report said."

"Where are you now?"

"Just closing with it. We're about 3000 yards behind."

"Can you see anything in the cab?"

"We'll pull closer and try. Here are our GPS coordinates."

The pursuing copter co-pilot reads the GPS coordinates and as the pilot closes on the locomotive."

Mark barks, "We're on our way. Report what you see then try to stop it and I don't care how. All units, head for that locomotive."

Mark's copter tilts left, the rotor revs up, and the chase is on.

Time: 4:20 PM

From a distance, the lone yellow and red railroad locomotive seems to float across the prairie, past farm houses, brown tilled spring fields, silos, windmills and a few tractors planting for a corn crop that will be a 10 foot deep sea of green

in three months. Before them, the sun is hanging in the west in a cloudless sky.

David makes a phone call.

Ryan says, "Is that a good idea?"

In a loud voice in Ryan's ear, David says, "It's being routed so the real destination can't be determined and I'm using an anonymous, prepaid phone so no one knows whose it is. We buy these at DiscountMart and modify their operating systems. And, for God's sake, it's a flip phone. You don't think I normally use one of these, do you?"

"Ya' never can tell," says Ryan, grinning.

David, with his hand over one ear, struggles to hear the voice on the other end. Nodding and grunting he finally flips it shut and says, "Crap, Mark knows where we are. His helicopters are trying to catch up with us. They'll be here soon."

"How'd you find out?"

"I got guys monitoring radio traffic."

They begin to scan the sky behind them. Phil is the first to see the tiny black spec, in the distance, off to one side. It is closing. It's a lone copter, moving at very high speed.

Slowly it paces the locomotive, on the south side. They see the co-pilot seat peering at them through binoculars.

Slowly it passes and then picks up speed and flies off ahead. They watch it receding into the distance and then, a few miles away, it becomes obscured by a hill.

"What the hell was that?" Ryan asks. "Was that one of Mark's or just someone curious about a lone locomotive running at high speed?"

They shrug their shoulders and return to scanning the horizon to their rear.

Mark's radio squawks and he hears, "It's them, I saw Munson in the cab. We're going to try to stop them."

"Roger, we're on our way."

As the locomotive rounds a small hill, the engineer shouts, "Oh Shit!"

They all turn to look and, ahead, they see the copter has landed across a grade crossing, about a mile ahead.

"What now?" asks Munson.

"Brace yourselves. I couldn't stop this thing if I wanted to."

"What's gonna happen?"

"They're gonna need a new helicopter. That one's gonna be tinsel in a few seconds."

"What about the windshield?"

"Not a problem. It's designed to take a 24 pound cinder block at high speed.

Anyway, the impact will pulverize that toy."

The pilot and SS agent sit in the copter, rotor slowly turning, watching the train approach.

"It doesn't look like it's slowing down?"

"No, it doesn't. You think they see us?"

The engineer pulls the air horn cord giving the two long, one short, one long warning signal.

"I think they do. We better get the fuck outa here. Lift off."

"Can't, engine won't rev up fast enough. Jump."

With a few seconds to spare, they jump out and run terrified away from the impending impact.

In the locomotive all duck as it smashes into the copter at 100 miles an hour. The copter disintegrates into a million pieces. It's tank of kerosene ruptures and detonates in a massive, orange and black cyclone of a fireball that swirls behind the unstopped, undamaged but scorched, locomotive receding down the line.

Mark's agents, only about a hundred feet away, burst into terrified screams as the splashed burning kerosene fries their skin. They fall and roll to fight the flames as shards of metal begin to rain from the sky. A fragment of the falling rotor neatly severs the head of the pilot while a chunk of engine slams into the other, mashing his chest cavity. Only debris and burnt copses remain as the diesel continues to speed west.

Several miles east, Mark and his approaching formation see the distant explosion and initially are hopeful that it's the locomotive. But the radio and cell phone silence dampens their optimism. They press on.

The engineer chuckles, "Always wanted to do that. But the company frowns on it. Though, I did take out an old Studebaker once."

"Holy crap!" exclaims Mike as he and the others gape at the flames and column of sooty black smoke diminishing in the distance.

However, a moment later, far behind them, they spot three more approaching copters, just coming into sight.

"There's the rest of them. They'll be here in about a minute or two. They must be the other SS security choppers from campus."

David looks and says, "At least they're not military copters, just security."

They watch as the copters gradually converge, certain that a new road block is unlikely. They lose sight of them as the viewing angle be comes too oblique.

A few moments later, however, they hear the thumping of blades above. They are low.

"Anyway they can get on the roof?"

"Nah, not likely at this speed The radiator fans would blow them off anyway.

Then gunshots and metallic pings.

"Sounds like hand guns," says Ryan. "How thick is the steel roof?"

"Pretty thick," says the engineer. "I'm not worried."

Andy begins a video cast of their predicament through his cell phone. No need for radio silence now. He gives Munson a Bluetooth headset and Munson begins narrating what's happening.

The video stream is fed to FAXNEWS which transmits it live. Other cable and Internet sites pick it up as well. The commercial networks, Munson's speech now over, are back in control of their satellites. While normally loyal to their government masters, they can't ignore it. Moreover, they can smell a change in the wind.

David's phone chirps and he answers it. This time he looks very grim.

Holding the phone in one hand, the call still connected, he says to the others, "Todd says they're sending the Apache helicopters they were hiding near Mason City. They're on an intersecting course."

Turning to the engineer, "Where are we now?"

"Just passing Denison."

David turns back to the phone and says, "Denison."

Nodding several times, he says "Yep, Got it. Ok," then flips the phone closed.

"Todd says they're about a hundred miles behind us. It should take them about 20 minutes to reach us. They're armed to the teeth. DeWitt's gone nuts. Now that her cover's been blown she's not taking prisoners. Are we going as fast as possible?"

"I've got it wide open. We're doing a little more than a hundred."

Munson says, "If we can just make it to Omaha, we'll be ok. Nebraska is a Free State. DeWitt doesn't control much there."

"What about Offutt Air Force Base?"

"Well, that could be a problem."

David interjects, "From what Todd just told me on the phone, DeWitt ordered military units still loyal to her in the Free States to seize the local governments, politicians, and declare marshal law. Some units are obeying but most aren't. Where she's being obeyed, there are pitched battles going on with local Guard units. Todd's trying to figure out what's going on at Offutt. He says the governor is trying to get the base general to defect."

"How many minutes until Omaha?"

The engineer replies, "About 40, more or less."

Mark's copter pulls along side the locomotive and Mark tries shooting at the side windows of the cab but, at the speed they're going and the headwind, accurate aim difficult.

But now the engineer is seriously pissed off. He quickly reaches down into a compartment and pulls out a menacingly large flare gun. Sliding the side window open, he braces the gun on his left arm, aims and fires.

A flaming phosphorous jet rushes towards the copter. They witness Mark's momentary last look of terror, terminated when his copter promptly explodes in a massive, wind distorted, comet shaped ball of fire.

A second chopper, a few hundred feet behind, engulfed in the flame and debris, explodes as well. The third chopper veers upward and slows. The locomotive forges ahead.

"Nice shooting," says Munson.

"All in a days work."

Minutes pass as they search the horizon. The sole remaining copter stalks them, but at a prudent distance.

As they crane their necks, ominous black dots rise above the horizon to the east. The Apache's have arrived. They creep ever closer.

David says, "I don't think a flare gun is gonna help us now."

"Nope," says the engineer as he adjusts the diesel mix.

"I guess we done for," says Munson as they all stand watching the prowling Apaches edge ever nearer.

David's phone chirps. He answers it. A moment later he exults, "YES!" and flips it closed.

"We got company," as he points southwest.

Far in the distance they see fighter jets, on a supersonic course intersecting the Apaches.

"Offutt fing flipped! Those are Air Force jets. Say goodbye, NSA!"

They cheer in unison. The Apaches see the fighters and break formation. They fire a few air-to-air missiles but these miss their mark, the fighter jets have electronic counter measures against 'friendly' fire.

The fighters, on the other hand, return cannon fire and the Apaches explode, one by one, until all that remains are blackened stains, randomly littering the otherwise sunny, light tan prairie. Sooty pillars of smoke mark their final landings.

The jets make a low victory pass over the engine and roar back towards Omaha.

The entire battle is captured and uploaded in real time and seen by nearly the entire country.

A while later, speed now reduced as the threats have passed, rolling south, parallel with I29, the engineer shouts over the engine, "We'll be in Council Bluffs in a few minutes and I need to slow down a bit more 'cause there are a lot of curves. My board is showing all signals and switches are lined up. Seems they might be expecting us. Ya'think?"

In Washington, D.C., panicked bureaucrats, knowing their days are numbered, ransack their government offices of anything of value. Ramshackle processions of over laden SUVs, retreat to the gated Maryland and Virginia enclaves of the former government agency overlords.

Rioting quickly breaks out in Boston, New York, Washington and Philadelphia. Limousine liberals flee in fear of the underclass they once exploited and ruled.

Looters, intent on stealing copper wire, detonate bombs on high voltage transmission towers leading from Niagara to New York City. The resulting power instability cascades violently throughout the interconnected transmission networks of the east coast causing what few power stations are still running to trip off line. There is no electricity from Virginia to Maine. Water systems began to fail, food begins to spoil. Millions, the fat, drunk and stupid, without the opiate of state television, stir from their squalid tenements. The bread and circus machine is broken.

As fires break out all around Manhattan and the approaching night advising flight, the last of the progressive elite, in crowded caravans, abscond to rural retreats far beyond the city. The roadside is littered with abandoned luxury vehicles stalled for lack of fuel.

Time: 5:30

DeWitt is apoplectic. She watched the dog fight and the demise of her last chance to take Munson. Waiting in the military terminal with her flunkies, who are now quivering, she demands to know if Air Force One is ready yet. She's told that it will be in a few minutes.

Fuming, she sits by herself and plots. She will not let this stand.

Time: 6:00 PM

As the locomotive clanks through Council Bluffs at 40 miles per hour, thousands of people line the right of way cheering. Munson steps out of the cab onto the walkway running along the side of the engine and waves.

The diesel gradually turns west over the Missouri Bridge and, now down to 30 miles an hour, switches onto the local track to Union Station. The engine glides majestically to a halt at the center of the platform. Thousands more await including a brass band, television cameras, the governor of Nebraska, a National Guard honor guard smartly at attention along with the commanding general of Orfutt.

In faraway San Francisco, a frazzled and vengeful DeWitt watches Munson's triumphal arrival. Her billionaires are pale and jittery. They know the game is lost but DeWitt will have revenge at any price. Her backers are too cowardly to intervene. No one has the nerve to tell her that it's over.

A minor flunky slips into the conference room that she's taken over and, in a soft, oleaginous, effusive voice, announces that AF1 is ready. She tells the others to get on the plane while she stays behind with her Air Force aide, a woman she hand picked for the job.

"I hate this damned country. I want Omaha and Kansas City wiped off the map."

"We don't control Offutt anymore, sir, and any aircraft we send that way would probably not stand a chance against the forces at Offutt."

"We got missiles, nukes?"

"You want to nuke Omaha and Kansas City?"

"Yes. Do it. It's the only way. Munson must die and the Convention must end."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. Presidential authorization. Get the football."

"I can't do it!"

DeWitt calls a Secret Service guard from the next room and says, "Do it or Jimbo here will blow your fucking head off."

The agent pulls his SIG Sauer handgun and casually points it at the aide.

Shaken, the aide retrieves the so called *football*. After looking up the target codes, she carefully punches the numbers in, double checks, then enters her authorization code. Lights switch from green to amber and blink. A warning tone sounds followed by a recorded voice, "*Nuclear launch authorization protocol initiated*." The aide stands and gestures to DeWitt.

DeWitt positions herself behind the small computer screen and begins typing the presidential authorization code. She hits enter. A red light blinks rapidly and the voice says, "*Presidential authorization accepted. Awaiting launch command.*"

DeWitt simultaneously hits the two interlinked red launch buttons and waits. After a minute, the mechanical voice announces, "*Missile launch confirmed*."

In a silo, in a field, in a prairie, a computer activates a missile launch protocol. Alarms clang, lights flash. Doors lock shut.

Stunned launch control officers stare in disbelief at their screens and then at one another. The computers reconfirm the launch authorization.

They look at one another from opposite ends of a long underground, bomb proof control console, shake their heads and simultaneously turn their launch keys.

Two great, heavy steel blast doors slide open revealing buried missile silos. In the underground bunker, reinforced doors slam shut. Air horns blast. Lights flash. Sirens wail.

A mechanical voice does a ten second countdown as automatic sequences ready the missiles. At zero, ignition. Two slender rockets burst to life and begin their ascent, slowly at first, then faster and faster, enveloped in brilliant, billowing shrouds of flame and smoke.

DeWitt grabs her cape and says, "Ok, shut that off and lets get back to D.C."

They walk out of the conference room to two cars waiting to take them to an idling Air Force One.

At the first car, at attention, is the commanding general of the base. A marine

guard, holds the car door open. The general salutes as DeWitt flops in.

As DeWitt makes herself comfortable, the aide whispers to the general, of long acquaintance, "She just ordered Omaha and Kansas City nuked."

The general staggers a bit, his eyes bulge looking at his old friend, who nods slowly and grimly.

DeWitt's car drives off and as the second pulls ahead to take the general and the aide to the plane.

The general asks, "Did you?"

"No, of course not. There was a launch, but Omaha and Kansas City were not the targets."

The general, holding the door for the aide, says, "I have something I need to do."

As the aide's car pulls away, the general rushes back into the terminal building.

The aide arrives at Air Force One a few seconds after DeWitt. According to protocol, she discreetly waits while DeWitt lumbers up the stairs. Then she double steps up and Air Force One's doors finally are closed.

The staircase is driven away. The chocks are pulled from under the wheels, the engines start to rev up. The ground crew, waiving yellow electric torches, begins guiding the plane on a slow turn to the nearby taxiway.

Suddenly, shots explode from multiple directions. The front tires and several wing carriage tires burst. The plane drops to its wheel rims.

The pilot quickly kills the engines, inducing a cascade of whines as the turbines spin down. From all sides, squads of armed troops in open trucks arrive and take up positions around the plane, guns pointed at the bloated, disabled jet.

The stair ramp, attached to the back of a truck, is driven back up to the plane's door. A military aide inside the plane unbolts and swings open the wide door.

A detail of MPs jogs up the stairs, enters and, a few minutes later, a handcuffed DeWitt, screaming and cursing savagely, is unceremoniously frog marched down the stairs. Her fat billionaires, likewise cuffed, waddle not far behind.

The general walks up to her at the base of the stairs. Squirming and kicking under the restraints, she lets loose with a torrent of invective.

He orders her to be gagged. An MP quickly rips off a length of duct tape and slaps it across her face. Her eyes bulging, only grunts and muffled moans can now be heard.

"In the name of the Free States of America I place you under arrest for mass murder, treason, and crimes against humanity," the general announces in a loud voice.

"Take her away."

The MPs shove her and her retainers into a waiting military police wagon and they are quickly driven to the base stockade.

A few minutes later, in Utah, at the sprawling NSA headquarters, the jewel in DeWitt's crown of intimidation, bribery and spying, with its petabytes of ill gotten data, there is a sudden blinding flash.

No more NSA, just desert sand turned to glass. All the petabytes are now just metallic vapor.

DeWitt's aide, it appears, carelessly entered a different set of GPS codes than those for Omaha.

A few minutes later, the palatial presidential leadership bunker in the Maryland mountains likewise vaporizes.

Patriots Day, 2022

In emergency sessions state legislatures ratify the new constitution and Munson is elected interim President.