

The Dark Column

By Judah Benjamin

He

1.

It was a cool March and the coming of spring almost felt like hope. He exited his first floor apartment into the streets, hoping the mid-afternoon hour would have thinned out the herds of people that usually clogged up the streets to the point of suffocation. It was Sunday, there was no relief.

He walked around the alien peoples choking the boulevards. Their disgusting odors and foreign gibberish inundated his senses. All he could do to make it through was maintain a blank, uninviting expression on his face and keep a solid pace. He assured himself that the unpleasantness would be fleeting. The outing would not take him too far, and he should be back in the apartment shortly.

The only constant in the sea of fragmentation before him was the uniformity of the media message on all the encircling screens, blasting like police sirens.

The outrage of the day was the trial of Eric Greider, a member of The 14 Words, a notorious white nationalist terrorist group. Greider was alleged to be the mastermind of the recent assassination of U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Sarah Robinson and her family. The brutal killing was undoubtedly the most infamous attack by the terrorists to date.

The 14 Words had made a name for themselves by targeting the children of those it considered to be enemies of the white race. Their attacks were condemned by nearly everyone - including other white nationalists - for being completely indefensible and barbaric. Acting under the maxim "If you try to take away our future, we will take away yours," The 14 Words specifically targeted children, reasoning this was both a deterrent for disloyal parents and a

method to cleanse the next generation of traitors. The logical validity of the killings notwithstanding, no one outside the darkest corners of the internet even dared to consider defending them. They had no rival for sheer hatred: given or received.

But the outrage rippling throughout media screens today was not about the assassination of Ambassador Robinson and her family, that tragedy had already had its moment in the sun. This day's emotional theatrics were actually directed at the state, not the criminal. Greider had, as was typical for the rare members of The 14 Words that were somehow taken alive, happily agreed to plead guilty to murder charges that ensured his execution. But, in a move that seemed downright trollish, Greider only agreed to accept first-degree murder charges for the two children of Ambassador Robinson, not for the ambassador, her husband, or the members of her security detail that were also killed in the attack. For those crimes, Greider would only accept involuntary manslaughter.

For U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Michael Chance this seemed like a good deal. Chance had Greider on two first-degree murder charges, which would certainly lead to a death sentence. The other charges were just icing on the cake. A job well done. Or so Chance thought.

But rather than getting a pat on the back and laudatory headlines, Chance was literally being burned in effigy on college campuses for agreeing to the plea terms of a white terrorist. What precisely the problem was with the deal was never fully articulated. There was just a feeling that power had been perceptively lost by Greider getting what he claimed to want. That feeling was enough to set the mob ablaze

Chance was now the subject of internet memes, hashtag campaigns, and rolling denunciations in mainstream media opinion columns - all produced in short order to foment and monetize the rage at a prosecutor for daring to cut a plea

deal that spared the taxpayers a lengthy and costly trial. Eric Greider was going to be executed for his crimes, but that wasn't enough. Total victory, or nothing.

Seeing his career flash before his eyes, Chance was desperately scrambling to get out of his plea deal and apologizing for even having made it, apparently not understanding that by doing so he was simply prolonging his suffering and further damaging his future prospects. His feeble bumbling at a press conference earlier in the day in hopes of convincing social justice activists that he was sorry for whatever he had done wrong just proved to everyone that he was the kind of weak fool that would allow a terrorist to get the upper hand.

Chance decided to keep digging, and set up a media availability for the next day.

Home at last. He returned to the apartment with his sandwich and sat down to eat. The hum of the street became muffled as he put on his headphones and opened his laptop. He restarted the video he downloaded from the dark web.

The man on the screen looked directly at the camera and said "Become who you are."

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At work he zoned out as the customers droned on about their computer issues. He used to travel to make repairs, but now only had to listen to their petulant whining on the phone. Each call blended into the next, the same introductory script, and usually the same solution: restart the damn thing.

The only punctuation of the mindless grind was when he received a negative call evaluation. That had to be addressed by his supervisor, which was an authentically worthless exercise. He pretended to care, and she pretended to

care that he pretended to care.

Otherwise, the hours at work floated away and were sucked into a vortex, the swirling debris of which made up his terminally pathetic existence. This was all time he would never get back, and its loss enraged him to the point of exhaustion.

But now there was good news - rumored layoffs. He had accrued enough time on the job to qualify for unemployment benefits. Finally, a paid vacation.

He tried to convince himself that it was his shitty job that was the cause of his misery. Deep down he knew it wasn't. He knew his hatreds were not what was destroying him, but what sustained him. His hatreds nurtured him, and reminded him that he was still alive. He was grateful to be hateful. He was grateful to still feel anything. He concluded that he simply needed to put his rage to better use.

As the day waved goodbye, he packed up his things and left the call center floor. The evening shift entered and took their stations. The office machines continued to whirl. The stars above quietly degraded. The hand of death shyly caressed the purpling world.

He put his earbuds in and strolled down the unusually clean streets. Strong winds during the day had swept much of the garbage out of its usual places. Sadly, the human pollution remained firmly in place. The city was still filled with muds.

The route to his apartment included going past a drug corner that was run by what had to be some of the dumbest niggers on the planet. Addicts would give the dindu on the corner their money and, after looking around a brief moment, the dindu would reach into a bag less than a foot away from him on the ground,

then hand the vials to the junkie. All of this took place under a bright street light on one of the busiest streets you could find. Master criminals they were not. Fortunately for them, no one seemed to care.

He thought about calling the police, but what was the point? There would be a new crew out on the corner in a matter of days and, although they were clearly morons, the dindus there now never chimped out and beat or killed anyone. The next crew might be worse.

He came through the apartment door, shut and locked it behind him. He plopped down on his raggedy couch. Trying to shrug off the day, he put his head back and closed his eyes. He took in a deep breath counting to five seconds as he inhaled, then exhaled for seven seconds. He did the exercise five times, then opened his eyes.

The laptop rested under the couch, he pulled it out and placed it on the table in front of him. He pulled out his headphones under the couch pillow and plugged them into the laptop. On the screen remained the video he dared not download without encryption. In fact, he could not even find it without scouring the dark web.

All the major social media and video sharing networks had been purged of what the recent industry guidelines called "anti-social messages." The term *anti-social messages* was so broad and vague as to include essentially any communication that the corporations owning the networks and platforms disagreed with. Not surprisingly, while the purge started with "hate speech" and "conspiracy theories," it expanded to include any controversial dissenting opinion, until finally criticism of the corporations and their business practices was also categorized as *anti-social*. Communication online was now reduced to sports fandom, celebrity worship, and targeted harassment of those causing the daily outrage.

The guidelines were not technically government regulations, though they were fashioned in the aftermath of some blistering congressional hearings and subsequent bare knuckle backroom dealmaking in D.C. Like Hollywood's rating system, the anti-social guidelines were, in theory, a result of private industry taking responsibility for the content it distributed. And, since it was private action of private property, no one could complain the regime ushered in under the guidelines violated the First Amendment. Private censorship was never censorship no matter how many people it censored, or how totally.

He started the video. A man slowly walked in front of the camera. He stood alone in front of an all black background, but for a large red emblazoned "1776." The man was Nathan Herbert, still young looking in his 40s, clean cut, and lean. He was rumored to have played college football, and had maintained an athletic physique.

Herbert looked directly into the camera and said. "Become who you are."

Herbert smiled, and began to speak softly. "Right, OK, so who are you? You, dear brother, are lost in the wilderness. So lost you aren't even asking the right question. So... what is the right question? The right question is not who are you, the right question is who are *we*. So, who are we?"

He let the questions hang in the air for a moment before increasing the tempo. "The system wants to fool you into thinking you are just an individual - weak, alone, helpless. That you came from nowhere and nothing and that all you are is a collection of animal appetites. A pig with no name, no history, no future, and no cares beyond the next piece of shit you're going to stick your snout into and swallow. But brother... you are so much more than that. Because *we* are so much more than that."

Herbert raises his hands up on his sides, almost as if praying. "We are the sons

of greatness! We are the people of the lightning and the sun, and we have traveled soooo very far... *together*." He clasps his hands together.

Now backing off the aggressive posture, Herbert takes a more attentive pose. "What is a race? A race is just an extended family. A bond between the generations, a fellowship across time. Brother, you are not a man from nowhere. You are not a formless blob crapped down from the heavens to shit, fuck, die, and be forgotten. You... are the latest exquisite, vital branch on the evergrowing tree of life. The roots of which extend back through the ages, purposed to grant us a small amount of sacred time for us to struggle to beautify our world, and perfect our lives. To achieve greatness."

He points at the camera. "You are the child of destiny who carries with you all the glory and honor of your ancestors that struggled and made their way through this world, victorious." Herbert practically snarled the last line as he pumped his fist. Now, he fixes his posture to the point of almost standing at attention.

"*We*, are America. It is a country founded by great men of the white race, *for* great men of the white race. It was forged by the blood and will of a great people, the product of white pride and white genius. Without whites there would be no America, nor will there be one should we ever fall. This country is, by its very definition and existence, a white nation. That is America's heart, that is America's soul. Brother, America is our great monument."

Herbert wells up for the crescendo, smacking his hands for emphasis. "It is our creation, it is our inheritance, and it-belongs-to-us!"

The climax over, Herbert takes a relaxed pose, warmly smiling. "Brother, thank you for your time. We need you. Your family truly needs you in this fight. Our great republic is in tremendous danger, our people on the verge of annihilation.

Will you fight for us? Will you become who you are?"

The image of Herbert's stern face fades to black. The video is over.

He closed the laptop and leaned back on the couch. He had listened to the speech so many times he could recite it from memory. He closed his eyes, and sleep came without protest.

2.

The shifting blue lights inside the restaurant bounced off the tastelessly arranged glasses and mirrors kaleidoscopically. Some of the worst electronic music he had ever heard pulsed throughout the room as he struggled to piece together coherent images in the sapphire haze.

Having an in-person meeting of white nationalists in this city was always risky, but he was past caring. He was finally done with trolling raids on social media and spewing on the chans. It was time to be a man of action.

Near the end of the bar he saw a man wearing a white polo shirt. He walked up to him. "Hey." The man nodded and stared at him for a moment. "You here for the thing?"

"Yeah." He said, looking for anyone else who might be a fellow traveler and wondering how he would hear anyone in this gaudy dump.

The man in the polo shirt pointed across the street to the community center. "It's in the basement."

The community center was a welcome change from the restaurant if for no other reason than the lights were stable. He walked up to a wrinkled old white woman sitting behind the information desk who had to be in her 80s. "Is there an event in the basement?"

"Oh yes, the book club!" she said, so glad to be helpful. "You can take the elevator over there."

The basement meeting room was drab but clean. Roughly twenty people had shown up, including a few women and what had to be a thoroughly misguided

Asian man. Everyone looked to be under thirty or barely over it. There was no outward indication of anyone's politics, but for a couple of arguably fashy haircuts. No one seemed at all threatening or, more accurately, capable of being a threat. They looked like typical shlubby Americans engaging in the national pastime of sitting around and playing on their phones. You could be forgiven for mistaking the event for a Pokemon Go meetup.

He took a seat at the back of the room, still not completely sure he was in the right place. Maybe it really was a book club. The front of the room had a podium and a whiteboard on the wall behind it, with the chairs arranged to face the podium. Two men stood at the front of the room, both playing on their phones. One was fat and bearded, wearing large glasses. The other was thin, and was sporting a man bun. Both looked to be in their early 20s.

After what seemed like forever, the fat man in the front put his phone down and addressed the room. "OK, let's get started. First, for the newcomers, I'm Justin and this is Kyle. And we are here to talk about restoring free speech for white people."

He winced at hearing the statement, *this free speech bullshit again?* But from his vantage point he could see most of the people in the audience nodding in agreement. For the first time he also noticed a man in the back on the other side of the room, quietly observing.

"Many of us here have been banned from social media, just for speaking our mind. And those that haven't been, will be soon." Justin said. "We have to find ways to get our accounts back!"

The people began to clap. "Kyle was banned for saying 'white lives matter' and now he can not even market his organic vegetables online." A murmur of sympathy whooshed through the audience.

"And I..." Justin stammered. "I lost everything for liking a post that had the hashtag '#holohoax' in it. Which I didn't even see!" Kyle began rubbing Justin's shoulders.

Justin tried to regain his composure, but his voice betrayed his deep anguish. "It is hard to believe that the broken man standing before you today once had it all. A verified account, thousands of followers, and a thriving spirit crystal business." Justin broke into loud sobs and Kyle hugged him and pulled tissues out of his pocket.

"You're going to get it all back Justin!" one of the women yelled, which led to loud applause.

Kyle took over at the podium as Justin tried to stop blubbering. "We need everyone to tell those people who still have accounts to be our voice. United we stand, divided we fall."

"It's like the Fellowship of the Ring!" a man yelled out. "We have to unite against *our* Mordor."

"You mean Sauron." another man corrected. "Mordor is just the realm, Sauron is the actual bad guy."

"Bad guy?" a third man scoffed. "Sauron is a lot worse than just a *bad guy*".

"No." The other man countered. "Mordor is the political entity, Sauron is just its leader. In this context, we are uniting against a political entity that is censoring us. It's bigger than just one man."

"Sauron's not a *man*!" another man blurted out.

What a shitshow. All he could do was sit in the back and shake his head as the arguing continued. He never thought levels of autism this high were possible. What an amazing waste of his time.

As the group discussion further devolved into part online petition drive and part litigating which J.R.R Tolkien characters applied to the group, he quietly slipped out the door. The man on the other side of the room followed.

The street was uncomfortably cool, but anything was cooler than that room. He began briskly walking back to his apartment, not sure what he was going to do now that the only open white nationalists he could find in the city had proven to be retards.

"Hey." a voice from behind him got his attention. He turned around to see the man from the other side of the room. "I don't want to talk about Lord of the fucking Rings." He quickly replied.

"Good. Me either." The man said, extending his hand. "John."

He shook John's hand without slowing his pace. "Alright, John. What do you want then?"

"To become who I am." John said and looked him straight in the eye.

He stopped walking and looked John over. He was in his late 20s, barrel chested, with auburn hair and blue eyes. "Me too. In fact, that's what I thought tonight was about." he said.

"No. Those sperg fests are just where we set up our first meet. I'm surprised you lasted that long before hitting the door." John said, his accent betraying a hint of New England.

"Who is we?"

John smirked and put his hand on his shoulder. "We is us. Now, I don't have much time, are you in or not?"

"Yes" He shot back. He didn't exactly know what *in* was, but there were no other options. John nodded and they walked together in silence.

When they arrived at his apartment there were two men waiting there, both looked like amateur body builders, also in their early 20s. John motioned with his head towards the door, and he let them all in.

The two men immediately began searching the apartment. John saddled up next to him. "How many laptops do you have?"

"Just one."

"Let me see it." John said, as if it was all a matter of routine.

He pulled out his laptop and put it on the table in front of the couch and opened it. John sat down on the couch and motioned for him to sit down next to him. He heard a thud as one of the men was in his bedroom.

"Log in." John said.

He sat down and logged in to his laptop. John then slid the laptop over to him and began typing.

"I'm going to install monitoring software onto your laptop. We'll be able to see pretty much everything you do: websites, keystrokes, et cetera."

One of the other men began going through his kitchen, pulling open drawers and searching inside cabinets.

"If you delete the program - We're done. If we see anything we don't like when we monitor you - We're done." John looked at him. "You understand?"

He nodded. The two men walked into the center of the room. John looked at them. "Clean" one of the men said.

"OK." John said as he rose from the couch and extended his hand. "We'll be in touch." John shook his hand and then all three of the men walked out of the apartment and shut the door behind them.

He put the laptop away and looked over the ransacked apartment. Either he was being trolled at an epic level, or he had finally taken the first step towards action, towards becoming who he was. A twinge of excitement rippled through his body. The feeling was unfamiliar, a rising energy, a near giddiness.

The jolt reanimated parts of him that he thought were long dead, forever gone, extinct. Could life be fun? He exhaled, for what seemed like the first time in a long time. He was still alive, and now, suddenly, awake. And he wanted to stay that way.

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The sun crashed into his bedroom, and he opened his eyes. There had been a dream, but now it seemed miles away. He couldn't quite touch it, but he knew it was good. He used to hope for empty, dreamless sleep. A simple rest and pause from life was all he wanted. Better nothing than to swim with ugly memories.

Done with facing his demons, he faced himself in the mirror. He was nearly

thirty, but the sheen of youth remained. He could be mistaken for a much younger man, like an adult actor who plays a teenager in high school on a TV show. He looked over his image, noticing the asymmetries and imperfections, he took comfort in not having to defend anything beautiful.

He was never sad from being lonely, he was sad from being lonely around other people. He still wanted to be in his own company. He still found value in solitude, and even some fine measure of peace in the stillness of his own mind.

But those comforts would have to die, so someone new could be born.

The city was still wretched. Never change you diseased fuckpuddle. He took his usual route to work traversing the disparate mud people swarming the streets and crawling in the buildings. The dindu dealers hadn't made it to work yet, usually they were up at the crack of crack. Maybe someone finally called the cops.

The workday dragged on, but was not especially terrible. He found himself appreciating the foibles of the clients that called, provided they weren't raging pricks. He was in such a good mood that while he usually marshaled all his concentration to tune out his co-workers' trivial conversations, he decided to eavesdrop on the sleepwalkers.

The outrage of the day was now-*former* U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Michael Chance. The 14 Words terrorist Eric Greider had taken his trolling nuclear. Not only did Greider demand that the court respect the signed plea agreement - which the judge ruled in favor of doing - he filed misconduct charges against Chance. Greider claimed that Chance violated the American Bar Association's professional standards when he attempted to back out of the plea deal. It was likely going nowhere, but it rubbed salt in Chance's wounds, especially when the law professor pundits and former federal

prosecutors on cable news said Greider had a point.

Not that Chance was a prosecutor anymore anyway. He had been promptly shitcanned from on high after getting dressed down in court for his poor form, and for what the judge labeled "publicity-seeking behavior". Greider sat across the courtroom doing his best not to fall down laughing as Chance got torn a new asshole by his honor. He was going to death row with a smile on his face.

The judge also had a point. After his first disastrous press conference, Chance had organized no less than three additional press availabilities before the plea hearing. Each one was more humiliating than the last as the social justice mob smelled blood in the water and made increasingly outlandish demands.

By his final press conference, Chance was wearing a gender-neutral pantsuit, having everything he said repeated in Spanish, and apologizing for the phallic nature of the microphone. When Chance raised his hand to emphasize how truly sorry he was, a woman from the audience screamed that it was a microaggression. Chance dropped his hands to his sides. When Chance raised his voice to emphasize how sorry he was, he was told that being loud was also a microaggression. By the end of the press conference, Chance was practically crouching out of view behind the podium and inaudibly whispering his apologies to the public.

Matthew Chance's fall was a body blow to the conservative legal establishment. Graduating at the top of his class at Yale Law school, Chance had been celebrated as one of the most promising lawyers for the conservative movement. His appointment as U.S. attorney came after heavy lobbying from the Federalist Society, which saw a federal judgeship in Chance's future. Maybe even a seat on the Supreme Court someday.

Conservative media expended near-endless airtime, column inches, and internet

clickbait decrying the social justice activists for intimidating Chance. As usual, the righteous indignation at a specific incident speedily morphed into lofty lamentations and rending of garments on the state of American liberal democracy and its precious institutions.

White nationalists, on the other hand, found the pathetic display thoroughly hilarious and named the last press conference "the cuckening," complete with memes of a triumphant Eric Greider joining the crowd to laugh at Chance.

Despite his many humiliations, Chance was continuing to engage with the press and social justice warriors, which is how he kept becoming the outrage of the day. Whether Chance was genuinely trying to salvage his political career, or was hopelessly addicted to getting attention, no one knew.

Chance had decided to go on a "listening tour" after his firing, mostly to liberal arts colleges. During yesterday's stop on the listening tour at Middlefruit University, Chance was asked if he agreed a mural based on the founders of the university should be taken down because all the founders were white. Chance answered that it was a slippery slope and such logic would lead to taking murals down of all the founding fathers, like Thomas Jefferson. The students claimed simply mentioning Thomas Jefferson's name as a cis-gendered white man was an act of violence as well as sexual assault as Jefferson was also a rapist for having sex with a slave. Making positive comments of a known rapist was, under university rules, *psycho-sexual assault*. Three students had already been expelled that year for what was being nicknamed "brain rape."

Shortly after making the offending comment, Chance was sent running from campus pell mell thanks to black-clad anti-fascist activists. The internet had a field day, and video of the run was set to numerous forms of music with "#Chanceathon" trending.

After finding safe ground, Chance agreed to attend unconscious bias training in exchange for getting his briefcase and other personal items back from the students.

That such distant and completely irrelevant events were emotionally affecting people at a computer repair call center was a compelling testament to the powers of suggestion, and human stupidity. The sleepwalkers really had made themselves upset over the most nonsensical dreck imaginable. He went back to tuning them out, convinced he would lose IQ points if he kept listening.

The walk home was uneventful. The dindus were back on their corner slinging, and the street smelled like hot garbage.

3.

His stomach was tied in knots. It had been weeks since his first contact and he had obliged their every demand. Every day marched past him, with no sign of progress. He knew there was a process and that he was being monitored, or was he?

Maybe it was all a prank and they were all laughing at him for letting them into his apartment and giving them access to his computer. Maybe they were cybercriminals who just wanted to steal his credit card information. Maybe they were feds, and they just added him to a watchlist and moved on. Maybe, maybe, maybe. His life was now one big maybe.

He agonized, then found some pride. At least he tried. At least he took action. At least he reached for greatness, even if it was all a lie. When they buried his stinking corpse, there would be a rotting heart inside, but a true heart.

The rain had fluttered throughout the day but started in earnest on his walk in home, endlessly kissing his hands and face. The city was getting a much needed shower, candy wrappers and heroin vials floated towards the drains.

Outside his apartment stood a man in a dark raincoat. He tried to make out who it was but the intensity of the rain made it impossible.

"Can I help you?" he said as he approached the door.

The man turned, it was John. "Yeah, let me in."

They entered his apartment. "No umbrella?" John said as he took off his coat and looked for a place to lay it.

"I work close to here." he said, while drying himself off from a towel he grabbed from the bathroom. He offered the towel to John, who waved him off.

"So?" he said, looking at John for some indication of the situation. Then again, why come if he failed the monitoring.

"So, we don't think you're a fed or a sperg. But it wouldn't be extreme vetting without a few more tests."

"What are these tests for?"

John smirked and looked him dead in the eye. "You know what it's for. You know why you contacted us." John tilted his head, maintaining eye contact. "Don't you?"

He nodded. It had gone unsaid, but given what he saw, John had to be with White Lightning. They were the only white nationalist militants effectively organized. Based on the events so far, there was definitely an inner logic and a system at work.

Anyone could join The 14 Words in the sense that anyone could pick up a gun, shoot someone's kid, and say they did it to punish the parents for race treason. The 14 Words was completely decentralized, which meant it had difficulty organizing major operations beyond the small group level, but was correspondingly impossible to eradicate from a law enforcement perspective. There was no head to cut off, or really any organization of any kind, just separate terrorist cells and lone wolf killers operating independently. In theory, everyone could *join* The 14 Words tomorrow.

After one of The 14 Words terrorists released an ironic rap song to celebrate a killing, pundits began mockingly calling the group Vanilla Isis.

The White Lightning terrorist group, on the other hand, definitely had a command structure, including a communications arm that issued public statements to explain the reasons for the group's assassinations. White Lightning also attempted to avoid civilian casualties, though their definition of civilians only really meant people they weren't targeting. Few to none of their targets were military. They were not a uniformed army, but a group of different "strike teams" that performed hit and run attacks called "lightning strikes" throughout the country. They mostly hit public figures espousing anti-white views, and never touched their children.

"OK. What's the next test?"

John pulled a piece of paper out of his pocket and handed it to him. "Be there one week from today, 23:30 hours. Memorize it and destroy the paper."

He nodded again, and John walked to the door. John stopped before turning the knob, and faced him again. "This is usually the part where I tell someone this is their last chance to get out. That they can say forget it now, and we'll just fade away into the ether. No harm, no foul. You can go back to your bugman existence with no consequences. But with you, there's no point, right?"

He looked directly into John's eyes, nothing but solid adamantine determination radiating from his face. The ships of doubt would never sail, they had been burned long ago.

"Right." John chuckled and walked out the door.

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The night was sweltering. He began jogging towards the meeting spot. He was confident he was going to be on time, but suddenly got nervous that he would

be late and decided it was better to err on the side of caution and be early.

They were already waiting. John waved him over, he was flanked by the two brutes he had with him the first night they met. They were all wearing black.

John threw a large black hoodie at him. "Put this on, if it's too hot, take off your undershirt." John then surveyed what he was wearing and made a face expressing it was acceptable but not optimal. "Alright, you ready?"

He put the black hoodie on. "What's the plan?"

John smiled as he and the two brutes started walking away. He followed.

After ten minutes John stopped in an alley behind a group of shops. He pulled out two ski masks and handed one to him. The brutes brought their own.

He put on the ski mask. "Is this when you tell me the plan?"

John smirked. "You think war is free?" The brutes laughed. "Just follow along, you're a lookout tonight."

The four men walked to the backdoor of a furniture store. One of the brutes climbed on the side and spray painted the surveillance camera, the other began working on the backdoor with a lock-picking set.

He realized he was holding his breath. He felt his heart pumping hard in his chest. He tried to calm himself down: five seconds in, five seconds out.

"Good." John whispered to him. "Breathe with the diaphragm. Stimulate your vagus nerve."

He nodded, uncomfortable that his breath work was so obvious. Though he quickly suspected John's insight was the result of close study, rather than a passing observation. He had felt John's eyes on him since the jump. It was time to remember this was a test.

The brute on the door was failing, the lock-pick set was proving ineffective. He looked back at John, and shook his head.

"Time for plan B." John said.

The brute on the door nodded and the second brute pulled a crowbar that had been hidden in his pants.

"You sure the code is right?" the brute on the door said.

"We'll find out shortly." John said, motioning for him to proceed.

The brute jammed the crow bar inside the door and used all his considerable might to crack the door open. The alarm immediately sounded and John sprang into the room. The brutes held the door open.

He tried to listen for sirens and willed himself to ignore every quaking muscle in his body, which told him to run full throttle into the night as the alarm continued blaring.

The alarm suddenly stopped and he felt a wave of relief wash over him, then he remembered that meant they had to continue on.

"Everyone in!" John called out from inside the store. The brutes entered and he went in with them.

It was damp and hot inside the store, the owner must have been trying to save money by keeping the air conditioning off during off hours. The smell of cleaning equipment and furniture polish combined for a rancid odor. The only light inside was from the street at the front of the store.

One of the brutes tapped him on the shoulder and they all quietly walked to an even darker part of the store. A light suddenly hit his eyes, it was a flashlight, and John was holding it.

"We're going to work on the safe in the manager's office. You keep an eye out for any suspicious activity." John whispered. "If you see anything come get us."

He nodded and walked out to the back of the sales floor. His mind began obsessing over the possibilities of what could go wrong. What if the alarm only going off for a few seconds could trigger a police response? What if the manager came back to check on something? What about a random cop seeing the broken door and calling it in? He practiced his breathing.

As the minutes went by, he tried to convince himself that his fear was distorting his sense of time. But the longer he waited, the harder it was. There was no way it took this long to crack a safe. Every minute inside the store, was a minute closer to jail.

Fuck. Something has gone wrong. They should be done by now. Jesus fucking Christ! If they can't get it done fast enough, we should come back later. What if he sees the police at the front and he runs out the back and they are already there? Fuck! He practiced his breathing.

His nerves had eased somewhat, he now had an incredible need to piss. He needed to piss like he needed to breathe. He reasoned that it must have been a reaction to the adrenaline. He was trying to remember if you could get DNA

from urine, because he was about ready to go behind one of these beds and piss like a racehorse.

He held firm. It was curiously a relief to be focused so much on his need to piss, it helped distract him from the reality that he was potentially on the verge of going to jail where his white ass would be prime meat.

Lights!

Suddenly the bright likes of the store were on. What the fuck? He jumped behind one of the boxes.

He turned towards the managers office only to see John and the two brutes standing, masks off, out in the open by the light switch.

"What the fuck are you doing?" He whispered.

"Congratulations. You passed." John said, bowing with minor respect. The two brutes stood next to him, both with jagged smirks across their faces.

"What?"

He slowly stood up and took his mask off.

"The store belongs to a friend. We needed to make sure you could handle some stress." John said, as he motioned for him to follow him to the exit.

"I need to piss." He said, anger at the deception beginning to simmer.

"Bathroom is back there." John pointed towards the manager's office.

He entered the bathroom and shut the door. He finally exhaled. He breathed out fully and then took a ferocious piss. The emptying of his bladder combined with the dissipation of anxiety felt like a small glimpse at utopia. He flushed and went to wash his hands.

He looked at himself in the mirror, he wanted to be angrier, but the relief of not being in danger and the pride of knowing he passed the test diluted his sense of grievance.

Out in the alley, John and the brutes were laughing about something. He looked at the back door on his way out, not a scratch. He looked up at the surveillance camera.

"Yeah, it's a dummy camera. Pretty convincing, no?" John said with a smile.

He nodded and fantasized about beating John's face in with a baseball bat. "So, what now?"

"One more test. We'll be in touch. Keep the hoodie." John said, as he and the brutes walked down the alley away from him.

He watched them walk out of site and looked around, still somewhat dumbfounded. He understood the logic of it, and that it was something others likely went through, but still couldn't help but take the ruse personally.

No matter. He shoved the mask in his pocket, and jogged into the dark back to his apartment. The energy from the false-caper still coursing through him.

*

There was no reason not to slack off at work now. The fear of losing the job and

drowning underneath a sea of unpaid bills was gone. He wasn't going to be around much longer regardless. Just the idea of leaving such a soul-crushing job was exhilarating; no more brain dead customers, no more passive-aggressive call review meetings, and no more pointless pleasantries with co-workers. No more bullshit.

Wagecucking is gentle suffocation. Even a pig is disposed of with a swift bolt to the head before it becomes breakfast. He deserved that much at least. He resolved to leave his shit tier job no matter what came after his endless testing. If he couldn't fight for his people with White Lightning, he would rob goddamn banks. Anything but this.

Notwithstanding his new carefree attitude, he was emailed two call reviews with passing grades to his company account. Two more and he got some tchotchke, typically a company lapel pin. After a few more, one of the supervisors would buy him lunch. Oh, goody!

He really hated this place, and often hoped one of the other drones would blow a gasket and go on a shooting spree - provided it wasn't during his shift.

He had a list of suspects who he thought might do it. He assumed other people made similar lists and he was on it. Well, they weren't entirely wrong. He certainly didn't care about the sleepwalkers and their fake little lives, he just wasn't willing to trade his life for such a trivial deed as shooting worthless people in their sleep.

If you're gonna go, go big. The sleepwalkers don't even deserve a bullet, a dramatic beautiful death was for men. They deserved their gentle suffocation, to decay, and die pruny in their own excrement. How can you kill something that isn't really alive?

But today was no day to dwell on absurdities. A new Nathan Herbert lecture had been uploaded that morning, and once the day's drudgery ended, he could go home and enjoy it.

The better he felt about leaving, the more he dreaded staying another moment. He started having strange thoughts, like that he would suddenly die at his desk in a freak accident, an unsung loser. The sheer terror of this thought caused him to fumble an easy call and he went into an unauthorized break to regain his bearings. So much for that lapel pin.

As he painstakingly watched the last hour of his shift tick down, he relaxed, finally concluding that this was his last day. His resolve comforted him. He logged out of his system and punched his electronic time card for the last time. It was glorious.

The walk home was practically a triumph. He didn't walk so much as march; long and imperious strides. This was his time. All time was his time. The putrid garbage was sweet perfume, the muds and dindu dealers his adoring fans.

Reality sunk back in as he arrived at his apartment door. John never told him how long it would be before his final test. In the meantime, the bills would pile up. He never told anyone he was quitting, maybe he could work two weeks and then - no, fuck that! He was done. Going back on that now was madness, self-obliteration.

He sat down on his couch and pulled his laptop out from under the couch and put his headphones on. He was a free man, and he had earned his reward.

The video started and Herbert slowly walked into view, standing in front of the black banner with the red 1776 on it. He focused directly on the camera.

He suddenly raised his arms and looked up to the heavens. "The truth, shall set you free!"

Herbert returned focus to the camera. "We've all heard the words, what does it mean? What does freedom mean to you and I, brother? What is the truth?"

"George Orwell said 'In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.'" Herbert smiled. "Well, OK, brother, let's have a revolution then."

"The truth is, no society, no state, not America, not anywhere, can exist without a people! A whole people. A real people."

Herbert points at the camera. "There is no universal man. That is the lie. There is no one humanity. That is the lie. There is no one dream. That is the lie. And to be free we must tell the truth."

He slowly dropped his hand and re-focused on the camera. "What do America's enemies say? They say 'diversity is strength.' Talk about Orwellian, brother." Herbert laughs.

"Diversity is division. Diversity is disunity. Diversity... is death." he whispered raspily.

"What do these disgusting merchants want? What do these diseased peddlers crave? What are these traitors ultimately after? ... They want all of us to be the universal beige consumer. A mongrel with no name, no history, and no future beyond his next pleasure. A pig with no soul to just eat and eat, buy and buy. A fat retarded slave to consumption, a prisoner of artificial desire, who waddles in misery below, while *they* dance in their skyscrapers above... then fly their private jets to Davos to congratulate themselves on their charity. Pathetic."

Herbert mock spits.

"While they celebrate diversity, they deny difference. We're all just humans, they say. Brother, there is no greater lie in the world than *humanity*. Humanity has never existed and will never exist. Humanity is nothing but smoke and mirrors. A con game to confuse and exploit you."

Herbert starts laughing. "Oh, they can't stop talking about all the similarities between people, and all the lifeforms on the planet. They even say 'you know, humans and chimpanzees have 99% of the same DNA.'"

Herbert puts his hands up, as if stopping a car at an intersection. "Brother, do what they didn't do - turn on your brain. If humans and chimpanzees share 99% of the same DNA, then the so-called small differences between peoples are not irrelevant, they-are-vital!" Herbert said smacking his hands for emphasis.

"But, that's the point, brother. Our enemies don't want to apply logic, they don't want the truth. They want *you* to live in their lie. They want *you* to be a prop in their sick twisted play. They want *you* to sacrifice all that you are, all that your ancestors fought and died for you to be, just so you become a beige nothing in their whorehouse. Truly, pathetic."

Herbert looks off into the distance, then returns to camera, now somber. "We were meant to be so much more. When the first white men came to this country, to claim this damn country, to create this beautiful country... They said they knew the eyes of the world were upon them, and that they would be a city upon a hill. And they pledged that they would rejoice together, mourn together, labor together, and suffer together. That they would live as if parts of the same body."

"Brother, that great task still lies before us. We are parts of the same body, the same family, the same *race*. We must retake this land, for there is only slavery in

being ruled by foreigners. That is the truth, and accepting that truth... shall set us free." Herbert raised his hands again, and looked at the camera with a resolved expression. The screen faded to black.

He closed his laptop, and leaned back on the couch. He surveyed the crummy apartment with new open eyes. It was worse than he remembered. He closed his eyes and drifted to sleep, dreaming sweet dreams of war.

4.

Knock. Knock.

He got up from the couch and opened the door to see John and the two brutes standing outside in the dark. The brutes pushed passed him and began searching the apartment.

"One more time." John said as he sauntered into the room like he owned it, and motioned for him to sit on the couch.

He sat on the couch and John sat next to him. "Tomorrow night is going to be your final test. If you pass, you won't be coming back here."

"OK." he said, surmising if he failed he wasn't coming back either. It was unlikely that White Lightning let people just piss off once they knew people's faces and recruiting methods. So be it.

"You need to get everything in order during the day. Don't bring anything with you tomorrow night that doesn't fit in your pocket." John handed him a slip of paper listing the time and place of the meetup. "You know the drill, memorize it, then destroy it."

He nodded. "Is that it?"

John smiled at his impatience. "No. Now is when we talk."

He looked at John with raised eyebrows. They knew everything about him at this point; his background, his politics, even his porn habits. What was left to talk about?

The two brutes finished their search and stood before John who said thank you and motioned towards the door. The brutes left and quietly closed the door behind them.

John leaned in to face him. "You're one of the few I don't get any hesitation from. But that can be just as much of a problem when the time comes to make your final decision."

"Your point?" he said, losing the plot.

John angled his head again, surveying his entire face, probing for doubts and weaknesses. "You understand what is expected of you if you pass?"

"Yes." he said flatly, beginning to get annoyed.

"Doing one's duty is no easy thing sometimes. You're going to be asked to do things a normal man would beg and plead not to have to do. Things that will test you and your sense of yourself at the deepest level." John said it all with a dramatic flare that might have been exciting to someone else, but was totally wasted on him. What a bore.

He mock-angled his head back at John and looked him right in the eyes. "I understand."

John leaned back, retreating with his signature smirk. "OK. I'm convinced I'm not dealing with a normie. Let's begin. Do you know about the Spartans?"

"I guess, yes. Am I supposed to know much more than what was in that terrible movie?"

John laughed. "No. You aren't supposed to be an expert on ancient Greece. The

point is to understand what the Spartans were and what they believed. That's who we want. That's who you need to be. A warrior willing to do whatever it takes, and sacrifice all for his people."

He indicated that he understood. There was no doubt now, he was auditioning for White Lightning. Their rhetoric often invoked the Spartans and other ancient Greek peoples and concepts. While The 14 Words pressed the perils of a dystopian future of white genocide and replacement, White Lightning framed the conflict as defending Western civilization from barbarian invaders.

"Good." John said standing up. "Read about the Spartans tomorrow, because tomorrow night you become one."

John opened the door and looked back at him earnestly. "Or not. Spartan mothers told their sons, 'Return with your shield or on it.'" John left and shut the door hard behind him.

He sat alone in his apartment, unsure how to feel. His sunken world would soon be ending and he was glad, but the sudden Spartan talk threw him for a loop. This initiation better not be some gay shit. He was willing to do a lot to get into White Lightning, but buttfucking was out. Though he found it highly unlikely that was the part of Spartan culture he was supposed to focus on. White Lightning's communications often railed against *degenerate culture*. He was pretty sure buttfucking was included.

He downloaded the movie 300 and hoped to gain some insight. He was asleep within ten minutes.

*

Panic. He opened his eyes. The clarity of his thinking was always sharpest when

he first woke up, before his conscious thoughts began to weigh him down. But today, of all days, his neurons were firing at light speed before he woke. The sandman had brought unremitting fear. The thought was reverberating through every synapse; he was about to ruin his fucking life.

He laid back in bed, trying to catch his breath. Was he a fool? Was he crazy? Was he so unfeeling for the lives of others that he would destroy them solely for his own satisfaction?

He focused on his breathing.

He started laughing. The anxiety had overtaken him, but he was finished letting fear rule his life. He knew the moralizing panic was just a cloaked fear of change. His mind's defiance to his goals was the manifestation of the emotional unease at entering the unknown. Grow or die, bitch.

This was his time. This was his life. It was destined to end, he wanted to live a little before it did.

He soaked his face in the sink. The panic was gradually diminishing and he was determined to enjoy the day and his triumph over his own mediocre impulses. Nothing would thwart him in his quest for greatness, not even himself.

The articles on Sparta he read online were not exactly illuminating. It was more of what he already knew; a militaristic society, a code of honor and bravery, the 300 against the Persians, and so on. He thought maybe it meant he should anticipate sparse living arrangements. Either way, if there was some inside joke, he had no idea what it was.

The day was finally dying. He had gotten all his affairs in order; emptied his bank accounts, disposed of all his personal records, and overwrote his files

before smashing his hard drive. When he left tonight, there would be nothing left to show he had ever been there besides the piss-poor furniture.

He paced around the apartment waiting for the right hour, he knew the location already, it wasn't very far from work. He looked at his phone to confirm the time every ten seconds it seemed.

Good God, it was finally time to leave. He was still jittery, but now it was being refined into a purer excitement. Red energy was shooting through his body, his chest pounding. He practiced his breathing.

He turned out the light and shut the door. So long, shithouse. He pulled the hood up on his black hoodie and walked into the night, untethered to any earthly possessions.

*

John was waiting for him in the street. No brutes to be seen.

"Did you do the reading?" John asked with his usual smirk.

"You would know." he said, letting John know that he never forgot he was being monitored. He was happy for John and company to see the website he visited, and went to more depraved places than usual for their benefit.

John started walking and he followed. "The Spartans..." John stopped as a group of what looked like mud teenagers approached.

"Wow, you see those pics, so hot bro." John said, with convincing passion.

"Oh, for sure man. My new phone makes the pics so clear too!" he said, trying to

play the perfect city bugman.

After the group passed, John checked the street, and started again. "The Spartans had an elite unit, the Crypteia. They were trusted with the highest and most sacred tasks. And service in that unit was the launching pad for rank and success in Spartan society. Crypteia means *secret things*, and they operated in the shadows. It was through the Crypteia that Sparta survived and thrived."

They stopped in front of a ramshackle building that looked like it might have been a factory decades ago. He looked at John somewhat confused.

"Listen." John said, putting his hand on his shoulder. "Sparta's greatness required sacrifice, all greatness does. That meant choosing only the best to be warriors, and discarding the rest. It also meant tolerating a group of shit tier people as slaves to do the work necessary to maintain the resources that were needed to train the next generation. Those were the Helots, whom *I know* you read about."

He nodded along. Not sure what this history lesson was going but given John's change in demeanor it was definitely going somewhere.

John's grip on his shoulder strengthened almost to the point of pain. "To truly become a member of the Crypteia, a young Spartan had to go into the countryside at night and kill a Helot to prove himself worthy. He had to demonstrate that he had the courage and the will to serve his nation. Do you understand?"

"I think so." he said.

John led him into the building, it was pitch black at first, until he noticed a light in the distance of the old factory. John was walking straight towards it and he

followed.

The light was coming from behind a door and John stopped at it, knocking four distinct times. "I come for your arms." John said.

A voice behind the door yelled back "Molon labe!"

John opened the door and motioned for him to go through. He looked over at John, beginning to sweat, he told himself there was no turning back now or ever. He walked into the light.

Inside the room were the two brutes, holding a bound and gagged black man down on his knees. He realized it was one of the dindus from the drug corner. The dindu looked terrified and had obviously taken a beating beforehand.

Out of nowhere, John came up behind him. "This is your final test." John handed him a pistol. It looked like a 9mm, but he was having trouble concentrating on it. He kept looking at the dindu who was drenched in sweat and trying to speak through his muzzle.

"You see this drug pusher everyday on your way to work, don't you? Now is the time to cleanse the countryside, Spartan. If you want to join us, you need to slay this Helot." John whispered.

The two brutes looked at him with no discernible expression. He looked down at the pistol. He wanted to be anywhere but here. No, fuck that. He worked to get here, this is exactly where he was meant to be.

"What are you waiting for?" John said, no longer whispering. "Kill the nigger!"

He couldn't control his breath, his body flooded with a sickening pulsating

nausea. He couldn't feel his hands or legs and his chest tightened like a vice.

He just kept telling himself, this was his moment, this was time, this was all there was, this was all there would ever be. If he failed, he was a failure. It was now or never.

"Fuck it!" he yelled.

He pointed the pistol at the dindu's head and pulled the trigger.

Click.

... Nothing. Nothing happened. He stared at the pistol in total shock.

The brutes began laughing and one put a plastic bag over the dindu's head and began strangling him.

He turned angrily to John. "What-the-fuck?" he said through clenched teeth.

John looked back at him, clearly pleased. "You passed."

He looked at John and gripped the pistol with rage, seriously considering pistol whipping the smug cocksucker.

John smiled. "Relax. Did you really think I was going to give someone unproven a loaded gun? Savor the kill." He noticed John had his own gun and was motioning with it towards the dindu. He looked back over as the dindu stopped struggling and his body went limp.

John extended his hand. "Welcome to White Lightning." He took it, as the nausea and anxiety dissipated. John then took the empty gun from him.

The two brutes picked up the dead black body and carried it into another room. John put away his gun and picked up a gym bag and a trash bag from a corner in the back of the room.

John put the gym bag down and picked up the trash bag. "OK, first give me the keys to the apartment." He handed John the keys.

"Alright, now empty your pockets and anything that isn't cash goes in the trash bag." John said, spreading it open. He took the cash out of his wallet and dropped it in, then his phone, and then a handheld can of pepper spray.

"That's it." he said.

John then picked up the gym bag. "Inside here is cash, new IDs, a pre-programmed burner phone, a clean laptop, train tickets, and some instructions. Your ID says John Davis, but you are going to also choose a new name for everyone to refer to you as. Never ever use your given name, right?"

"Understood. So I'm John now too." he said.

John smirked. "Don't worry, I haven't been John that much longer. You leave on a train tonight, there's a change of clothes in the bag. Change at the train station and throw the old clothes out."

"Can I ask where I'm going?" he said.

"West." John gave a reassuring pat the arm. "Don't worry, they'll know what train you're on and what you look like. When you arrive at your destination, you'll be able to call them. The number is already in the phone."

"So, you're not going?" he said, almost disappointed.

"No. We just do recruitment and counter-intel. You're the one going to the big show." John said as the two brutes came out of the other room, both head to toe in plastic, covered in blood. Acknowledging him for the first time as a man, they each saluted.

"That's it. Time for you to get going, John. Good luck, Spartan. Remember, *with your shield, or on it.*" John gave an abrupt smile, which disappeared just as abruptly, and went back to work.

He stood for a moment, slightly overwhelmed, then he got control of himself.

"Bye, John." he said blandly, and walked back into the darkness.

5.

The train station was freezing. He had changed in the bathroom and put on some obnoxious sweats with a t-shirt underneath. His appearance was sure not to arouse suspicion: looking like a douchebag was typical for a late night train ride.

He killed time waiting for his train by reading a few newspapers. Matthew Chance was back in the news. After his failed listening tour, Chance was going on his so-called "apology tour," where he was going to lecture on white privilege and the dangers of the patriarchy. Chance was going to take personal responsibility for; the Native American genocide, slavery, rape culture, and the high suicide rate among transsexuals. There was little doubt among pretty much all observers that he was in for yet another round of public shaming when he, inevitably, offended someone.

It was taxing to try to decipher what precisely Chance was after with these moves. Especially, at this stage of the game. His legal career was definitely over. His political career appeared to be in a similarly pitiful condition. Pretty much everyone agreed that Chance was deplorable and not worthy of redemption. Nevertheless, he persisted.

Was this strategy? Was he experiencing some kind of mental breakdown? Did Chance really believe that through sheer force of will he could reverse all this reputational damage? Or, was raw attention always the point of the accolades and positions? Now he was getting it directly, without the mitigation or interruption of careerist concerns. An intravenous infusion of existential recognition. Though more and more people thought he was a piece of shit, people at least knew who Matthew Chance was.

He didn't know for sure why he was taking a train instead of flying to his

destination, but he surmised it must have been the lax security. When he got on his train, they simply checked his ticket, no question about ID. Though he was confident his IDs would pass. Whoever forged them had done a remarkable job.

On the train, he pulled out his laptop and got on the WiFi. The only program he had was a browser. He began a search for an appropriate new name. It had to be a war name. He tried to stay with the classical theme John had invoked with Sparta. He hit a dead end, and decided to look over his instructions: *When you arrive at your destination, call the number on the phone, and provide the name on your ID.* Not much to work with.

He was running on fumes at this point. The final test was so exhausting and stressful, his brain wouldn't even let him contemplate it. He decided to try and get some sleep, and hoped doing so would help him find an answer to the name conundrum.

Outside the window, he could see the train pulling away from the city. The city lights grew fainter, and he was happy to be watching that protruding tumor on the landscape fade away. He was amazed that he felt sleepy, and closed his eyes.

*

The train was flying down the tracks. He awoke and grabbed the sides of his seat thinking something might be wrong. But promptly deduced there was nothing wrong, when he looked at the other passengers going about their business placidly, and reasoned that the train must normally go this fast at certain intervals.

The sun was shining and the train was speeding past what looked like farmland. He knew he had hours left to go before this train would reach his destination, this must just be what was between here and there. No way he missed his stop.

Holy shit. That nigger is dead.

He almost started laughing out loud. He had somehow put it out of his mind, but now recalled it vividly. John's empty gun trick was so infuriating, and the night so emotionally taxing, that he had forgotten about the fate of the corner dindu. His body being carried out and the blood-covered brutes now took center stage in his mind's eye. What part had he played, really?

Well, shit. He hadn't killed him, but he had been there. He was guilty of being, genuflect please, an *accessory to murder*. It had a nice ring to it, and, more to the point, it meant he had crossed the line into crimeland. He was no longer eligible for the shit tier life he was supposed to grovel and plead for. The rich degenerates who owned America couldn't use him anymore. He was an outlaw, mother fucker!

And, he was free.

That his freedom had cost someone else so dearly was immaterial. He was so pleased with himself that he almost forgot his assignment. He needed a name.

The train continued running down the tracks as the sunlight faded and left a red and orange hue in the sky. He searched and searched for anything that would fit his own story, and impress his future comrades.

Being reborn was no easy thing. His name from his former life was chosen by others. He had no say in it, nor loyalty to it. He was born from his parents, and they were born of their parents. None had chosen their names. None had been reborn, and taken on such a defining burden.

The enormity of names available was overwhelming. He here was a son of the earth and sky, the seed of air and space. He was made of all that there was, and

all that there ever would be. Something had to be chosen for the new him to live, to give breath to his next life. Otherwise, he was nameless and formless. Stuck in the void between birth and rebirth. Nothing, once again.

And nothing was more painful than indecision. He had to make his choice, and conjure this new him into existence before the train arrived at his next destination. A bad choice was better than no choice. Someone had to be incarnated.

Finally, he found it. Arminius. It was the name of a German who had been born a prince but was brought to Rome as a hostage. He was schooled and indoctrinated to be a Roman, even being given Roman citizenship. But his heart stayed true to his people. He was sent to Germania to help subjugate his people for Rome, instead he secretly united the German tribes and kicked the Romans out.

So, too, was he captured by this garbage empire and made to serve it. But now, his service would be true. He was Arminius. He had his name, and summoned the birthing to begin.

The Farm

1.

The train rolled into the station. Arminius collected his equipment and put it all back in the gym bag, save his phone. He stood up and waited for a complete stop, going over the security process again in his mind.

The train station smelled like crotch rot lightly sprinkled with cleaning products. To even call it a station seemed generous. The waiting area could barely hold ten people. Not that anyone would want to wait there.

Arminius surveyed the people in the station, trying to see if he could figure out who his connection was before making the call. No clue.

He stood outside, still looking. He gave up and dialed the one number in his burner phone.

One ring and someone picked up. "Who are you? Where are you?"

"John Davis. Front entrance."

"Throw out the phone and go to the back entrance. Black pickup truck, wearing a white t-shirt and blue ball cap. Truck will beep three times." The call ended.

Arminius tossed the burner phone into the nearest trash can and walked all the way around the station.

A black pickup truck pulled up alongside him and beeped three times. He

stopped walking and got in.

As soon as he got in and shut the door the truck started driving. Arminius extended his hand to the driver. "Hey I -"

The driver ignored the handshake, kept his eyes fixed on the road, and turned up the classic rock music playing in the truck. Arminius sat back in his seat and reasoned this was a security precaution. He looked over at the driver, late twenties with a military haircut, and blank expression.

After roughly a twenty minute drive, the truck violently pulled into a large parking garage. The truck zoomed up to the third floor and braked quickly.

"Silver Camry. Get out." the driver said.

Arminius jumped out of the truck and shut the door, and the truck sped away. The silver Camry flashed its lights and Arminius jogged across the parking lot and got in.

The man inside smiled and extended his hand. "My name is Dave. John, right?"

Arminius shook his hand. "That's what it says on my driver's license."

Dave laughed. He looked to be in his late 40s, overweight, and sporting disjointed facial hair. "Alright, let's get down to the farm."

Dave waited for a few cars to get in front of him, then exited the garage and went out onto the main road. He checked his mirrors and scrutinized the other cars around him. He began making right turns down side streets until the car was back on the road it had started on.

He pulled over on the side of the road. Checked his mirrors again. Then started back up down the road.

Dave looked over and smiled at him, appearing to relax.

"So, did you pick your name yet?" Dave asked.

"Arminius." he said, proud of his choice. The name really found him. It was destiny.

"Ah, yeah. That's a common one." Dave said, plainly unimpressed.

Arminius became a bit deflated, realizing he had overestimated his cleverness. Maybe he should have put more thought into it, but it seemed perfect at the time. Nothing irked him more than the thought that he was indistinguishable from everyone else. But maybe that's what everyone thought. Son of a bitch.

Dave looked him over. "Don't worry. You're the only Arminius in this group. Trust me, it can become a real pain in the ass when two guys choose the same name. One time, three guys all wanted to be Andrew Jackson..."

Dave focused back fully on the road, an injured expression on his face. "Total nightmare."

The car turned off the main road and went down a back street, the familiar corporate landscape retreated as long stretches of farms took over the view. The unevenness of the road made the car shake and jostle. Wherever they were going, it was way off the highway.

An hour or so later, Dave nudged Arminius. "We're almost there."

The car pulled onto a dirt road and began going through a heavily wooded area. The visibility was next to zero.

The car made it through, and Arminius looked out the window stunned. The farm was nestled inside a valley, with a mountain behind it. The sunlight poured down from the sky, illuminating a farmhouse, fences, and the long rows of corn.

He wasn't sure if it was from the travel or the stress, but he was beguiled by the vista. He let the beauty wash over him like holy water, cleansing him with its simple majesty. Arminius was right where he was supposed to be.

The car stopped in front of the farmhouse. "Alright, we're home." Dave said.

Arminius took his bag and followed Dave to the farmhouse.

The door opened to reveal four men inside a room with five beds, all around Arminius' age, with a similar swagger. They stood up as Dave and Arminius entered.

"Meet the rest of the team." Dave said. "Guys, this is Arminius."

The first man extended his hand and introduced himself. "Charles Martel." He was a squirrely looking ginger, but he was built and looked determined. They shook hands and the next man stepped forward, the tallest of the group and seemingly the strongest. He had jet black hair and dark eyes. He towered over the other men.

"Andrew Jackson." the tall man said. Arminius looked over at Dave, who smiled and shook his head.

The third man stepped forward, blond and lean. "Jesse Helms." he said in a

thick southern accent, clearly pleased with his name choice.

The fourth man stepped forward, he had brown hair and piercing blue eyes, and wore a self-satisfied expression that made it obvious he was someone you were either going to really love or really hate. "Curtis LeMay." he said, with a Midwestern accent.

"Well boys, get a chance to get to know each other. But I wouldn't stay up too late. The fun starts tomorrow." Dave said, shutting the door behind him.

Arminius put his gym bag on the only bed that looked free of someone else's things. He assumed all the men in the room had gone through the same initiation process, and that everyone had proven that they were ready to kill and die for the cause.

"What happens tomorrow?" Martel asked, more intrigued than scared. He had a monotone way of speaking that made him sound robotic.

"I don't know exactly, but I'm guessing we're going to be sore by the end of it." LeMay said, as he laid down on the bed, and put his hands behind his head.

"Whatever. I've gone through too much shit to get here to back out now." Jackson said.

"Like you could back out anyway." LeMay scoffed. "You bought a one way ticket, baby."

"Let the weak fall." Helms said, trying to flex but really sounding like a LARPer who wasn't sure he was up for whatever was coming.

Arminius didn't feel the need to beat his chest. He was happy to take Dave's

advice and rest up. He was a bit travel sick and knew he would need all his strength for any physical endurance test. His time in the city had left him soft physically, if not mentally. His only strength was his iron will, from which all his confidence came. He wasn't in peak physical shape, but he would will his body to prevail. He surmised it was going to be a game of inches, and more sleep would give him a few.

"I'm beat from the trip. I'm going to try to get some rest for whatever is coming," Arminius said.

The other men agreed. And everyone got into their beds. Lights out.

*

"Get the fuck up!" a voice screamed.

A man was banging a trash can lid and light flooded the room. Two other men, both with hand guns, started kicking the beds as the men scrambled to wake up and get a handle on things. "Get up!"

"Stand in front of your beds. Now!" a large man said, clearly in charge. He had a fierce face and a southern draw. Texas, maybe. He threw down the trash can lid and drew his gun. Everyone got up and stood in front of their beds still half asleep and fully panicked.

"You have exactly thirty seconds to get dressed and be outside or you'll die right here in this goddamn room!"

Everyone rushed to get dressed. Some grabbed their clothes and headed for the exit. Arminius struggled to get his right sneaker on. He almost tripped and fell down, but caught himself just in time.

Outside it was still dark, but there was faint light in the sky. "Line up!" one of the gunmen said.

The five men formed a crooked line in front of the farm house. They were all now wide awake, though still in a state of confusion.

The large man came outside and stood in front of the group, flanked by the two other gunmen.

"Well, good morning. My name is Sergeant Cross, and the man to my right is Sergeant Matthews, and the man to my left is Sergeant Lowry. We will be your instructors doing your time here at the farm." Cross stood well over six feet and was built like a truck. Lowry and Matthews were not as big as Cross, but just as imposing. They looked capable of bringing the pain if need be.

"You will address us as sergeant at all times, and if you ever forget that, you will be incredibly sorry that you did." Cross walked the line. "I don't know your names, because you are not worth knowing, because you have not proven yourselves worthy of knowing. That ends now."

Sergeant Cross stopped in front of everyone. "This morning we are going to find out which of you is worthy of knowing, and which of you is worth *nothing*. This is the 'victory or death march.' If you make it, you will be taught the art of war and how to defend our people. If you don't, well... the name gives it away, doesn't it?"

Cross raised his gun. "Move out!"

The other two instructors started pushing the five men to move forward and begin running. The apparent destination being the mountain ahead.

"Faster, faster, faster!" Sergeant Matthews screamed.

The morning dew soaked into their socks as they made their way to the mountain, flanked by Mathews and Lowry, with Sergeant Cross screaming at them from behind. "Victory or death! Victory of death!"

They ran through the farmland and hit the dirt trail to go up the mountain. The trail was muddy and people lost their footing. The incline only exacerbated the difficulty. The moment one of the five men slipped, all the instructors would rush him and begin screaming until he caught up with the group.

That dawn was breaking was cool comfort to the men, as seeing the trail was hardly the problem. To even call it a trail was misleading. There may, at some point, have been a well defined trail, but nature was winning the battle to take it back.

Arminius was already well spent. He had not run this much in years, and was panting like a dog. That he had avoided getting disgustingly fat like his co-workers at the call center meant little. He could taste every cheeseburger now. His legs were starting to give way as they lunged to grip the nearly vanished muddy trail. His foot cracked into a hidden tree root and he fell to his knees.

"Get the fuck up, now!" Sergeant Matthews pressed a gun to his temple.

Arminius summoned all his strength and moved to get back on the trail. All he could try to do was try to tune out the pain, though his breath felt like knives in his chest. His lungs were in open rebellion, refusing to give him air.

The men all began to break out into a thick sloppy sweat. The humidity of the morning air ensured there would be of little relief. The sweat stuck to them like glue. Sticky and gasping, they persevered, as the instructors drove them up the

mountain at a breakneck pace.

Arminius felt himself losing his strength, his limbs going numb. Every step made him woozy and fearful that he could faint. The fear of fainting was augmented by the fear that if he did faint, the instructors would casually put a bullet in his head and keep moving.

The trail had leveled out somewhat, and the top of the mountain seemed to be in sight. There was no indication that reaching the top meant they could stop. The instructors kept screaming at everyone to go on.

Helms was the first to go down. He collapsed and the instructors were all over him. After it appeared he was unable to get up, they picked him up and began slapping him. Everyone else just kept moving. Helms was able to finally get back on the trail and tried to split the difference by walking fast, but the instructors were on to that and began pushing him.

The top of the mountain was imminent, and Arminius had made a deal with himself that if he was going to get blown away, he wanted to at least die on the top of the mountain.

LeMay was the first to make it to the top. He was followed by Jackson, Martel, Arminius and then Helms. The trail ended and the ground became flat and firm. The area was clear, but for two cruddy tables. How anyone got them up there was a mystery.

"Stop here!" Sergeant Matthews screamed.

Enter the symphony of dry heaving and coughing. Arminius could barely stand, and even the fitter members of the group had trouble faking strength. Within a minute everyone was laying on the dirt.

Sergeant Cross came up to the men. "Hydrate." he said, and threw two canteens on the ground.

It was like mana from heaven, and the men scrambled to get the canteens and took turns drinking from them. Arminius couldn't believe water could taste this good. He took a large swig and passed it on, eagerly awaiting his next turn.

The receding thirst gave way to inflamed muscles. Although they were at rest, the ferocity of the workout was still making its impact known. Going from zero to a hundred was an efficient way to weed out weakness, but had costs for those that survived too.

"Helms, you going to make it back or do we need to bury you up here."
Sergeant Cross said.

It was difficult to gauge how serious the comment was. The instructors had given every indication that they were not above killing someone, or at least further violence.

"I'll make it!" Helms said defiantly, still out of breath.

Jackson finished off the last of the water as the panting among the men subsided.

"You're going down this mountain vertical or horizontal, which way is up to you. But we're leaving, now!" Sergeant Cross screamed.

The men began the run back down the trail, flanked by Matthews and Lowry.

The run down the mountain was initially easier given the incline, but then the falls began. LeMay tried to fly down the trail only to slip and crash face first.

The logic of running down the mountain more or less made sense, let the steepness carry you down. But you never knew what you would land on when you fell, and Martel appeared to have done real damage to himself when he lost his footing and slammed into a tree.

Sergeant Cross pushed Martel forward and began yelling at the team. "Let's go! Let's go! Down the mountain. Life is struggle. Life is for the strong. Greatness has a price. Greatness has a cost. Audacity, men. Always, audacity!"

After watching the others take tough falls, Arminius tried to strike a balance between riding the trail down, and slowing down enough to keep his balance. It seemed to be working until his foot caught a deep tree root and he went crashing into a bush.

The instructors were all over him, but he didn't need their threats, he was furious with himself. He pushed himself up and went rolling back down the trail, determined not to lose his balance again. He pumped his legs to slow down his speed and had a few near misses, but he only fell the one time.

All the men made it down the mountain and into the farmland. The instructors kept screaming for them to get to the farmhouse. The adrenaline rush from being in direct bodily danger dissipated, and the pain and exhaustion of the running came back with a vengeance.

Arminius could see the farmhouse, but it felt like a million miles away. His vision was increasingly narrowing, he was just fighting to see what was directly in front of him. He hyperfocused on the back of Jackson's shirt, and just put one foot in front of the other. There was nothing else in the world.

All of the sudden he saw Jackson's shirt go down. Arminius looked up to see the farmhouse and happily collapsed. He laid on the wet ground panting and

waiting to see if any feeling in his extremities returned.

"Hydrate!" he heard Cross yell out of view.

Arminius started to close his eyes but was awakened by a solid kick to his side. He saw Sergeant Cross standing over him.

"I didn't say sleep. I said hydrate." Cross shoved a bottle of water into Arminius' chest.

"You've got one hour to recuperate. Then head to the classroom." Cross said. The rest of the instructors passed out bottled waters.

He drank the water and somehow willed himself to keep his eyes open. He wasn't sure he would ever get up again. Sergeant Lowry took his empty bottle and put a fresh one in his hand. "Drink." he said.

After roughly forty minutes Arminius had the strength to look around, he saw the other men were in different stages of recovery. LeMay and Jackson were still on the ground, but were joking with each other. Martel was up but still weak. Helms was sleeping.

Matthews and Lowry came back and told everyone to get up and head to the classroom. Arminius struggled, but ultimately returned to his feet. He walked, zombie-like, with the others into another part of the farmhouse.

In the room stood five desks facing a mobile whiteboard with the red letters 1776 on it. Sergeant Cross stood in front of it.

"Take your seats." he said, and the men sat down.

"So how did y'all like the run up the mountain? Good news, that's going to be our morning routine for awhile." Cross said, with an audible groan coming from the men.

"Don't worry, it will be easier. Y'all be shooting up and down that mountain. Even Helms." Cross said snickering.

"But I'm done ragging on ya. The fact is, you all have come here to serve your country, your people. And that's a damn fine thing." Cross walked to the whiteboard.

"Now, let's begin." Cross drew a classical building with two columns in the front. "These are the two columns that define the movement to take back our country. The first column represents rebuilding the family, and producing a new generation of white children. The second column represents open economic, political, and cultural struggle."

Sergeant Cross turned back to face the men. "I know many of you dismiss the second column as a waste of time for optics cucks. But, as Ho Chi Minh once said, 'a printing press is worth a thousand rifles', and he was damn smart for a yellow monkey. Let's not forget the commies won the long game... Remember, no victory on the battlefield is worth anything if it does not translate into cultural and political dominance. The true battlefield is in our people's hearts and minds."

Cross turned back to the board and drew a faint darker column between the first two. "This is you. This is us. This is White Lightning. We are, gentlemen, the dark column. We never touch the first two columns. We are but a whisper in the wind, a passing shadow."

Cross put the marker away. "We march steadily alongside the movement, a

spectral presence that is never, ever acknowledged. We destroy the enemies of the movement, the enemies of our people, and never take a bow. We just send a message: try to destroy our people, and we will destroy you."

"As you may already know, we organize into strike teams. We mercilessly strike and then disappear like lightning. The teams have no knowledge of each other for their own protection. Here, at what we lovingly call *the farm*, you will receive both military and ideological training for the battles to come. When you graduate, you will be deployed into the field and, God willing, will destroy a sizable portion of the enemy before you die. The only alternative to death... is victory. Victory or death are the only possible outcomes for your life as of *this* moment. There is no third option. So be fucking victorious!"

Cross looked over the five men. "That's all for now. Dismissed. Enjoy your breakfast."

The other instructors led the men to the barn where a table with eggs and coffee was laid out. There were no condiments for the eggs, nor was there cream or sugar for the coffee. The men sat down and began ravenously eating. Arminius was not a particular fan of eggs, but he inhaled three before touching his coffee.

Dave walked into the barn "Let me know if anyone needs more eggs and coffee. You guys should stock up, it will be awhile before you get lunch."

The men dug in and ate as much as they could. Their burning hunger and taste buds battled every step of the way. Arminius forced down as many oily slippery eggs as he could, and poured acidic coffee down his gullet until he almost puked. He knew he needed the energy, and hoped the gross taste in his mouth would pass shortly.

2.

Sergeant Cross stood in front of the now blank whiteboard and began his lecture. "Why does the guerrilla fighter fight? We must come to the inevitable conclusion that the guerrilla fighter is a social reformer, that he takes up arms responding to the angry protest of the people against their oppressors, and that he fights in order to change the social system that keeps all his unarmed brothers in ignominy and misery."

"Anyone know who said it?" Cross looked around. No response. "Ernesto Guevara. Better known as *Che Guevara*. That's right. The guy from the libtard t-shirts. Now, I know you boys might not think there is much you can learn from your enemies, but that's where you're wrong."

Cross raised his index finger, to emphasize the point. "No one teaches you more than your enemies. And, in this case, Mr. Guevara has some serious fucking wisdom to impart."

"Let us be clear here and now. White Lightning is - and must be - a guerrilla army! It is through our actions - our bravery and heroism - that general insurrection will rise up, and our people will take back our beloved country. Ambushes, sabotage, raids, hit and run attacks - these show the weakness of the enemy regime. That the enemy can be brought low. That the enemy is not just worthy of being broken, but is breakable."

Cross wrote the acronym "Z.O.G" on the whiteboard. "While The 14 Words are grabbing headlines with their wicked depravity, we are inspiring the people to

rise up against their oppressors. While The 14 Words are *killing* white children, we are fighting for them to be free!"

Cross points to the whiteboard. "Anyone know what that stands for?"

LeMay raises his hand, Cross points to him. "Zionist Occupational Government."

"Bingo. A for the day." Cross said, writing Zionist Occupational Government on the whiteboard. "The Jews have hypnotized the world, and rule it through the United States. An evil empire if ever there was one. They control our government, media, and our economy. What you see, and what you think."

Sergeant Cross shakes his head and puts the cap back on his marker. "And now, that the white man has served his usefulness to the Jew, he is being put out to pasture. He is to be replaced by a mongrel horde of muds too stupid to rebel against their Jewish masters. Western Civilization is being destroyed not by some foreign army, but by the enemy within. We must destroy them, or die trying."

Arminius shifted in his seat and looked around to see all the other men nodding along. He never thought he would be hearing revolutionary socialist pablum at a White Lightning training camp. Whites are the colonized and the occupied? So much for Sparta.

Nor was Arminius ever particularly impressed with antisemitism. He had no special love for Jews, he just thought that the claims of Jewish world domination always seemed hamhanded and overblown.

There was no doubt Jews had a wildly disproportionate influence in America given their numbers. A blind man could see that. But destroying Western civilization? Wouldn't that ruin them, too? Didn't they own everything? If any group had an interest in maintaining the status quo, it would be them. And,

more to the point, the muddy hordes that would take control in the white replacement scenario would put Jews to the sword with just as much pleasure as any white man. Maybe more pleasure.

Arminius' ambivalence mattered not. Sergeant Cross had total conviction, and his passion was infectious. If this was the line that needed to be taken, then it would be taken.

"It takes revolutionaries to start a revolution. And that is what you men will become. That is who you are, and you will become who you are." Cross said, proudly surveying the group. "Revolution is an act of imagination and will; you must dream it, touch it, taste it, *then* you make it. We will show you how."

Cross smiled and raised his arms, motioning for everyone to stand. "And now we go back up the mountain."

The men suppressed their groans and filed out of the classroom. Arminius' body still ached from the morning's hike, he wasn't sure he had another one in him.

The midday sun was out in force, radiating down on everyone. There were five camouflage colored rucksacks and what looked like wooden rifles painted black, laid out on the ground before them.

"Alright, pick up one rucksack and one rifle. Then get in line." Sergeant Cross shouted.

The men took their equipment and lined up single file facing the mountain.

"We must inspire others with our example. We must model unity. We must demonstrate absolute discipline. Say it!" Cross bellowed.

"We must inspire others with our example. We must model unity. We must demonstrate absolute discipline." the men said in unison.

"That's good boys. Now start marching. Left... left, right, left."

The men began marching towards the mountain flanked by the instructors, now watching to see who was out of step as Cross continued to call the cadence. The slower pace was welcomed, but was offset by the intensity of the afternoon heat and the weight of the rucksack.

It was cooler under the trees, but the open field sun had done its damage. The men were caked in sweat. The rucksacks were getting heavier by the minute.

"Halt!" Cross yelled. The men stopped. "Hydrate." The men looked at the instructors, expecting water.

"Check the rucksack, morons."

Arminius dropped the rucksack and found a canteen in one of the pouches. He began violently drinking, worried he was still dehydrated from the morning run.

"Now, don't drink it all at once. That's the only canteen you have. Conserve your water. No instructor will be giving you any water on any of the hikes going forward. Packing that provision is your responsibility, and your problem should you fuck it up." Cross said.

Sergeant Lowry came up with a long thin rope.

"Sergeant Lowry is going to tie a rope to each of you. This will help you learn the power of unity, and the dangers of division."

Lowry tied the rope around each man's waist, leaving a small space between each man. The snug fit ensured each man couldn't move too far away from the man directly in front and behind him. Each man felt every other man's movements through the tension in the rope.

"Today, y'all going to learn the importance of communication and teamwork. Benjamin Franklin told the Continental Congress during the signing of the Declaration of Independence 'We'll hang together, or we'll hang separately'. Well, you boys are going to demonstrate that theory in all its splendor. Move out!"

The men started going up the muddy, steep trail. The instructors goaded them to go faster and faster. Upon getting up the first section of the incline, Martel lost his footing and fell back causing a chain reaction that threw everyone off the trail and into the bushes and the mud.

Sergeant Cross rushed up next to the men on the ground. "What we have here is a failure to communicate."

The men looked around confused as they were trying to get to their feet. The odd accent Cross adopted when he said the phrase was unfamiliar.

"Shit, anyone here old enough to get that reference? Never mind. The point is, you people have to talk to each other. LeMay!"

"Yes, Sergeant!" LeMay responded.

"You're on point. Let people know what the trail is like, control the speed of the team by explaining the terrain. Now, for everyone. If you feel like you are slipping, tell your teammates. This ain't brain surgery, boys. Alright, move out!" Cross waved the men forward and he retook his post behind them.

Things seemed on track for a while as the team navigated the trail with decent ease and speed. Then Jackson slipped and took everyone with him as he fell.

Arminius, who was fourth in line in front of Helms and behind Martel, saw Jackson fall and immediately hit the ground, but it was no use, he was pulled off the trail with the rest. Back into the mud.

Cross rushed up as the men were struggling to get to their feet. "Good lord, Jackson! You some kind of fucking retard. You can't walk *or* talk? Talk-to-your-teammates! Team, you better learn how to work together, or this is going to be one long-ass day. Now get up and move out!"

The men grumbled and started back up the trail. Another fall seemed inevitable, along with the following tongue lashing.

"And nobody better be using their rifle as a walking stick. That means you, Helms!"

Helms cursed Cross under his breath as he, along with the rest of the team, tried to remember how far away they were from the top of the mountain.

"Take it slow!" LeMay yelled back to the team.

The trail ahead was particularly steep and muddy. Arminius ended up crawling to make it past. Helms followed suit.

There were some close calls, but the team never had a full fall again, and reached the top of the mountain.

When they reached the mountain top, the familiar halt command came and the team dropped to the ground to drink water and rest their poor bodies.

Arminius was amazed he made it up the mountain, and was certain the trip down was going to be the end of him.

"Your rucksacks also contain some food. This will be the last time food will be provided on a hike, from now on packing food is your responsibility." Cross said.

Arminius dug into the rucksack, largely packed with clothes, and found a bag of trail mix. He devoured it like a starving dog. He ate the bag and laid down on the unforgiving ground.

Sergeant Cross stood in front of the depleted men. "Now I know what you're thinking. You're thinking there's no way you can handle this. There's no wayyyyy you can do this day in, day out. Well, let me tell you something. The recruiters gave us all your health records, and we reviewed them thoroughly. You can handle all this, physically. The real question is whether you have what it takes mentally to get the job done. The real question is do you have the determination required to do what is necessary, and to mold your bodies with the force of your own will."

The men looked at each other, the rope still connecting them. No one flinched. They all knew why they were here, and what it took to get here.

Cross glared down at them. "Well, do you?"

"Yes, sergeant!" the team said in unison.

"Good. Now get down this fucking mountain!"

The sun had shifted, and the shade from the trees made it harder to see the imperfections in the trail. As the team headed down the mountain together,

LeMay called out warnings and directions. The men behind him took heed and balanced each other's movements. They finally found their flow, and breathed together.

The team found the bottom of the mountain without a single fall. The instructors could barely hide their delight. Sergeant Lowry untied the rope, and Sergeant Cross dismissed them for an hour break before class resumed.

The men went back to the farmhouse and collectively collapsed in their beds. Arminius' legs burned and his back threatened full resistance if he tasked it with anything else for the time being.

"These fuckers are going to kill me." Helms said, exasperated.

"Who are they training us to assassinate, mountain lions?" LeMay joked.

"We're going to kill the gnomes of Zurich!" Martel cracked.

Arminius laid back on his cot, he wanted to chime in with a joke or two, but he was so tired his brain wasn't working. His eyes grew heavy. The room grew silent.

Knock. Knock. "Alright boys, back at it." Dave said from the other side of the door leading to the makeshift bedroom. Somehow it had already been an hour and it was time for class again.

"Propaganda of the deed." Sergeant Cross said, before writing those words on the whiteboard. "We leave to others the publishing of lengthy manifestos and tedious blog posts. We speak through the barrel of a gun. And when you speak through the barrel of a gun, everyone listens."

Cross put down the marker and faced the team. "Our deeds must inspire hope in our people. Our deeds must excite the spirit of revolution. White Lightning's strikes prove that our love for our people is real. Which is why they must be controlled and targeted. No bombs, no bystanders, and no children! We strike the guilty and the guilty alone!"

It was no secret that there was friction between White Lightning and The 14 Words. In theory, they both agreed on the same vision for America; a white traditional and nominally Christian country. But the tactics used by The 14 Words left a bad taste in most white nationalist's mouths, and White Lightning was no exception. White Lightning tried to respect the maxim of not punching right while at war, but the targeted killing of children was so disgusting to their sensibilities that official communiques posted after lightning strike assassinations often included subtle digs at The 14 Words.

A recent press release celebrating the assassination of an anti-white nationalist researcher included the line "White Lightning is proud to have held this adult traitor accountable in a mature way." The passive-aggressive smack had not gone unnoticed and legions of social media accounts claiming to be loyal to The 14 Words began slamming White Lightning as cucks who were not willing to go all the way for the cause.

Sergeant Cross was making it plain that he was sincerely butthurt over the issue, if not the very existence of The 14 Words. Besides the lamentable tactics, there was also the fact that The 14 Words continually took public attention away from White Lightning.

However, this was an odd audience for such a lecture, all the men in the classroom had obviously chosen to align with White Lightning over The 14 Words. They wanted to kill the enemy, not their kids.

"We are everywhere, and nowhere. We choose when and where to fight. We strike like lightning, then disappear. These are the principles of the strike team. Repeat it!" Cross said.

"We are everywhere, and nowhere. We choose when and where to fight. We strike like lightning, then disappear. These are the principles of the strike team." the men said.

Sergeant Cross nodded his approval. "Your sole responsibility is to hit your target and get out. Not intelligence or counter-intelligence. Not sabotage. Not recruitment. Not anything, other than striking your target and disappearing. You will be given your target, you will find your target, you will develop a plan to hit your target, then you will hit your target and escape so you can live long enough to hit other targets."

Cross sternly looked over the team. "Is that in any way unclear?"

Silence.

"Good. Because failure to follow these rules is going to get you killed. Which means you'd have wasted my precious time. I expect at least three kills from each of you before you get killed. That's fifteen total from this team. Stick to your mission and abide by the principles of the strike team, and you can get it done. And what are those principles? Let me hear it."

"We are everywhere, and nowhere. We choose when and where to fight. We strike like lightning, then disappear. These are the principles of the strike team." the team said.

"OK, let's break for lunch. Dismissed." Sergeant Cross walked out of the classroom.

Lunch was as disappointing as breakfast; broccoli, grilled chicken, and an apple. Dieting was apparently also part of the training regime. The only drinks allowed were water and black coffee.

Arminius gobbled down the food so fast he barely tasted it, his body was crying out for nourishment to the point of near madness. The rest of the team did likewise, and within the first ten minutes of the lunch break, lunch was gone.

Dave walked by laughing. "Pace yourselves, boys. Damn."

After catching his breath from the food inhalation session, Arminius returned to the claims of Sergeant Cross in his mind. He was confused by how Cross was framing the white nationalist struggle, like it was some anti-colonial insurgency with the Jews standing in for the old white imperial overlords. As if globohomo would just cease if Jews disappeared. The 14 Words hated Jews of course, but they focused on anti-white fanatics regardless of their background. If anything, whites caught more of their fire. As was appropriate, traitors should die first.

He also had problems with the whole notion of being a Che Guevara-esque revolutionary. How was he supposed to be a Spartan of the Crypteia ruthlessly maintaining the sacred order, *and* a revolutionary dedicated to overthrowing everything? It was a rather incoherent message. In any case, he didn't join White Lightning for "ideological training." The only lesson Arminius learned from studying political philosophy years ago was to be distrustful of language. Now, he was stuck in a shit tier political science seminar.

He was willing to kill and die for the cause, what more could they ask for?

After lunch, Dave motioned for the men to follow him. The team followed Dave out of the farmhouse to large cellar doors. Dave opened the doors and the men followed him down the stairs. A strange smell wafted up from below.

The cellar was incredibly large and deep. Inside was Sergeants Cross, Lowry, and Matthews. They stood in front of a fully developed shooting range. Pistols and rifles had been laid out in front of five spaces.

"Line up in one of the alleys and face the targets. And don't you dare touch those firearms until explicitly authorized." Cross said.

The men lined up, one to an alley. Laid before them were two pistols and two rifles. Ahead was a silhouette of a man-shaped target. The metal gleamed from the overhead lights.

"Alright, for those of you new to firearms, let's get some quick rules out of the way." Sergeant Cross said as he walked behind the men, now all facing the target.

"Rule number one: always point your gun in a safe direction. Don't ever point it at anything you don't wanna shoot. Rule two: always keep your finger away from the trigger until you are ready to shoot. Rule three: always keep the gun unloaded until you are ready to shoot it - nothing in the magazine, nothing in the chamber. And last, but not least: if there is anything you don't understand ask a sergeant before doing anything. Is that understood?"

"Yes, Sergeant!" the men yelled in unison.

"Good. Because failure to follow those rules is going to lead to your shit seriously getting fucked up! Now, you'll notice there are four weapons laid out in front of you; one nine millimeter pistol, one forty-five caliber pistol, one semi-automatic AR-15 style rifle, and one thirty-aught six bolt-action rifle. Like a carpenter has a hammer and nails for his carpentry, these are your tools for revolution.

Sergeant Matthew, Sergeant Lowry, and myself are going to come to each of you individually and to get you trained on each weapon. Do not touch a single-

fucking-gun until instructed." Cross said.

Arminius continued to face the target, Sergeant Lowry came up beside him.

"Have you ever shot a gun before?" Lowry asked.

"No."

"OK, watch closely." Sergeant Lowry loaded the clip and cocked the nine millimeter pistol. He handed it to Arminius. "Remember, keep your finger on the outside of the trigger, and only point where you want it to shoot."

Arminius took the pistol in his hand and pointed at the target. "Keep your hands steady, there is no reason to move your arms or hands. The only point of your body in motion will be your trigger finger, understand?"

"Yes."

Arminius pointed the pistol at the chest of the target. Sergeant Lowry straightened his arm. "Squeeze the trigger." The gun fired, a rush echoing through Arminius' body. The bullet was true and hit the target in the chest.

"Good." Lowry said. He took the nine millimeter pistol and laid it on the table, then loaded and cocked the forty-five and handed it to Arminius. "This one carries more of a kick, you need to position yourself in a stronger position to take it."

Arminius took the forty-five and put his body in a slight crouch. Lowered adjusted his body and said "Same process. Aim and squeeze the trigger."

The blast from the forty-five was exceedingly powerful and his ears rang

afterwards. Arminius had barely maintained control of the gun and his legs had wobbled. He looked at the target and saw a much larger hole in its chest.

Lowry took the forty-five and laid it on the table. He picked up the AR-15 rifle. "Watch how I hold this." Lowry said, putting the rifle snugly into his shoulder. "Use the pocket in your shoulder to steady the rifle."

Arminius took the rifle and mirrored Lowry, placing the rifle in the pocket of his shoulder. Arminius aimed the rifle at the target. "Shoot when ready." The rifle fired and the bullet hit the target in the chest again.

Lowry took the AR-15 and put it down, then picked up the thirty-aught six and handed it to Arminius. "This one has the biggest kick so far. Brace yourself."

Arminius lined up the rifle with the target. He put himself in the strong crouch and the rifle in his shoulder pocket. He fired and immediately got a big kick in his chest and a ringing in his ears. The target was barely hanging together after the blast.

He looked over at Sergeant Lowry who smiled and nodded. "Good. Just wait for us to finish with your teammates."

Lowry walked over to Helms and started training him.

All the men completed their shooting, and the instructors called a cease fire to retrieve the targets. Each man held their completed target in front of them as Sergeant Cross reviewed each one.

"Not a bad start boys. But we definitely got work to do. You know how you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice. By the time we're done, y'all gonna be world class marksmen. Alright, break for dinner. Dismissed." Cross said.

Dinner was the greatest disappointment of all; leftover eggs, broccoli, and brown rice. Arminius was seriously considering running away, not out of fear, but out of desperate need for food. The hunger and fatigue made it hard to concentrate, and a fog descended on his brain.

The team was too tired to do much other than finish their plates and let their muscles cool. Sleeping never had so much allure.

"Classroom." Sergeant Matthews said as he walked through the room.

Sergeant Cross stood before the men. "Alright boys, you had a good first day, and you'll be wanting to hit the rack ASAP to regain your strength. Tomorrow is going to be another bear of a day, so I won't keep you long. But I want you to take this parting thought to bed."

Cross went down the line and looked at each man as he spoke. "You have joined the great and beautiful tradition of the warrior. You have more than belief in the cause, you have the will to fight. Because you have that will, because you are part of that special breed, more is expected from you than the cowering millions. You are our people's champions. You have to fight for those who cannot fight for themselves. You are the thin white line between order and chaos. And no matter what happens, you should be proud. So good night and dismissed."

The men were too tired to be flattered, or to process much of the ideological education. The fatigue from the day was pulling them to the floor. Their bodies had reached their limit, and demanded rest before any further instructions would be entertained.

Perhaps Cross knew this, and aimed for his rhetoric to bypass their alert minds, and seep into their unconsciousness. A last injection before bed to help his ideas

invade their brains, and reshape their mindscapes. The storm of spells would raise dark columns from the ground, and build a new phenomenal order. A new order that would cultivate a new man. A man with the will to do what was necessary

Arminius entered the bedroom and collapsed on his bed, not caring what dreams might come.

3.

The trash can lid played its song and the men woke up and filed out of the bedroom and into the dim morning light. The early air was crisp, with the day's humidity waiting to pounce.

The men put on their rucksacks and Sergeant Mathews tied the rope between them. They marched towards the mountain, most of them still half-asleep. The morning dew again soaked their socks, as their muscles and joints began loosening up.

The trail was as muddy as ever, and the instructors had replaced their guns with thin sticks that they were using to strike slow moving team members. Helms took the brunt of the punishment, even though LeMay was arguably the one setting the pace. Despite a few stumbles, the team never fell off the trail.

When the men reached the top of the mountain the day had broken and light began shining down in prelude to the coming heat. Everyone remembered their water, but only Helms remembered his food.

"Looks like you boys have finally figured out how to march together without fucking up. That's good." Sergeant Cross said with a sinister smile. "We're going to put those skills to the test." He caught a paintball gun that Sergeant Lowry had tossed to him.

Sergeant Matthews and Sergeant Lowry handed out paintball guns to the team. Arminius looked over the gun. There was a container at the top filled with white paint balls and a compressed air tank attached to the back. It was clunky, but not heavy.

"So, here's the deal. You boys get to go down the hill as fast as you can. And we get to shoot at you. Sound fun? Good." Cross said, motioning for everyone to stand.

"Feel free to fire back, but remember we aren't the ones tied to a rope. You get a ten second head start. 10, 9, 8..."

The team charged down the trail hoping to somehow outrun the instructors. The speed and panic led to some quick falls, but no one had a full wipe out. Cross yelled zero and all the noise behind them stopped.

Arminius wondered if they had really outran the instructors, but was too scared to look back. Just keep moving. Just keep moving. The trees and bushes went by faster than they ever had before. Suddenly, Jackson was hit; right in the back of his head. Every man hit the dirt.

"Fuck!" Jackson yelled. He writhed on the ground as LeMay looked at the big white mark on his head, and tried to wipe the paint out of Jackson's hair.

Arminius looked back at Helms who was desperately pointing his gun at the trees behind them. The instructors were completely out of sight, the only sounds the men could hear came from the wind, and the creatures of the forest.

Thud. A paintball cracked the back of Helms' thigh and he screamed in pain. The team all fired in the direction of the shot, but nothing was there.

"We gotta get the fuck out of here!" Arminius yelled to LeMay.

LeMay nodded. "Everyone up. We can't stay here."

The team got to their feet and immediately came under heavy fire. The

paintballs stung like hell, but the men started making their way down the mountain.

"Faster!" LeMay screamed.

The sound of curses and painful grunts filled the air as the men continued to hike down the trail under constant fire from all sides. Helms took most of the damage by far. Arminius did his best to position himself directly in front of him, to minimize the hits coming from the rear.

As the bottom of the trail came into view, the painted men broke out into a straight up sprint. The momentum overtook LeMay as he tried to negotiate the trail and the team went tumbling down the mountain, crashing into every bush.

They landed at the bottom and the instructors could all be heard laughing. The men were in a tangled, white-stained mess. It was hard to tell if the bruises were from the fall or the paint balls.

Sergeant Lowry began untying the rope from the team as Sergeant Matthews took the paintball guns back.

"Well, boys. That was goddamn hilarious. I especially like how you just completely gave up on unit discipline at the end there. Good times. Now go get some breakfast and try to remember how not to be stupid. Dismissed." Cross said, a shit-eating grin plastered on his face.

The battered men staggered their way back to the farmhouse, covered in white paint blots and red welts. Every step was painful. They were already sapped, and the day was just getting started.

The hard boiled eggs and black coffee went down as well as could be expected.

The acidic taste a welcomed distraction from the various aches throughout Arminius' body. He knew the true challenge was supposed to be one of resolve, but even that had its natural limits. Perhaps the point was to endure the certain pain of getting shot with the paintballs and not risk greater bodily harm from a fall. Or, perhaps, this was all irrelevant to training and just a sadistic exercise by the instructors. Maybe he was just a sucker.

Dave brought in newspapers and placed them on the table. Only LeMay had the interest to pick one up. He scanned the paper, a smile began creeping across his face.

"Matthew Chance, back in the news!" LeMay said. Everyone started chuckling. Chance was becoming a poster boy for dildo culture, a cuck among cucks.

"Here we go." Jackson said.

LeMay could barely read the article he was laughing so hard. "Chance is in the process of transitioning and has requested being called *Michelle* Chance."

The team erupted into hysterical laughter. The vibrations from the laughter increased the pain, but no one cared. It was a welcome reminder that their lives could absolutely be worse. That sore backs and atrocious food was nothing compared to unconditional defeat and unrestricted humiliation.

"He's going to cut his dick off, too?" Helms said.

"Yep." LeMay said in between laughs. "Surgery already scheduled."

"Well, that's what they ultimately wanted, isn't it?" Arminius said.

"Is he going to transition to black next?" Martel said.

"In my heart, I was born a poor black child." LeMay said, tossing the newspaper down and laughing his ass off.

The men were still laughing when Sergeant Lowry came into the barn and said "Classroom."

"Why do we fight?" Sergeant Cross asked, as the men took their seats, still diverted by the ongoing comedy known as the life of Matthew Chance.

Cross wrote "Why do we fight?" on the whiteboard. He looked over the team, waiting for an answer. "It ain't a rhetorical question."

LeMay raised his hand and Cross pointed at him.

"To re-take our land. To free our people from Jewish thought control and prevent the destruction of our race. To save Western civilization." LeMay said.

"Bulls eye." Cross said, a pleased expression decorating his face. "You men will never wear a uniform, but you must dress yourselves in armor. These ideals are your armor. You must decorate your mind with them. They will keep you warm in the winter, and cool in the summer. Our ideals are for all seasons, and all time."

Sergeant Cross pointed at Helms. "Why do we perform lightning strikes?"

"To kill the enemy." Helms said. The answer seemed to leave Cross unsatisfied.

"OK, how do lightning strikes kill the enemy?" Cross said. He pointed to Martel.

"They show the enemy is not all powerful. They show our people that the enemy is weak and can be killed. That inspires the people to join the revolution."

Martel said.

"Yes! When White Lightning strikes, it is a revolutionary act. The act itself fosters revolutionary conditions. The strikes inspire the people to revolution. And, when enough revolutionary acts inspire enough of the people, the revolution will be won. It's that simple, boys. You are the tip of the spear. You are the men who - through your good deeds - will bring down ZOG and free our people!" Cross said.

Arminius was still uncomfortable with the revolutionary rhetoric. He also never bought the Jewish mind control claim, or the underlying conceit that within every man was a foiled genius trying to get out. *Oh, if only someone would shut down the Matrix, we could all touch greatness.* Bullshit.

Most people were corrupt and stupid naturally. The notion that the normies were being denied their potential by hook-nosed brainiacs was preposterous. The sleepwalkers would be ground to dust no matter the background and completion of their masters. Because they are dust.

He had grown up and lived within the system, and here he was, a man of action. He had triumphed over the mental plantation by sheer force of will, before anyone taught him anything. You can't free people, they have to free themselves. Most people are too dumb and weak for freedom. They need to live with someone's boot on their throat, or they'll forget to breathe.

"Now that you know the *why*, we can teach you the *how*. Break for lunch for an hour and come back fresh. The day is just beginning. Dismissed." Sergeant Cross said.

Lunch was as terrible as ever, but Arminius had resigned himself to eating tasteless crap at this point. Eating a big carby meal seemed like a recipe to see it

come back on him out on the trail anyway. For revolutionary warriors, discipline had to be visceral.

He was happy to be done with the ideological training stage, and ready to move on to the nuts and bolts of lightning strikes. He didn't come here to study bastardized Marxism. He came to learn how to kill.

"Looks like the real fun is about to begin." LeMay said.

"About time." Arminius said.

"I dunno, I get the strategy. It makes sense. You take out these high profile targets and it inspires people. I get it." Helms said.

"Force is the only thing the Jew understands. They take it as an invitation for aggression when you show them mercy. That's the point of Jewish media control. They can't stand a free-thinking white man, because he will come to understand his domination and rebel." Martel said.

"You really believe this ZOG bullshit? Once the Jews are gone, I expect just as many shitheads and degenerates will plague society." Arminius said.

The rest of the men were surprised by the statement, but Martel was completely rustled.

"No, man. You have to be down with the JQ." Martel said.

"OK, fine. Whatever." Arminius said, looking to move on, and realizing he misstepped.

"No. No. Don't dismiss it. You have to be in. You have to be educated

ideologically to understand why." Martel said, his face beginning to show his indignation.

Arminius knew it was foolish to keep antagonizing Martel, but was too tired and proud to back down. "What the fuck difference does it make? I'm going to shoot their asses, what more do you want?"

"No! You have to have the correct understanding of the Jewish question, or you are not a real white nationalist." Martel said.

"OK." Arminius said.

"No! You have to able say, with total conviction, 'Gas the Kikes Race War Now.' You have to say that." Martel said. Arminius' acquiesce only further infuriated him.

"Fine. *Gas the kikes, race war now.* OK?"

"No. It's not OK!" Martel said

"Why are you being so fucking autistic about this? I said I don't give a shit. I'm going along with you. Run the gas chambers all day every day until all the Jews are dead. I don't care!" Arminius said.

"No! You have to know why we're doing this. That's not revolutionary idealism! You're not revolutionary! You're not revolutionary!" Martel was almost frothing at the mouth and began hyperventilating.

"Oh my God! What the fuck is wrong with you?" Arminius groaned.

Sergeant Lowry walked to the table concerned, as Martel and Arminius

continued to glare at each other.

"Yo! Everyone just chill." LeMay said.

"No! Understanding the JQ is essential to our struggle!" Martel screamed

"OK, fine! I agree! Take yes for a fucking answer you goddamn retard!"
Arminius screamed back.

Now all the instructors were in the room and they pushed Martel and Arminius to opposite sides of the farmhouse. Arminius regained control, but Martel was still incensed and had to be held back as he continued to denounce Arminius as a false revolutionary.

Sergeant Lowry led Arminius into the classroom. "Don't worry, this happens all the time. Emotions run high during the beginning of training." Lowry said.

"Kid is crazy." Arminius said. Lowry shrugged.

Sergeant Cross entered the room, holding a book and some other papers. "OK, Arminius. Looks like Martel is knee deep in a purity spiral. Let me just say that I have total confidence in your commitment to our sacred and glorious cause. You wouldn't be here, otherwise. But let's give the baby his bottle. I'll extend lunch another hour so you can read over these materials."

Cross handed Arminius a book and a stack of papers. Arminius looked the book over. "This is like five hundred fucking pages. Are you serious?"

"I know. Just review it for an hour and we can kill this thing in the cradle. I appreciate it." Cross said as he and Lowry left the room.

Arminius looked around the empty classroom in disbelief. Then again, he did finally feel like a Che Guevara-inspired Marxist revolutionary, in the sense that he had committed thought crime and now needed politically correct re-education. Ah, liberation.

He looked over the book and assorted papers. From what he could gather from skimming the materials, there was a central theme, the gist of which was some half-baked evolutionary psychological theory arguing that Jews pursued a group strategy to out-compete non-Jews for resources. They also, allegedly, engaged in selective breeding practices restricted to within their own group to enhance traits like intelligence. Those traits were then, of course, enlisted in their group strategy to win resources over the goyim.

The evidence was pretty thin, but Arminius had no trouble accepting the central point: antisemitism was not irrational, but the inevitable and practical response to competition between Jews and other groups. This seemed less like forbidden knowledge, and more like a truism. No one likes their rivals. Few people, in truth, even like to see their friends succeed.

In any case, he was glad to have the extra hour to recuperate from that morning's hike and was starting to doze off when the door opened and the rest of the instructors and team entered the classroom.

Sergeant Cross looked at Arminius expectantly. "Have you studied Arminius? Have you corrected your thinking on the Jewish question?"

"Yes, Sergeant. I now understand the JQ, and I will commit myself to revolutionary idealism." Arminius said, trying to sound as sincere as possible so everyone could move the fuck on.

He cursed himself for letting his guard down and expressing his cynicism

publicly, and reasoned it was probably the result of the stress of the training and his own ego.

Cross looked at Martel who nodded, signally he was willing to drop the matter. There had clearly been some kind of private session with the sperg.

"Great. Let's get some more range time in." Cross said. The men filed out of the classroom and headed to the shooting range.

*

The men trudged up the mountain trail, as the sky gradually darkened. Shooting practice had just been a warm up for another shooting exercise, in this one the targets would shoot back. The team had their paintball guns again and were still attached together by the rope. This time, the instructors were the ones given a ten second start, which seemed like more than enough time for them to prepare a sufficient ambush.

Plat. Plat. Plat. LeMay dropped, hit by a volley of paintballs. The team fired indiscriminately into the woods. The fading light made it difficult to see anything clearly, but the panic from the sudden attack made the most benign aspects of the forest threatening. Every tree was under suspicion.

Jackson helped LeMay get to his feet and the team was moving again. The only sound was boots scraping the ground to secure good footing. No one dared to breathe loudly.

Thwack. Helms dropped and Arminius felt a sharp pain in his lower back. The shooters were behind them now. The team began firing behind them. Just as before, it was unclear if they hit anything or were even firing in the right direction.

Helms and Arminius got to their feet, still in pain from getting hit at what seemed like close range. The team was back on the move, it was a painful but simple strategy: just get to the top of the mountain.

"I guess y'all ain't gonna talk to each other." a voice from the darkness called out. It sounded distinctly like Sergeant Cross. The team looked around, but there was no obvious direction to the voice.

"It came from there!" LeMay yelled and pointed to a large tree on the right. Everyone fired at the tree.

The voice was laughing. "I like the conviction LeMay, but not the accuracy."

A paintball flew by Arminius' head. The team began firing indiscriminately again. It seemed unlikely they hit any instructors, but the forest creatures probably took some shots. They were shooting anything that moved, or at least moved in their minds.

"Fuck this, we need to get out of here while there is still light. If anyone sees anything, call out and everyone fire with them." LeMay said.

The team began moving faster up the trail. The only way out was to run the gauntlet.

The trail was its own challenge as the faint light made it difficult to avoid tree roots and find your footing on the muddier sections. The increased speed also meant increased trips and falls.

"There!" Martel cried out and began firing at a bush on the left.

Everyone followed his fire and the bush took extensive hits. Whether any of the

instructors were actually near there was another story. There was no indication they had hit anything human.

The team finally reached the top of the mountain and saw the instructors there waiting for them. "Did we get anyone?" Martel asked.

"We have no idea what y'all were firing at, but it was good to see you work as a team." Sergeant Cross said, as he and the other instructors laughed.

Sergeant Lowry untied the rope as the men rested and drank water. Cross turned on a lantern flashlight to compensate for the retreating daylight.

Sergeant Cross crouched in front of the resting men. "I'm done with the lectures, boys. I know you wouldn't be here if you didn't believe in our principles. I have one job, to help make you effective in the field and to help you stay alive long enough to get the job done. For the rest of your time here, that will be our sole focus. Initiation is over. Now is when we get to work."

"Move out. Let's get down the mountain while there's still some light left." Cross picked up the lantern and started making his way down the trail.

Everyone marched down the mountain trail together, with Sergeant Cross lighting the way. The darkness was all around them, but for the one eye of light that was delivering them from catastrophe. They walked as one body, and found home whole.

4.

Martel threw a strong right cross at Arminius, who slid out of the way and positioned himself for a rear naked choke.

"Good." Sergeant Matthews said. The team watched the hand to hand combat instruction. "If you can't reposition yourself by completely avoiding the blow, block the punch and deliver your own strike to the head. Like so."

Matthews motioned to Arminius, who threw a jab, which was subsequently blocked, with Matthews throwing a punch that stopped short of Arminius' face. "Everyone up, Helms you can spar with me."

Arminius and Martel continued sparing together as LeMay and Jackson paired off. The great JQ sparg out had long been forgotten as the team had spent the last week focusing on close quarter and hand to hand combat training, marksmanship, and the tradecraft of communicating with headquarters to learn about assigned targets.

Tradecraft and communications security were some of White Lightning's biggest challenges, and the men were told they should expect constant changes to prevent being compromised. Bad tradecraft, hacked communications, and enemy infiltration were such high concerns of White Lightning's leadership that it seemed as though they thought of nothing else.

Cross had made communication security his hobby horse. "There is no fixed system. Comsec is an adaptive process. As General Patton said 'Fixed fortifications are a monument to the stupidity of men.' You will be briefed and you will be updated, but change is the only constant in warfare." He repeated the speech multiple times along with his favorite "adapt and overcome" mantra.

But everyone was happy to be completely subsumed with learning strike team strategies and tactics, if for no other reason than it kept them off the mountain trail. The morning hike had been replaced with a basic physical training workout, and classes were never in the classroom anymore.

The most invigorating training exercises were the mock lightning strikes. Setting up the hit, shooting the target, and making the escape - nothing else got the heart racing so fast. That the men were shooting at the instructors only added to the fun.

Soon the targets would be real enemies of the white race, and they would be annihilated, for real. The men were like children counting down the days before Christmas. Their bloodlust and need for carnage was rising like a fever. They wanted to fulfill their promise to Sergeant Cross. They needed those kills.

The team completed another round at the cellar firing range and prepped for their next mock strike. The structure was always the same: one shooter, one backup, two lookouts and one man pretending to be a getaway driver. In the field, the amount of lookouts could change, but every hit was expected to be carried out at close range, with at least one backup shooter in case there was a complication. White Lightning wanted, above all, to always kill their target. No target had survived a lightning strike yet, and even if it put their operatives in greater danger, that perfect record had to be maintained. It was considered "highly inspirational" for the revolution.

The designated shooter would use the forty-five at close range, which made it practically impossible to not kill the target if he was able to get a head or chest shot off. The backup and lookouts carried nine millimeters, with the AR-15 and thirty-aught six staying in the car with the getaway driver. If anything went wrong, everyone was expected to shoot their way out, or die trying.

Part of the logic of having a series of self-contained teams operating independently of each other was to minimize the risk of the organization being compromised if one of the teams got captured. One strike team had no connections to any other strike team. So if one got taken down, and one or all its members arrested and compromised, no serious damage could be done. The only highly sensitive information members of strike teams had was the tradecraft required to get their target list, and that could be changed at whim.

Despite the decentralized structure of the assassination program, no strike team member was permitted to be taken alive by authorities. It was the duty of a strike team member to die fighting and never surrender. And, if a man was wounded, it was the duty of his teammates to kill him to avoid him being captured and being potentially compromised. There was no retirement or resigning either, the tour was over whenever the cause was won.

Being a part of a White Lightning strike team made life beautifully simple: victory or death.

Arminius was finally getting his turn as the designated shooter, or the "striker." He thought he would have gotten his chance days ago, but the instructors forced other team members to keep repeating the exercise until they got it right.

A mock town had been set up near the farmhouse. The scenery was on the level you would expect to see at a low-budget middle school play, but there were enough stores and houses and roads to create a sense of place to orient around. The drill involved setting up on a target, hitting the target, and cleanly escaping from the location.

The instructors would throw in little changes to shake up the team. The last drill had the target having a bodyguard, played by Sergeant Cross. A shootout ensued with the target almost getting away, and most of the team catching paint.

But since the target was killed, it was considered a success. They passed.

The men lined up outside the fake town, nicknamed Mud City, partly because after it was first set up a rain storm made it difficult to walk in, and partly for the usual reason. The instructors disappeared into the scenery. The target would be wearing an orange vest, anyone else was to be considered a civilian unless shown otherwise. Killing civilians was always a last resort, and if one did so without justification the shooter and team was considered to have failed the drill.

Arminius, Helms, Martel, and LeMay walked forward into the town. Jackson was the designated getaway driver and stayed behind. Martel and LeMay were the lookouts, and Helms was the backup shooter.

As the men entered the mock town, they saw Sergeant Matthews was leaning against a fake store. Everyone nodded pleasantly, as they had been taught, and moved on. When they turned down the only other street, they saw Sergeant Cross in an orange vest headed to the only store in the town that someone could physically enter.

Arminius nodded at Helms and the two headed towards the store as LeMay and Martel took positions on opposite sides of the entrance to the street.

Helms took a position less than a stone's throw away from the store and Arminius walked right up to the front and bent down to pretend to tie his shoe. He slowly reached for the paintball pistol stuck in his pants.

The door opened and Sergeant Lowry walked out. Shit. He had on a blue armband, which signified he was to be seen as a police officer. Lowry wore a gun on his hip and took his sweet time walking down the street. Helms greeted him as taught, as Arminius continued pretending to tie his shoe. White Lightning had a policy of avoiding the killing of police officers unless absolutely necessary,

especially white police officers. While killing a fed was considered glorious, killing local police was to be avoided as they were assumed to be in good standing with their respective communities, and therefore a backlash could occur if they were killed. Instead of inspiring revolution, the lighting strike would inspire disgust and animosity, making it ultimately counter-productive for the revolution.

This put Arminius in a difficult position. As the striker, he was the one empowered to fire the first shot, or pass on the strike. No one would fire unless he fired first. It was his call.

Sergeant Cross walked out the door. Arminius waited for him to pass then finally got back to a standing position. He looked down the street and saw Lowry looking around the scenery and pretending to be window shopping, still in view. If he shot Cross now, Lowry would see and the team would have to shoot him too.

Cross' pace of walking was fast enough that he would catch up to the lackadaisical Lowry. Arminius pulled his pistol out and held it behind his back. He was desperate to somehow stop Cross from leaving or at least slow him down.

"Excuse me, sir?" Arminius said.

Sergeant Cross turned around. "Yes?"

Arminius walked up to Cross, positioning himself so he could see passed him on one side and keep an eye on Lowry, who was still in view.

"I think I'm lost. Do you know how to get to main street?"

Cross half-smiled. "Sure. You take a left at the end of the street and you're there."

Lowry finally moved out of view. "Thank you so much." Arminius said, smiling.

"Of course." Cross said and turned to walk down the street.

Plat. Plat. Arminius shot Cross twice in the back.

Cross dropped to the ground and played dead. Arminius stood over him and said "Bang," to indicate he was finishing up with a head shot, as they had been trained to do. Literally firing the coup de grace shot was suspended for mock lighting strikes.

Arminius and Helms walked back up the street and joined LeMay and Martel. They all turned to the entrance street and walked past Matthews talking to Policeman Lowry. They waited in anticipation for any movement that would indicate a fire fight was about to start, none came.

They joined Jackson at the end of the street, and turned around to look at Matthews and Lowry. Arminius looked to see if he had passed, thinking that he must have given that Lowry didn't start firing at them.

"Good." Sergeant Matthews said.

Lowry jogged to the other fake street and told Cross the drill was over.

They had come a long way since the first drills, which typically devolved into a full on paintball gun battle, with the instructors getting the upper hand. Over the course of the perpetual drilling, a familiarity and discipline developed, along with a comfort in setting up a lightning strike. The objective of the repetition

was to make the hits second nature. It was working.

Cross walked up to the team. "Alright, good. Run it again."

*

Twas the night before graduation and they were dancing in the moonlight. One last grueling round of physical training before tomorrow's final test. And then, the road.

Arminius completed his leg lifts and push ups and the remainder of the routine, barely out of breath in his new toned body. Cross called dismissed, and warned everyone to take their rest as tomorrow would require all their strength.

Arminius stood still as the instructors and the team left. He stood alone in the field in the shadow of the moon. He felt a cool night breeze ripple over his exposed skin and pulse down his neck. He remembered his old sad life. A throbbing pain sunk into his heart, rendering him helpless for the moment. Where would he be now if he had stayed? Dead? If not physically, then spiritually. He would be dust. Dust. Empty pulverized flickers of nothingness shimmering under a desk lamp.

Instead of bitter death, he had crashed into a hidden groove in space. He had pushed through his grim dusky life to chase the hazy starlight. Here he was, living in what seemed like a memory of a dream - a recollection bent by an obscured gravity. Here he was, fiercely standing inside his abysmal despair. Here he was, soaring above his broken pieces.

The feeling of helplessness passed. He walked back to the farmhouse. The only feeling he could summon now, was gratitude.

5.

It was a cloudy hot morning, and the men were running hard. The final test wasn't easy, but it was simple. A man had to get from the farmhouse all the way to the top of the mountain without getting shot with a paintball by one of the instructors. If he was shot, he had to go all the way back to the farmhouse and start over. To add to the difficulty, the instructors had long range compressed air paintball guns, and the men were forced to strip down to their underwear to ensure they fully appreciated the sting of failure.

The team ran across the open field towards the woods, carrying nothing but their fear of getting shot. The paintballs began whizzing by and Arminius started running in a zig-zag pattern, hoping to avoid getting hit.

Jackson got plugged right in the stomach. His size was an immense disadvantage in a gunfight. He recovered from the pain and jogged back to the farmhouse to start again.

The remaining team continued their sprint, more shots whizzed by, but it seemed as though they were all set to make it to the woods. Nothing was more enchanting at this moment than the thought of a tree big enough to hide behind.

Crack. A paintball smacked into LeMay's right shoulder. The sound of the rubber hitting naked skin led Helms, Martel, and Arminius to push themselves even harder. LeMay cursed and began jogging back to the farmhouse.

Arminius ducked behind a tree just in time to hear a paintball shoot by. He was clearly the target. He looked over to see Martel hiding behind a tree a stone throw away. A groan was heard in the distance. He turned to see it was Jackson, who had been shot again in the open field, and was now turning back towards

the farmhouse.

Helms made a dash for the trail and was immediately shot in the chest.

"Fuck!" he screamed and slowly walked out of the woods back to the open field.

The more Arminius thought about it, the more impossible the test seemed.

Helms was retarded. The trail was obviously the worst place to go, it was a clear shot for the instructors. Really, the clearest shot. But getting up any other way seemed just as perilous.

More shots whizzed by, as LeMay ran wildly across the field. He took a shot on his thigh and fell down. He punched the ground, got up, and limped back towards the farmhouse.

Arminius was happy to have cover, but still had no clue as to how to get to the top. He saw Martel out of the corner of his eye. Martel was crouched down and began crawling on the ground through the mud. He wasn't exactly hidden, but it was an idea.

Another volley of shots flew by as Helms, Jackson, and LeMay all ran together towards the woods. Jackson was hit twice: once in the chest, once in the left arm, and dropped. LeMay and Helms made it through and burst into the woods. Helms took cover with Arminius, LeMay scrambled to get behind the tree Martel was previously behind.

Jackson slowly got up and walked back towards the farmhouse.

"That guy is fucked. He's just too big a target." Helms said, still catching his breath from the sprint.

Arminius looked over at LeMay and whispered. "What do you want to do?"

"We have to bum rush them. Everyone run up the trail. See if someone can get through." LeMay said.

Arminius shook his head. "The trail is the worst spot. We'll get shot. There's no cover. Ask Helms."

Helms nodded in agreement. "Bad idea."

LeMay shrugged, as if conceding the point. He looked around. "Where's Martel?"

Arminius pointed ahead and LeMay turned to see Martel sluggishly making his way through the bushes. He had made little to no progress in the mud.

"Let's all take off in different directions then. Try to get cover farther up the mountain." LeMay whispered.

Arminius nodded. It wasn't a good plan, but he had been pinned down for a while and hadn't come up with anything better.

"Count it down." Arminius said.

LeMay put his hand up with three fingers, then two, then one. Arminius and Helms bolted from behind the tree and tried to find cover up the mountain. Helms dove behind a bush, but the paintballs were making it through and he pressed himself lower to the ground. Arminius looked for another tree and found nothing close, he decided to keep running up the mountain.

Thud. A paintball hit him right in the stomach, he dropped to his knees then

fell backward into the mud. He held his stomach. The paintball hadn't broken, which seemed to make it more painful.

Arminius got up and began walking back down the mountain and towards the field, still holding his gut, which throbbed with pain.

Jackson was on the verge of making it to the woods, but took another shot to the chest and fell down. "Son of a bitch!" he yelled and picked himself up.

Jackson and Arminius leisurely walked back to the farmhouse. There was no rush, both knew this likely wasn't going to be their last trip of the day.

"What the fuck is even the point of this test?" Jackson asked.

"Seems more like punishment." Arminius clutched his stomach. "I think I have fucking internal bleeding."

Arminius and Jackson reached the farmhouse. "You want to give it another try, or rest a minute?" Jackson asked.

"Let's wait for Helms, that will give us a better chance when we come back at them." Arminius said, and tossed one of the water bottles laid out to Jackson, and started drinking one himself.

"Did he get hit?"

"Not yet. But he definitely will be. His cover was shit." Arminius said.

As if on cue, Helms came walking out of the woods cursing. Arminius smiled and said "Like clockwork."

Jackson laughed and waved for Helms to hurry up and get back to the farmhouse.

"Fuck this shit!" Helms said, as he reached the farmhouse, a big splotch of white paint on his forehead. Arminius tossed him a water bottle.

"Drink up and then we'll do another run." Jackson said.

The men drank their water, trying to recover from what had already been a remarkably brutal morning. Arminius looked over at Jackson, who looked like he was wearing half a polka dot shirt. An idea percolated in his mind.

"Ready?" Arminius asked, finishing off his water bottle.

Helms and Jackson nodded and the three started off across the field. Jogging at first, they picked up speed as they got closer to the woods.

As the jog broke into a sprint, Arminius dropped back and positioned himself behind Jackson as they approached the tree line. The paintballs began whizzing by and Helms took a shot in the stomach and dropped.

Jackson was back on the verge of entering the woods again, and Arminius was now crouched and running directly behind him. Jackson took three shots nearly simultaneously to the chest and began to fall. Arminius held him up and pushed forward, using Jackson as a shield as more paintballs hit. He then broke right into a full sprint well away from the trail, as Jackson fell face first into the mud at the beginning of the trail.

The section of the mountain away from the trail was considerably more wooded, and Arminius quickly made his way up the mountain hiding behind tree after tree. The paintballs didn't come, at first. Then, they came rapidly.

The instructors had figured out what he had done, but it was too late to do much about it unless they were going to abandon their well-supported position covering the trail.

Arminius knew he was unlikely to get this chance again and resolved to give it everything he had. He scurried up each natural obstacle as best he could, his lack of clothes meant each thorn bush hurt like hell, he could only hope he wasn't going through anything poisonous.

He had to double-back to get to the finish spot. But he appeared to have out-flanked the instructors who were still firing on the rest of the team. He pushed harder and was able to get through a bush that put him right at the trail entrance to the top of the mountain.

Did he just win? He turned and looked down.

The instructors were firing far down the trail. Arminius could see the back of Sergeant Cross as he aimed and fired his long range paintball gun. He looked to his right and saw something moving next to Cross, he squinted. It was Martel.

Arminius felt better, now he couldn't be accused of being the only one who went on his own. Bit by bit Martel made his way passed Cross, pausing when Cross stopped firing, and restarting when the shooting kicked back up.

It seemed as though only Arminius and Martel had made it past the entrance to the trail. The rest of the team just kept getting shot and restarting, only to get shot again.

Arminius looked around and saw that a reception of sorts had been prepared for the men who reached the top, water and trail mix. Also on one of the cruddy tables were paintball guns. Why were they there?

The shooting continued down below, and Arminius walked back to the edge to see how far Martel had gone. He was making progress, but it would be awhile at this rate.

Arminius turned back to the guns on the table, still puzzled. Was he supposed to use the guns? There was no way everyone was going to make it to the top if they played it this way. Every man that somehow reached the top just made the odds easier for the instructors - fewer targets to shoot at. He looked back at the guns and reasoned he was supposed to take out the instructors and save the team. He picked up two paintball guns and quietly headed down the trail.

Martel was by now only a few yards in front of him. Arminius found a tree and took a position behind it. He waved his hands and made a clicking sound with his mouth hoping to get Martel's attention.

After several minutes Martel finally looked up and saw him. Arminius showed him the paintball gun and motioned for him to come get it.

Martel slowly rose from his position, and, keeping an eye on Sergeant Cross, gingerly shuffled over to Arminius and took the paintball gun.

"They put these at the top, I think we are supposed to use them to get everyone up the mountain." Arminius whispered.

"Makes sense." Martel whispered back.

"I see Cross, you know where Matthews and Lowry are?"

"Yeah. They are both right below Cross." Martel said.

"Cross goes first then."

Martel nodded.

Arminius and Martel crept down the mountain trail, guns pointed at Cross, who was now firing at quick intervals. They waited until he started firing one last time to get within spitting distance, crouched into a shooting position, and opened fire.

Cross took five shots to the back and fell down and played dead. Arminius and Martel slide into his spot. They could hear Matthews and Lowry firing at what had to be just a few yards below them. Arminius picked up Cross' long range gun. He looked over at Martel who smiled and nodded.

Arminius stood up and saw Sergeant Matthews firing down the trail. He aimed the gun and hit him square in the back. Matthews dutifully fell. Sergeant Lowry turned to fire on Arminius, but was hit twice in the chest by Martel. Painted and tagged, baby.

Martel and Arminius stepped out onto the trail, victorious. "Game over!" Martel shouted with glee.

Cheers broke out at the bottom of the trail as Cross, Matthews, and Lowry got up. Sergeant Cross smiled and patted each man on the back.

"Alright, boys. Y'all passed. Come up to the top of the mountain we got food and water." Cross yelled down the trail.

The team and the instructors marched up the mountain together. The men knew it would be the last time.

Arminius, Martel and Sergeant Cross reached the top first. "You can leave those guns on the table, go grab a water and some chow. You earned it."

Soon everyone was at the top, drinking and eating, and happy to be finished. It appeared LeMay and Helms had stayed pinned down, with Jackson now having a full polka dot shirt. Who cares? The day was won.

Sergeant Cross proudly stood in front of the team. "You boys... You *men* I should say, were one of the best classes we've ever had. I mean that, truly. I thank you, and we all look forward to hearing of your mighty exploits. You are a tribute to our race. And I know you will be the thunder and the lightning for our people... And don't forget, I want my three kills! Jackson, if you learn to duck, you might even get them for me! Just kidding. Just kidding. Y'all going to do great!" Cross waited for the laughter to die down.

"So, congratulations and good luck. And whenever you're ready to move out, all the preparations have been made. Your chariot awaits. That's it. Thank you."

Cross, obviously emotional, saluted, and the men saluted back. The instructors shook the team member's hands and everyone started walking back down the trail. The trail was muddy and slippery, but no one fell. Even if that had, it mattered not. For nothing could stain such an auspicious day.

*

The team showered, dressed, and made sure they didn't forget anything as they loaded up the car. The *chariot* was a sixteen-year-old silver Toyota Camry. The weapons had already been loaded into a false bottom in the truck, along with basic supplies, \$40,000 in cash, and an initial kill list. Once they got through the first list, only then would they need to make contact with White Lightning command. Otherwise, they were on their own.

The final hugs and handshakes were completed. The men got in the car and drove off, away from the purity of the countryside and onto the dirt road

towards a fallen nation.

The instructors watched the car drive off. "Sergeant Lowry, could I see you a minute." Sergeant Cross said.

Sergeant Lowry followed Cross into the farmhouse, being trailed by Sergeant Matthews and Dave.

Cross sat down at the makeshift kitchen table and invited Lowry to do the same. "I wanted to give you this back."

Cross pushed a sheet of paper across the table.

Lowry picked it up. "It's their kill list..."

"Nah, they got another list."

Lowry gave Cross a confused look. "Why?"

Cross smiled at Lowry, his eyes ice cold. "I didn't think the FBI needed to see the *real* list."

Lowry suddenly figured out his cover was blown and went to get up, but before he could Sergeant Matthews had a noose around his neck and was strangling him. Dave put Lowry in a bear hug to prevent him from grabbing the rope. Matthews used all his weight and strength to cut off Lowry's air.

After a few moments, Lowry stopped struggling and went limp. Dave let go and caught his breath. Matthews let the body hit the floor.

"We need to clean house." Cross said, as he stood up and headed towards the

classroom. "We got a damn infestation!"

Dave and Sergeant Matthews laid Lowry's body down on top of some scenery from the fake town they had created for training. Cross poured a full container of gasoline on top of the body. He pulled out a lighter and lit the scenery. The body quickly caught fire.

"Throw the rest on there." Cross said. The men threw the remaining scenery from Mud City on the conflagration. The stench from Lowry's burning body invaded their nostrils.

Cross put a handkerchief over his nose, "Rats do stink, don't they? Alright, we need to wipe everything down and move all our supplies out. The farm is closed until further notice. New recruits will have to be redirected for training elsewhere. I'll let HQ know we've been compromised. "

"How much do you think he gave them?" Matthews said, blankly looking over the fire.

"I don't know." Cross said, and put the handkerchief down and sneered at what remained of Lowry's charred corpse. He turned and walked back towards the farmhouse, and Matthews and Dave followed.

The fire crackled on the ground and the smoke plumed into the sky above. Lowry was dead, but the strike team was alive. Newly born and fit. Ready to fight with audacity, and die ecstatically. At least three kills each, that was a promise. There was nothing else to do, but just drive. They were on the road to serve death, and it was such a happy highway.

Run To Daylight

1.

They rode down the sun-drenched freeway in their steel chariot. LeMay drove, with Arminius riding shotgun, everyone else was crammed in the back. White power Oi! music blared through the car speakers. It was safe, there was no one for miles.

"I wish this was a convertible." Martel said. "It's been too long since I got some sun. Remember, one of our top priorities is the war against xenoestrogen."

Everyone else in the car groaned. "Not this faggotry again, goddammit!" Arminius said.

"You need sun to increase testosterone, it's science!"

"You want to talk about science? Straight up Martel, you pull your balls out again and you're going to get a kinetic response - namely, my fist in your face!" LeMay said.

"Fine, I won't. But sunlight on your scrotum has been scientifically verified to increase testosterone. I mean, multiple times. It's confirmed!"

"Fine then." LeMay said.

It had only been a few days since the farm, but it was clear that Martel was going to be the most difficult traveling companion of the group. He had launched - more like forced - a long ranging discussion on how exposure to processed food,

plastic, and other chemicals was screwing with people's hormones by increasing estrogen. Martel's sweeping and poorly sourced theory explained alleged increases in homosexual and transsexual activity, and why so many men were weak and fat.

The rest of the team had agreed to try and make more time for tanning and budget for more steak-dinners to appease him, but then Martel whipped out his balls and things had gotten hectic. It was a confined space, and no one wanted to see that shit.

"I'm honestly amazed that I'm the only one here who understands we're being poisoned!" Martel said.

"I'm with you on it. I just don't want to see your balls again." Helms said.

"I'm definitely into it. Yukio Mishima all the way. I'm seriously missing the gym right now, I used to basically live there. Also, Martel, for real, I don't want to see your balls again." Jackson said.

"Mishima for life." LeMay said.

Martel sulked back in his seat. As usual, he was upset to be agreed with.

"If I may make a point without a sperg out." Arminius said and looked at Martel using the rear view mirror. "Aren't we supposed to be modeling our behavior based on Latin American communists? Not a lot of love for Japanese fascism among that lot."

Arminius knew it was a trollish comment, but he was in a mischievous mood, and the barren highway had no end in sight.

"Yeah, I wasn't with all that. I get the idea though" Jackson said.

"I took it purely as strategy. Once we win, mud commies will hang. And just to make sure we get them all - all the other muds get the rope too!" Helms said.

Everyone laughed, and the tension brought about by Martel's autism was relieved. In the final analysis, they didn't join White Lightning by accident, and they agreed more than they disagreed.

"I'll hold to the greatness of strength. The triumph of the will. And the eternal power of beauty and youth. Let us rekindle the hyperborean age and re-build a master race!" LeMay said in a way that made it difficult to tell how sincere he was.

"Hail victory! Hail our people!" Martel cheered from the back.

Arminius was suddenly more bored now than he was before he baited everyone into the discussion. His favorite song started playing, and he had no need for further stimulation.

"You've read Nietzsche, right Arminius?" LeMay said.

"Thanks. But I've had enough philosophy for two lifetimes." Arminius said, and turned the song up to drown out any additional conversation.

The music blared and the men all sang in unison:

The streets are still, the final battle has ended

Flushed with the fight, we proudly hail the dawn

See over the streets, the White man's emblem is waving

Triumphant standards of a race reborn.

*

A cop car had turned in behind the strike team on the highway as they entered Chicago. Shortly thereafter the car cut in front of them and sped off, apparently annoyed by the team's car doing the speed limit.

They speculated most people only began following the traffic laws when a police car was behind them, so the cop's annoyance was probably not exceptional. All clear.

Either way, the police were gone and it was time to get to work. The first target was a Whiteness Studies professor at the University of Illinois, Dr. Carol Justice. She was one of the few remaining vocally anti-white professors left after the lightning strikes had started. Most other anti-white professors had either been gunned down or learned to keep quiet. Her Jewish background made her an even more attractive target for white nationalists, but she was childless, so The 14 Words had more or less left her alone outside of internet harassment.

Now she would be the team's first hit.

LeMay parked the car near the university. Everyone checked to ensure they still had their new ID cards, before hitting the street.

Like most universities after the incidents started, the school was on virtual lockdown to non-students. You could travel the campus, but entering a building required someone to buzz you in or a special key card. The on-running joke about the recent reports of sexual assault reductions was that the curfews, key

cards, and other restrictions meant people couldn't even lie about having sex anymore.

Professor Justice's classes were part of the political science department. The team figured her office must be in that building. They came upon a hideous structure on Harrison Street labeled The Behavioral Science Building. They decided to hang out in front of the building to get a sense of things.

The target packet included a head shot, and everyone studied it before leaving the car. There was also some random information including her supposed office hours gleaned from a website, but they needed better intel before taking any action.

Students scurried in and out of the building, using their key cards. There was no way the team was getting to the target that way, especially given there were security guards inside.

The oddly shaped building had what looked like a gray outgrowth that stretched out a few feet in front of the doors to the front entrance, which were indented on either side of the outgrowth. No one coming out either of the entrances could see anyone standing in front of the outgrowth section of the building. Postmodern architecture was doing their work for them.

The office hours listed on the target packet said Professor Justice should be finishing up for the day. The men had only been standing around for roughly an hour, but it was still somewhat suspicious. They agreed to break up and move to different parts of the front of the building.

Twenty or so minutes later the doors opened and a woman, early 50s, stumpy and disheveled, walked out one of the doors. Jackson was positioned closest to her, and nodded at LeMay.

"Professor Justice?" LeMay called out.

The woman slightly turned while still walking "Yes?"

"Oh, I'm sorry, I just missed you. Are you having office hours tomorrow?"

"Yes. Be on time." Professor Justice said, and continued walking towards the parking lot.

LeMay turned back to the team, smiling. Target acquired.

They walked back to the car, pleased and aroused. It was finally time to do it for real.

*

"It's simple." LeMay said, addressing the team.

The team were circled around a piece of paper and a map in a room at the Holiday Inn just up the highway from the university.

"Jackson and Martel are on opposite sides of the building entrance. Arminius is my backup, he spots her coming out of the door. He signals, me, I come out from behind the front of the building - point blank shot to the head. I fuck it up, you three come in blasting to finish her off. Otherwise, I shoot and we all run to Helms who is going to be idling in this street near the university parking lot."

LeMay drew lines on the piece of paper, they were rudimentary but comprehensible. "If we make it. Helms hits the highway and we go to Indianapolis for the change up."

"Why are we taking the highway, isn't that the first place they'll look?" Helms asked.

"Look. We either make a clean getaway or we're pwned. We stick around, Chicago PD will shut down the city and squeeze. For Christsakes, this is a Jew we're talking about. They could give a fuck if the niggers smoke each other in Chiraq. But a Jewess professor? Calling all cars. Calling all cars." LeMay retorted.

"All the more reason not to take the highway. Chicago PD can shut down the highway in minutes and there are cameras everywhere. They get the make and model of the car and out come the roadblocks." Arminius said.

"You got a better plan? I'm all ears." LeMay said.

"The strike is fine. Quick, clean, doable. But we don't hit the highway." Arminius pointed to the map. "We go north, uptown baby. Through the Gold Coast, up Lake Shore Drive. Through country club land. Those areas are quality of life policing, they won't be looking too hard at us. It's our best chance to slip away. Do the change up in Madison."

LeMay considered it, and looked around the circle. "Is that the plan?"

Everyone nodded.

The strike team had a steak dinner and went to bed. Only Martel slept, confident in his purity of essence. The rest of the men tried, but failed to find peace as they gyrated between doom and euphoria at tomorrow's duties. Unlike Martel, they appreciated that this could be their last night alive.

*

She pushed the doors open and walked out of the Behavioral Science Building and saw a white man, late 20s, with his hands behind his back. He nodded at her, or was he looking at someone else.

"Thunder!" a voice behind her yelled.

Professor Justice turned around as LeMay put the forty-five pistol an inch from her eye, and fired. The bullet went through her eye and blew her brains out the back of her face, with her skull folding like burning paper into mush. She collapsed on the ground, as dead as Dixie.

"Lightning." LeMay said softly, as he crouched over what was left of her head, and winked.

"Let's go!" Arminius shouted, and he, LeMay, Jackson and Martel all ran towards the student parking lot.

They reached the car and jumped inside. Helms handed the AR-15 to LeMay and hit the gas. The forty-five had been loud and caught the attention of everyone nearby. LeMay slid the AR-15 further down in the seat until it was out of sight.

Helms just hyperfocused on the task in front of him. He took the car fast for three blocks, the engine straining under the demand for immediate speed.

"Anybody see anything?"

"Clear." Arminius said from the back.

Helms turned right and crossed the river at Grand Avenue and hit normal speed. They looked for police activity and saw none. Helms followed the route he had almost committed to memory; still slyly looking down at a notepad he

had written the driving directions on from time to time.

The car coasted along the bustling city streets, no one seemingly aware that they were in the presence of full-time killers. That they were graced by the presence of White Lightning, destroyers of worlds.

Helms pulled onto Lakeshore Drive. "Here we go."

"Ride it all the way up. Then jump on Sheridan and ride that all the way up."
Arminius said, checking his gun.

LeMay turned on the radio and searched for a news station. He found one, but there was nothing on the shooting yet. This would have been a great time to have had internet access, but the protocols of comsec prevailed.

"We need to make a stop once we hit country club land." Arminius said.

"Change plates?" LeMay asked.

"Yeah."

There was about ten minutes of relative silence and the men relaxed a bit. They took down the target and were still alive and free at the moment. Mission accomplished.

Lakeshore Drive ended, and Helms turned onto Sheridan Road. Helms was beginning to ease up. They seemed to have gotten away clean and he was happy to look down and see that he hadn't pissed his pants.

The news finally reported the shooting. But also said there were reports of an active shooter on campus. The team looked at each other and laughed.

"They think it's some sperg!" Martel said, without a hint of irony.

"Good. Let them chase shadows. First twenty-four hours are everything." LeMay said.

"Whoa, let's make a stop here. Perfect." Arminius said.

"The cemetery?" Helms asked.

"Definitely."

Helms pulled into Calvary Catholic Cemetery. LeMay jumped out of the passenger seat and Arminius followed out of the back.

"Pop the trunk" LeMay yelled.

Helms popped the trunk open, and LeMay and Arminius dug in and came out with plates and tools. Arminius took the front and LeMay took the back. They had practiced this repeatedly at the farm, but were making Daytona time now. Adrenaline is a hell of a drug.

Done. Arminius brought the old plate back, and LeMay put it in the trunk and slammed the trunk shut. They both hopped back in their respective seats.

"Hit it!" LeMay said.

Helms pulled back onto Sheridan Road and tried to make up for lost time.

"Slow down. Think normie." Arminius said.

"Alright, we changed to the plates under your alias Jackson. If we get pulled

over, it's your car." LeMay said.

"OK." Jackson said, the only one of the men who seemed fairly calm.

The radio continued belching out wild speculation and calling it news. Now the police were reportedly looking for multiple active shooters. The team guessed this was the result of a mixture between the erroneous active shooter report, and someone who actually saw the team in action. Whatever, the kill zone was well in the rear view mirror now.

"Oh, fuck!" Helms screamed as two police cars came speeding up behind them, sirens blaring.

"Everyone, get ready!" LeMay commanded.

The team checked their weapons and LeMay pulled the AR-15 up to his chest.

The police cars flew past them and up the street. Their flashing lights quickly disappearing in the distance.

The team sat in dead silence. Helms was completely befuddled. "What... the fuck."

He realized he was choking the steering wheel like it owed him money. He eased up on his grip.

LeMay dropped the AR-15 back down into the seat. "I'm right there with you, Helms. What the fuck, indeed."

Arminius sat in the back seat, pistol still drawn. He had been maintaining his cool with pure grit and breathing exercises, but the sudden near miss was

testing his ability to cope. Nothing made sense. If they followed them this far, why not take them? Were they getting ahead of them to set up a roadblock? No. They wouldn't drive past them for that. Then, suddenly, a thought shot into his mind like a bullet from a forty-five.

"Northwestern!" Arminius yelled.

"What?" LeMay said.

"Northwestern University is up ahead, they are probably sending police there because they think it's about colleges. Helms, turn off, now!"

Helms haphazardly took a left off Sheridan to Clark Street. The car lurched hard to the left, smooching the people in the back, with LeMay almost ending up in Helms' lap.

"Take a right next chance you get, we can parallel Sheridan without going into the university area. Shit, they might even have checkpoints. We're not out of the woods yet." Arminius said, rechecking his pistol and trying to recompose himself.

Helms took a right onto Sherman Avenue and rode parallel to Sheridan. Cops were everywhere. LeMay turned the radio down.

Sherman suddenly ended. Helms dreamed of a world where cell phones and GPS weren't comsec violations.

"Left, then a right!" Arminius yelled from the back.

Helms jumped onto Ridge Avenue, and the cop noises faded away.

Arminius pulled up the map and looked at it. "OK, good. Ridge becomes Sheridan. We're good. We're good. Just take it straight up."

Thirty minutes passed and no one said a word. They feared that any utterance, or merely unclenching, would lead to divine punishment and two police cars would suddenly materialize out of thin air.

"At the risk of jinxing myself, I think we're good." LeMay said.

Everyone in the backseat looked for cop cars, and then gradually loosened up. They were well out of the city now. If the police had any idea it was them, there was no evidence of it.

Arminius put his pistol away, and finally closed his eyes. After missing last night's sleep, and enduring the emotional roller coaster of the day, he was drained. He closed his eyes.

"Alright!" a voice in front of him yelled.

He bounced awake.

"Welcome to Wisconsin." LeMay said softly.

2.

LeMay handed the cash to the used car dealer and took the keys to the Honda Civic. "You sure you don't want to trade that in?" the dealer asked, pointing to the Camry.

"Yeah. We'll still use it." LeMay said, and forced a handshake to close things out.

The team made it to Madison without incident. Changing up vehicles after a lightning strike was protocol, so was trying to get the most popular models to blend in as much as possible. The team had paperwork for various popular models that could, in theory, pass police scrutiny.

Based on news reports it seemed that the police had figured out Professor Justice wasn't killed by a crazed student, nor that there was an active shooter on campus. Not that solving the case would take much detective work: within forty-eight hours White Lightning would be issuing a communique explaining that the killing was a lightning strike, and why Justice had to die. The press release was always delayed to give operatives time to get out of town.

The team met back up in the parking lot of a Home Depot. Arminius laid the map down on the back of the Camry.

"Alright up there, is 151." Arminius pointed towards a highway up ahead. "We'll take that into Iowa. Then we swing through Missouri to Kentucky to Virginia for target two. Make sense?"

"You want to avoid Illinois entirely? That's going to add time." LeMay said.

"Despite all that fusion center bullshit, I don't think the states talk to each other that much. But if Chicago PD got one of us on camera, I'd bet state police will have it. Unless it goes wide, then we're well fucked."

LeMay shrugged and looked at the rest of the team. "Thoughts?"

"We gotta dump the car. As in now. It's a direct connection." Helms said.

"Agreed. But don't flip out. You know how many silver Camry's there are? And if they caught us on a plate reader, they still don't have this one. The old plate is a dead end. So we're good. But yes, we need to dump the Camry." LeMay said.

"Speaking of a direct connection, did you pick up your casing?" Arminius asked

LeMay smiled and pulled out the forty-five casing from the lightning strike. It shined in the light. Arminius mock saluted.

"So, the car..." Helms said.

Arminius looked at the map. "Out here on 18, looks like a dead zone. We can drive it into this lake or burn it."

"Let's go. Jackson, drive the Camry. The plates are under your name. Just follow us out." LeMay said. The rest of the team got into the Honda Civic.

The two cars drove down highway Route 151 and turned onto Route 18. They followed the route down, past a hiking trail and some kind of recreation area.

The Civic put it's turn signal on and turned onto a dirt road, the Camry

followed close behind. They drove past the trail and a small lake, and turned in behind it.

The men got out and started transferring the weapons and materials from the Camry to the Civic. They put the next set of plates on the Civic and hid the rest of the sensitive materials in the spare tire well. The rifles were packed in a bag and covered with the clothes and everything else. They would keep their pistols close.

"That lake looks too shallow for a car." LeMay said.

"Yeah, and burning it isn't an option out here." Arminius said, as he looked across the open air to the highway and neighboring fields. He pulled out the map.

"Alright, new plan. We take 18 to this county highway G. Go deep in the woods, burn it."

LeMay nodded. "Jackson got back in. I know it sucks not having cell phones, but it's why we're still free. Just follow."

Jackson nodded and headed back to the Camry.

The Civic and Camry were back on the road, and soon approached the turn for G. The Civic turned and the Camry followed. The surrounding woods began getting thicker.

"This is good." Arminius said, and LeMay turned into a wooded area. The Camry followed. "Make sure you can turn around."

The cars stopped, everyone got out. LeMay motioned for Jackson to get back in

the Camry. "Drive it in deeper."

The Camry passed the group, and LeMay jumped back in the Civic to turn it around. The men looked around to see if they were being watched but the roads were empty, and the few houses they passed were well shrouded in green.

Jackson came walking back from out of the woods. "I can't drive any further in."

"That's OK, this is fine. There's probably houses not so far on the other side anyway." Arminius said.

LeMay grabbed a big red gas can from the trunk of the Camry, and the rest of the strike team stepped back from the car.

"Seems a shame to burn it. Still runs well." Jackson said, looking over the Camry.

"Next time we should sell the car. This is a lot of work for nothing." Helms said.

"Then what happens when the cop pulls the car over somewhere and asks the driver where he got it? They go back to the dealer and he gives them everything he knows, and probably a surveillance tape." Arminius said.

"No loose ends." LeMay said as he opened the passenger side front door and started pouring gasoline all over the front seats. Then he opened the passenger side back door and did the same.

He shut both doors and asked "Who has the paper and lighter?"

"Me." Helms said.

Everyone moved back as LeMay lit a piece of newspaper on fire and tossed into

the car through the open door window. Flames immediately shot up and began engulfing the car. The heat pushed out onto the men.

"Let's go." LeMay said as they ran back to the Civic. LeMay put the gas can back in the trunk and jumped into the driver's seat.

The car peeled out and back onto the road. It wouldn't be long until the fire and smoke raised alarms.

"Take a right onto 92. That will take us back to 151." Arminius said.

LeMay hit the gas going up 92, then slowed down and merged onto 151. "What now?"

"Nothing. We'll be in Dubuque in an hour and change. We're good."

LeMay searched for the news channel on the Civic's radio. The shooting appeared to be largely absorbed by the system, normalized and mostly forgotten. It was America, after all. The police were interviewing suspects and had no leads they were disclosing at the moment. The communique countdown ticked away.

*

They were somewhere around St. Louis when the communique went wide. The radio news program simply mentioned that White Lightning had "taken responsibility" for the killing of Dr. Justice. A futile policy of not reporting the full content of the communiques had been adopted by most of the liberal establishment media.

The ostensible justification was that the mainstream media would be giving a

platform to White Lightning if they reported the words in the communique, and therefore, encourage more killings.

The substantive effect of the censorship was for more people to look for the content of the message, and therefore, be more invested in considering it when they read it. It was a nice arrangement for everyone involved.

Underneath the petty virtue signaling was a deeper logic. The old baby boomer liberals nested within the establishment media oligopolies believed that they were delegitimizing the white nationalists by both denying them a platform for their messages, and attempting, Soviet-style, to portray every white nationalist militant as suffering from some kind of mental health disorder.

This rather naked gaslighting did next to nothing to stop white nationalist militancy, but did irritate to no end the younger journalists and media executives who noted, quite accurately, that there was a double-standard being applied to white nationalist violence when compared to the coverage of the violence perpetrated by official enemies of the empire.

While it was certainly true that one of the more despicable pathologies of liberal elites is over-confidence in their own intellectual superiority, the strategy was not simply born of hubris and a low opinion of the public's cognitive capacities. The boomer liberals believed they had a better understanding of the awesome dark powers with which they dealt, and feared conceding that the white nationalist agenda was fundamentally a political program would summon the slumbering animal spirits that dwelt just underneath the surface of American society. If such forces were unleashed, they believed, the delicate balance painstakingly forged in the aftermath of the cultural revolutions of the 1960s would be smashed, and a new order forged in crimson.

In other words, they were terrified. Not just out of fear for the security of their

current positions of status and influence - that was a daily anxiety they had mostly made peace with - but a fear of total obliteration. Not just ghastly irrelevance, but a purge of all their sensibilities along with their pieties. Conservatives are just liberals who hate poor people openly, the white nationalists are a different sort of threat altogether. They wouldn't just change regimes, they would change paradigms. The white nationalists would perform some serious brain surgery on the national mind if they got control.

It was a strategy they knew all too well. The boomer liberals had rewritten American history to suit their own deformities, now they thought they were in danger of having to watch themselves be written back out. A lifetime of endless striving, kissassery, and connivance all just to be unpersoned by history - the horror!

There was also the downside of being hanged from a lamp post.

The team headed towards St. Louis and Arminius opened the map. "We can get on 64 and ride it all the way to Charlottesville. Unless you want to crash here."

"Not here. But I don't have much driving time left in me." LeMay said.

"We'll technically be in Illinois for a few hours, but a new car and new plates makes it seem worth the risk." Arminius said.

"So, when are we stopping?" Helms asked.

"Piss break whenever, but I say we cross into Kentucky and stop at the first motel. Probably three hours from now."

"I can do three hours more." LeMay said.

They drove for just under three hours and stopped at a Motel 6 that was about an hour or so outside Louisville. The team was wasted, and in desperate need of a shower and a meal. But as soon as they got to the room they succumbed to sleep.

*

A hand shook Arminius awake. He squinted to see Jackson standing over him. "You want breakfast, or you want to sleep in?"

Arminius struggled to keep his eyes open. He must have slept over ten hours, and his stomach was growling. "Fuck it. I can eat."

He forced himself to sit up and saw only Martel still sleeping on the floor, the rest of the team was sluggishly getting dressed and cleaning up.

He went to the bathroom sink and threw water on his face. He looked like shit. But he was still alive and so so pretty. He smiled at himself.

Martel finally got up and the team walked to a Denny's by the motel. It felt good to walk after so much time immobilized in the car. They almost missed those morning runs up the mountain. Almost.

Arminius plopped down in the circular booth and put his head on the table, still half asleep. Helms came in after him, and shoved him to the side to make room for Jackson. LeMay and Martel came in on the other side.

A waitress came by and LeMay told her five coffees and that they would need time with the menus. Helms hit Arminius on the top of the head with a menu, which he then took from Helms' hands.

The coffee flowed through Arminius, gently lifting the fog in his brain. His eyes finally fully opened. "Goddamn, I needed that."

LeMay returned with a newspaper and a wide smile. "Boys, we've been upstaged."

The front page of The New York Times showed a picture of a draped body laying in the street, the headline "14 Words Takes Credit For Anti-Racist Activist Murder."

Arminius, now jolted fully awake, looked at the name. "You gotta be fucking kidding me."

"That's right, they hit our boy!" LeMay laughed.

The man killed had called himself a woman. Elizabeth Scagnetti had become a multimedia sensation after the Charlottesville rally in 2017 for her on-the-ground broadcasts. She became a leading voice in anti-racist activism on social media, and had kept plugging away even when the bodies of her comrades kept falling around her. She was a total thorn in the side of the white nationalist movement and was, by biological imperative and choice, childless. Which is why The 14 Words hadn't touched her so far, and also why Scagnetti was target number two for the strike team.

It was going to be Arminius' first time as striker.

"Not the end of the world. Target three is in Maryland. We're on our way there, anyway." Jackson reasoned.

"Fucking bullshit, she was mine!" Arminius said between clenched teeth.

"He." Martel inserted.

Arminius dropped a look at Martel that should have had an ordinance warning.

"What's the difference? Dead is dead." Helms said.

The waitress returned and took their orders. LeMay continued reading the article, then busted out laughing.

"Listen to this. The 14 Words issued a press release saying they didn't usually kill childless degenerates but he was 'exceptionally annoying.' They are demanding donations from 'everyone who enjoys the internet.'"

The team laughed, even Arminius, though he was still furious at being denied his kill.

"I should be striker for target three." Arminius said.

"No way. It's my time to shine." Jackson said. He was designated as striker for target three, but that assumed target two was taken out by the strike team.

"Target three is really target two. I mean, he will be the second target we strike." Arminius said emphatically.

"No. Scagnetti was target two. Three is mine. Your responsibility as striker is for target two." Jackson insisted.

"My responsibility?" Arminius looked at Jackson incredulously. "What am I supposed to do, kill her again?"

"Him." Martel inserted.

"Mother fucker..." Arminius seriously considered jumping over the table and gouging Martel's eyes out with a butter knife.

"Relax. Relax. We'll work something out." LeMay said, using a lowering motion with his hands to try and remind everyone they were in a public place, and on the run for murder.

The food arrived and everyone ate their breakfast in silence. LeMay kept reading the paper and Arminius kept fuming over his loss. The only good thing about eating at Denny's was the assurance that they would hit the road with empty bowels.

The team checked out of Motel 6 and piled into the car. LeMay got back on 64, and Arminius pulled out the map. "OK. We'll take 64 until we get to Route 79. I'll tell you when."

"What? We're not going to Charlottesville?" Martel asked.

"Martel, shut the fuck up." LeMay said, laughing.

Arminius glared at Martel in the rear view mirror, and Martel rubbed an outstretched middle finger on his nose. The feeling was mutual.

The third target was Herbert Osher, a man who had made a fortune selling shitty home mortgage loans before getting out just before the crash in 2008. He was sending a nice cut of his sleazy gains to anti-white nationalist groups. That alone signed his death warrant. That he was also a Jew who made his money in crooked financial dealings would make the kill that much sweeter.

"OK, get on 70." Arminius said.

LeMay turned onto Route 70 heading towards Mount Airy, Maryland. The team had been in the car for almost eleven continuous hours, but for a few bathroom breaks.

"How far out are we now?" Helms asked.

"An hour, roughly." Arminius replied.

"I'm eager to get this rolling, but I'm going to need to crash for a bit before we do recon." Jackson said.

"First motel we see." LeMay said.

The hour reluctantly passed, and the car came upon a sign showing they reached Mount Airy. LeMay pulled into a Budget Inn right on the other side of the highway from the entrance to the town.

*

The next morning, the team piled back into the Civic. They drove into the town, and were soon engulfed by the howling emptiness of suburban living. Mount Airy was a case study on the tacky yuppieization of a historic community. There were hundred year-old churches flanked by corporate coffee shops and fly-by-night craft stores. It was the quintessential petit bourgeois projection of *the small American town*, but superimposed on an actual pre-existing small American town.

Every aspect of the town had a forced quality to it: people pretended to be neighborly neighbors, and performed their traditional traditions. It was as if everyone was acting in a play written and directed by an authoritarian greeting card company.

But the enforced normalcy had backfired, and instead of being given a taste of authentic Americana, the scenery and atmosphere made things seem hypernormal to the point of being surreal. Now, nothing seemed normal, or genuine. Even the facades had facades. The lack of baseline human sincerity was excruciating.

It was strange for a man of such wealth to be hiding out in Epcot U.S.A, but his larger homes had come under attack by white nationalists after it was revealed that he was putting big money behind their enemies. His home in Annapolis had been burned to the ground in a suspicious fire a few months ago, and his home in Palm Beach had been machine gunned.

LeMay turned off Main Street onto Buffalo Road. The little town faded into farmland. "How much do you think these homes run?"

"Half a mil. Maybe more." Arminius said, looking around. "Take the left up here."

LeMay turned onto Harrisville Road. "Loan shark Jew becomes a farmer, now I've seen it all."

"Good cover. He should try being a coal miner next. OK, We're coming up on it. Don't stop, just slow down."

The large three floor house was at the end of a long private driveway. At first glance the house appeared typical for the neighborhood. But a closer look showed there were surveillance cameras and what looked like an armed guard sitting on the porch.

Arminius looked over at LeMay, they nodded at each other.

"Is it him?" Helms asked from the back.

"Yes." LeMay said.

"Don't circle back, take a left on Woodville. A right on Shirely Bohn gets you back to Buffalo." Arminius said, putting the map away and leaning back in his seat in frustration.

LeMay turned onto Woodville. "We're going to have to go in hard. That place looks locked down."

"Impossible." Arminius said, shaking his head. "That house is a death trap. I can only imagine the firepower he has in there. It's a bunker. We need to catch him out in the open."

The car ride back to the motel was completely silent, but the wheels were turning.

"Why don't we just park at the end of the street, and wait for the car to leave and just roll up on them and hit the car?" Jackson asked, during the team's after action meeting in the motel room.

"The car might be reinforced to take the shots. Then it's a waste and we won't get a second chance." LeMay said.

"Bullshit. What car window can take an AR-15 or forty-five at close range?" Helms said.

"He might not even be in the car!" Arminius said, becoming frustrated. "I saw two big black SUVs in the driveway. We might hit the wrong one, or it could be able to withstand assault rifle fire. He's got the money to reinforce the vehicles."

We need to catch him in the open to even have a chance."

"How?" Martel asked.

"I don't know. We need to figure out his hobbies. He has to leave the house sometime, right? Who does he see? Where does he go?"

"You want to do surveillance for pattern of life? Follow him for a week?" LeMay asked.

"Too risky. We get made and he's gone. I'm not trying to keep serving up the black pill here, but this is not a soft target. Maybe he was before, but not now." Arminius said.

For the first time the strike team was out-manned and outgunned.

*

The two black SUVs came down the road towards the vineyard. The music festival was already underway. There was a sea of tents setup for shade, and a crowd of people gathered around a stage.

Osher stepped out of the second SUV. A four man security team accompanied him as he walked from the parking lot towards the festival grounds.

AR-15 fire ripped into the two men in front splashing their blood all over the ground. Jackson, having been hidden behind a fence near the stage, kept firing and walking closer to Osher.

Screams came from the vineyard as the two remaining security detail jumped in front of Osher and tried to hide him behind a nearby car. Helms jumped out

from behind another car and fired the forty-five at Osher, hitting one of his other guards in the throat.

Osher took off as the AR-15 and forty-five rained down on what remained of his security detail. He headed back towards the road, where Arminius and Martel fired on him with their nines and put close to ten bullets in his face, chest, and extremities. Arminius ran up and put one in his head at close range.

"My kill!" Martel shouted.

"Bullshit, my kill!" Arminius shouted back.

Jackson and Helms ran past them towards the Civic, and Arminius and Martel quickly followed.

They all jumped in the car and LeMay hit the gas. "Keep that AR-15 handy, Jackson. Getting out is going to be the hard part."

The car flew down the local road and headed north. There were no signs of police yet. Most of their scenarios involved a large police response. That nothing came so far was unnerving.

"OK, here comes the park." Arminius said, riding shotgun.

The car slowed as it went through Catoctin Mountain Park, then accelerated once on the other side, racing up towards Pennsylvania.

"Is anyone seeing anything?" LeMay shouted.

"Nothing." Helms said.

The Civic crossed into Pennsylvania without incident. No police anywhere. No commotion at all to speak of.

"You want to change plates?" LeMay asked, more confused than anxious.

"No. Fuck it. Get on 81, then take 30 . It's all about distance now." Arminius said, more anxious than confused, but still very confused. How did the police not respond given how many people must have called it in?

The adrenaline was less severe the second time, but still a force to be reckoned with. The car reeked of fear. This was a much higher risk strike than the Justice hit.

It had taken almost two weeks to discover that Osher had a weakness for snotty music festivals at the Linganore Wine cellars vineyard. The team had finally set up the strike after scouting the location and planning a clean getaway. The men had prepared to be suffering injuries from the security team, as well as running from a lot of cops. Instead, nothing.

"How long until Pittsburgh?" Jackson asked.

"Three hours." Arminius responded.

After roughly half an hour, people in the car started to calm down. The tension subsided and the men started to accept that, despite their own certain predictions, they had gotten away completely clean.

Arminius and LeMay changed plates on the Civic as the rest of the team decompressed at the motel. The complete lack of a police response was still unnerving. The only rationale for the weak response was how fast they had left. Maybe they had fled the scene so rapidly that local and state police were caught

flatfooted. It was possible, wasn't it?

3.

The uneven highway clacked under the wheels of the Chevy Impala. The men were headed to the last kill on the list. The steel chariot applauded their valor with every clack, it rang out like God's own thunder. It was a harmony written in blood, and sung with sweet screams. They were keeping their heads up.

The highway evened out. The applause faded, but the blazing visions remained. Arminius looked out the back seat window at what was left of Ohio. There wasn't much to look at.

Wall Street had ravaged the heartland: shut down the factories and shipped the jobs to China. In exchange for giving the chinks the middle class jobs that used to be in Ohio, Goldman Sachs and friends had gotten themselves a nice cut of the loot from the caper. It was a hell of a party, if you were invited.

As the banksters used their lavish bonuses to snort blow and fuck high-priced escorts, the people of the interior languished in poverty and misery. The now out of work wagecucks tried to escape the pain of their obsolescence with opioids and Reality TV. And many, after years of struggle, finally decided to ride out of this cruel dark world on a shotgun blast.

The bankers, if they thought about the people they crushed at all, were happy to see them go. They wanted young immigrant muds for the interior. Workers who were amenable to wage slavery and wouldn't ask questions. Better if they couldn't even speak English. It's harder to organize a union if you don't have papers and can't speak the local language. Well, the local language *for the moment*.

But now there was redemption. While the lightning strike on Osher was making news, another team's strike on bank CEO Danny Jewel shocked the parasite class. Jewel's megabank had been one of the primary culprits in the 2008 crash, and he had tried to refurbish his reputation and influence by going all in on funding white nationalism's enemies. It is not clear if this bought him any substantial goodwill with the public, but it definitely pissed off the wrong people.

Jewel's death had exposed all the hidden anxieties of corporate America, which came spilling out in their cable news channels, newspapers, and other media. Maybe the commercial oligarchy bet on the wrong horse? Who was next? If law enforcement couldn't stop these people, was it time to cut a deal? What would the Nazis take to agree to back off?

The reaction to the Jewel assassination by the corporatocracy confirmed what more or less everyone always knew, the businessman is fundamentally amoral. He is a calculator at heart. If it's in his interest to caterwaul about social justice and shed crocodile tears over the state of diversity and sexual harassment in the workplace, he will. If it's in his interest to hang niggers from trees, he will. Never forget those Auschwitz tattoos were IBM code.

Jewel's death had taken some of the air out of the Osher killing's press coverage, which the team was surprisingly fine with. Frankly, they were in awe. It had taken intense time and effort to kill a retired executive hanging out in a random suburb with a small security team. But the other strike team had gotten a world-

famous sitting billionaire CEO. One could only imagine the level of security they had to overcome.

The Impala was under one of Helms' IDs, so he drove. The car passed by a group of zombified heroin addicts walking in the middle of the street.

"Goddamn, the Jews did a number on this place." Helms said, steering his way around the addicts.

They rolled on through the Midwest wasteland. Tongues of desolation licked the province, with strategically placed corporate outposts the only visible sign of human activity. The expanding jungle of foreclosed homes and shuttered local businesses was kept in check just enough to maintain a still functional McDonald's or Walmart. Everything else was left to rot.

Outside of the Big Business strongholds, the only punctuation of the decaying landscape was old cemeteries: a reminder that once a thriving people lived here, and cared about life enough to memorialize the passing of it. But now the thrill of life was gone, and all that stood in its place were the cold commercial fangs that sucked the community's remaining blood to feed the coastal elite's indulgences. It was a new frontier.

The last target on their list was almost comically under-protected. John Kelly had been a scourge of the white nationalist movement for years. His exposés had done considerable damage to organizing and networking in the formative stage of the movement, but were ultimately fruitless in the grand scheme of things. The disruptive and transformative power of demographic change was beyond anyone's capability to neutralize. The white nationalist movement was successful in spite of its own members' rank incompetence. The media matters, but only to a certain point. Nonetheless, Kelly was still in the game, and still taking down high-value targets with his stories.

It was almost hard to believe he hadn't been killed already. He had to have been on a number of hit lists over the years. But more prominent journalists and lawyers had taken priority. Much of the so-called resistance's infrastructure had been hollowed out by the killings to the point where few journalists, researchers, and lawyers dared to work on white nationalist issues.

Kelly was mostly shunned by mainstream reporters and institutions, which may have made him a lower priority. But he was in the spotlight now.

"Do we even need to recon this? Fuckwit is right out in the open." Helms said, almost in disbelief.

The team was watching Kelly eat lunch at an almost empty Taco Bell. They had stumbled upon him on the way to his hotel. He was far from physically intimidating and it was evident that he had no security detail. Compared to the Osher operation, it was a layup.

"I haven't seen a cop in hours." Jackson offered.

"It's tempting. Just casually walk up and... *lights out, faggot.*" LeMay said, looking over at Arminius.

Arminius looked back over at LeMay, then realized everyone in the car was waiting for his response.

"Guys. We don't have an escape plan. That's basic bitch prep. Also, I'm pretty sure Taco Bell has cameras. Let's at least wait until he's out of public view. I mean, shit, are we just going to ignore everything Cross taught us?"

Arminius understood the team's blood lust. Kelly was everything he hated: a trust-fund douchebag who was betraying his own people in hopes of advancing

his social status. The scum of the white race.

Kelly finished his lunch and got into a BMW and drove down the highway. The team followed.

"What do you think he's here for?" Martel asked.

"Probably another piece on Fisher." LeMay answered.

Fred Fisher, the diminutive publisher of one of the most infamous white nationalist sites on the internet, had been a staple of Kelly's work. Kelly had been relentlessly covering him for years and was convinced he still resided in Ohio. For his part, Fisher continued to insist that he was in a series of different overseas locations, and took every opportunity to troll Kelly and the outlets where he was published. They were locked in what could only be described as an extremely online hatefuck for clicks.

Kelly's articles on Fisher were continuing despite diminishing returns. Fisher was largely considered a spent force these days, as the white nationalist movement had turned from internet shitposting into a militant insurgency. Fisher's continued emphasis on pushing a non-violent movement had led to the nickname "Fisher Price." His site's playful and ironic tone was geared more towards middle class LARPer than real world hitters.

It was The 14 Words and White Lightning that had elite American society squealing, not keyboard commandos.

"Didn't he *just* do a big cover story on Fisher?" LeMay asked.

"Probably." Helms said, keeping his eyes on the car in front of him and fantasizing about the upcoming kill.

"Hang back. He's going home." Arminius said.

Kelly's car slowed down and turned into a Crown-Plaza hotel parking lot. He had been working out of the hotel for months and had not changed up locations, even as new lightning strikes against journalists and anti-white researchers made the news. A profound mistake. Then again, Kelly had gone completely untouched in the recent wave of violence, so it was somewhat reasonable to be under the impression that the militant wing of the movement was largely disinterested in his work.

"So what are we doing then? Killing him in the hotel is more dangerous than Taco Bell. The hotel security, and an even bigger camera problem." LeMay said.

"We missed our shot!" Helms said.

"We didn't miss shit. Calm the fuck down." Arminius said, trying to think of the best option. "He's here trying to track information down, right? Let's wait it out here, and follow him to a more secluded area. Hit him, then hit the highway. There's no point in making it a spectacle."

Helms pulled the car into the far side of the hotel parking lot and shut off the engine. Everyone could see Kelly's car in the distance.

Arminius leaned back in the seat and closed his eyes. "Someone take first watch, I'll take second."

Two hours later, Kelly walked to his BMW and got in.

"Show time." Helms said, and started the Impala. Arminius shook himself awake as the car slowly followed Kelly out of the parking lot.

The team followed Kelly for roughly fifteen minutes until he slowed down and turned off the highway into a residential area.

"Well, what do we have hereee?" Arminius said.

"Meetup. Has to be." Jackson said.

"At someone's house? Who would be dumb enough to let this shitlib into their house?" Helms said.

Kelly slowed down and turned into a park.

"Don't turn. Stay straight." Arminius said, and Helms kept going.

The team looked over to see a sign for Antrim Park. There were fields, tennis courts, and a large lake in the background.

"What are we doing?" LeMay asked.

Arminius thought about it. It wasn't secluded, but they were in the open air, and damn close to the highway. They might not get a better chance for a strike.

"Fuck it. Turn around at the end of the street and come back. This is it."

Jackson pulled a duffel bag off the floor. "Who is striker on this one?"

"My turn." Helms said.

"What? How?" LeMay said. "You got trigger time on Osher. I was in the car. My turn."

"I didn't get the kill shot on the target though, Martel did." Helms said.

"Oh bullshit! That was my kill!" Arminius yelled.

"No way Arminius! I was first to hit the target. You just spiked the football."
Martel retorted, proud that he made a sports reference.

LeMay turned the car around at the end of the street and began making his way back to the park.

"Well? Who is getting what?" Jackson asked impatiently, the duffel bag laying his lap.

Arminius smirked. "Fine. Martel gets credit for the last kill. That puts me as striker. LeMay can back me up. Jackson and Helms cover us, and Martel is wheel man."

"Wait, what? That's illogical!" Martel wailed.

Everyone else agreed as LeMay slowly pulled into the parking lot. He saw Kelly's car parked all the way in.

Kelly was on a bench talking to a white man with a fashy haircut. The car slowly pulled closer and it became clear that Kelly was taking notes on what the man said.

"Mother fucking traitor." LeMay said.

"He can get some too then." Arminius said with a hard smile. "Give me the forty-five."

Jackson handed Arminius the forty-five and LeMay the nine millimeter. He handed the other nine to Helms before taking his own. The men got out and Martel begrudgingly moved into the driver's seat.

LeMay leaned into the driver's side window. "Turn around and get ready to bolt back to the highway. This is going to go down quick."

Martel nodded and the men walked down the sliver of a parking lot towards the bench.

As they got closer, Arminius looked back and then forward. Jackson and Helms then broke formation and began meandering on either side of the lot, slowly following behind Arminius and LeMay.

Arminius had tucked the forty-five in the front of his pants and motioned for LeMay to turn to face him as they were now in shooting distance from Kelly and his source.

Facing LeMay, Arminius looked at LeMay's face. LeMay looked past Arminius and nodded. Arminius pulled the forty-five from his waistband and LeMay pulled his nine from his. They cocked their pistols slowly together. LeMay mouthed "Three, two, one..."

Arminius turned around, ran up to Kelly, and fired. The first bullet missed his head and caught a piece of his neck then hit the bench and ricocheted elsewhere. The other man on the bench started to run but took a shot to the head, blood splattered all over Arminius' face.

Kelly was holding his neck and tried to run. Arminius fired another shot almost point blank at the back of his head and a wave of blood and brain spewed out of Kelly's forehead. LeMay ran up to the other man and fired on him. Arminius

stood over Kelly's body and fired twice into his back to ensure the kill.

"Let's go!" LeMay screamed, and started running for the car.

Arminius wiped his face and ran after him. During the attack everything had been slow and silent, but now he was hearing the screams coming from all over the park. Tennis players ran off the court, and parents grabbed their children and took cover. They ran back to the Impala, Jackson and Helms were already inside. Arminius jumped into the passenger seat and LeMay jumped in the back.

Martel sped out of the park. He made the turn onto the highway and floored it.

"Where am I going?" Martel yelled over the sound of the engine.

"Just drive. Anywhere but here." Arminius said stoically.

He was strangely serene, almost content as the energy from the kill flowed through him. Arminius pulled down the vanity mirror and saw his face splattered with blood and laughed to himself, his white teeth the only part of his face not touched by red. It was the greatest of all possible worlds.

*

The strike team's dead drop was supposed to be near the final target, but it took a day's drive to reach it. The landscape of desolation had continued well past the target's location, but as the corporate signage and abandoned factories receded into the rear view mirror, farmlands emerged and a sense of tranquility flooded in.

Jackson pulled into the run-down gas station at the edge of Kraftsville. It had to

have been years since it was in operation, and was now being overrun by weeds. Arminius pulled out the original untouched target list paper and began going through the process: he struck a red line through each name, then made three lightning symbols at the bottom of the page. He folded the page inside a plain white envelope and got out of the car.

The abandoned gas station gave off an eerie feeling. The wind had picked up, and the sound of glass bottles rolling on the dusky gravel sent a shiver down Arminius' spine, as if he was being teased by the soft whispers of the dead. He scanned the empty horizon nervously, half-expecting a SWAT team to jump out from behind the building.

The pang of fear subsided and all that remained was the vision of a barren landscape, and the specter of a long deserted gas station calmly being reclaimed by the elements. Soon, it would be as if there never was a gas station at all. The world was spinning in total indifference to all of the little people living on it, and all their little cares. And it wouldn't be so long until he and everyone he knew - friends and enemies - would be reclaimed by the elements too. Was he really a new man? Or, was he just playing a game he was always going to play, destined to decay and be forgotten like all things? Maybe nothing had changed. Maybe nothing ever will.

He walked past the gas station to a small brick storage shed a few yards away. He went to the back of the shed and began counting the bricks from top to bottom, left to right. When he got to the fourteenth brick, he stopped. He pulled on the brick, nothing. He pulled a little harder, and it gave way and came out into his hand.

Arminius looked inside the hole and saw a makeshift wooden box. He put the envelope in the box and replaced the brick inside the wall.

Kraftsville was a painfully small town. Main street was just two or so blocks of shops, though it appeared at one point to have been larger. The most prominent landmark was the hardware store, which had a large for sale sign in the front.

Jackson turned off main street to Washington Avenue. "You see it?"

"Keep going." Arminius said.

"Here it is." Jackson said, pulling the car next to a rusty green public mailbox.

"OK. If anyone sees anything suspicious let me know." Arminius jumped out the car and casually walked up the mailbox. That section of the street was empty, but people could be seen walking their dog a block or so away.

He leaned down and tied the yellow ribbon around the front right leg of the mailbox. Nothing looked out of the ordinary, Arminius jumped back in the car and the team headed out.

"How long do we have to wait for this asshole?" Helms asked.

"No clue. Just follow the plan I guess." Arminius looked at the side mirrors in the off chance he could see anyone approaching the mailbox to change the ribbon. He looked even though he knew the whole point of the process was that he shouldn't know who was going to give the strike team their new orders, nor they him. Anonymity was a heavy shield.

*

It had been almost a week since the drop, and the yellow ribbon stayed right where it was each time the team drove by, once in the morning and once in the

evening before dusk. It was phenomenal how bored they could be despite being killers on the run.

There was a shoddy motel about forty minutes away from town, and all the team could do in between their two daily trips to the mailbox was eat, workout, and read the lackluster local newspapers they picked up in town. It was truly depressing how much Arminius knew about the trials and tribulations of the Kraftsville Community Garden.

Communications security was never more of a burden than here in the doldrums. The common whining revolved around no cell phones to check in with friends and family, but Arminius missed lurking around online and ingesting the most heinous content that humanity could produce. Every time something he read referenced the internet it was like pain from a phantom limb.

"I think I'd rather die in a gunfight with the local cops, then do this another day." Arminius said, lying on his bed looking up at the grimy ceiling. The team was getting ready for the morning drive to Kraftsville.

"I hear that." LeMay said, packing his things.

The team resolved that if they got the signal and their new instructions, they would leave town immediately. That meant packing everything up each day, and unpacking it each night.

The drive was as uneventful as always. Even Martel's autism couldn't rouse the slightest reaction. Actual prison would be more interesting than this. Limbo was the worst punishment.

The team went down Main Street and everyone silently prayed the mailbox

would tell them their long wait was over. Helms turned on to Washington, and everyone held their breath. No change.

"Oh, for fuck's sake!" Arminius screamed.

The Impala rolled down Washington and started making the turns that would take the team back to Main Street.

"You want to stop for the newspapers?" Helms asked.

"Fuck it, just go." Arminius said bitterly. He couldn't take any local news today, and the motel was the only one that had the Times.

The drive back was silent. It was not even worth it to try and force conversation. Trying to kill boredom at this point would just lead to more severe boredom.

The team took turns going for their runs around the motel, running together would have raised suspicion. Exercise was Arminius' only joy left in life. Even his teammates, whom he had learned to tolerate if not appreciate, grated on his nerves the more inaction and indecision ruled his life.

He knew it would pass, that one fine day there would be a sign to get back in the fight. He also knew that his lowest day with White Lightning was infinitely better than his life as a wagecuck in the city. He was an unhappy man, but he was still a man. And after each run, he appreciated that he might not be as unhappy and as miserable as he thought he was.

The team showered and checked their bags for the evening ride to town. It was a scene by now familiar, the survey and the checklist to ensure nothing would be left behind. And, of course, the hope to never see this shithole again.

The drive was laconic verging on catatonic. No one said anything, and minds wandered into a nebulous state. When the car hit Main Street, the team prepared for the worst, nothing.

LeMay made the turn onto Washington and rolled up to the mailbox. He stopped the car. The ribbon was on the left leg. It was almost unbelievable. The men kept straining their eyes and second guessing themselves as to whether it was the real signal, or that the ribbon was always on the left leg and wishful thinking had distorted their own memories.

Arminius put his arm on LeMay's shoulder. "Let's go."

There was no wind at the gas station that day, as Arminius walked to the shed. He counted the bricks and pulled the fourteenth. He reached inside and pulled out a blank white envelope. He suddenly worried that their fears were right and that the ribbon had always been on the left leg and he was simply pulling back out the envelope he had placed there over a week before.

He broke procedure and opened the envelope. A smile ripped across his face. It was a new list, and where they were going there would be no shortage of action.

Arminius jumped back into the car. The men all looked at him, they could tell he had good news from his uncommonly cheery disposition.

"Portland." he said.

4.

The highway was behind them, and the road began to snake. The broken pavement rumbled under their feet, and all Arminius could do was tell himself saccharine love stories and blow kisses at passing thoughts of death. The anticipation was becoming the best part.

Portland had become a virtual war zone. A cycle of killings had turned a yuppie paradise into rainy Beirut. Neither the left nor right would claim responsibility for the deed, but someone had shot the mayor. Mayor Carter had been only one in a series of incompetent and despised city chief executives, but his assassination triggered all the lukewarm liberals to flee town, and take their money with them. With no funds for public services, the battles in the streets between the left and right went largely unpoliced, and speedily escalated to outright gun battles. The gun play led to what remained of the middle class to leave too. The normies were on the run.

The federal government had largely ignored bourgeois Dunkirk. One of the few things everyone agreed on was that Portland's political class had brought the predicament on themselves through a sordid mix of naive policies and cynical posturing. The shit had hit the fan, and they were welcome to choke on it.

But that tune changed once left-wing and right-wing militants from all over

America began traveling to the city seeking ideological dispensation. Many of the travelers were well-armed and happy for it to be a one-way trip. They turned the city into a war zone. And while no one in D.C. cared about the fate of Portland per se, having masked gunmen engaging in daytime on-running shootouts in the middle of a mid-tier American city was terrible PR for a country increasingly in need of foreign investment. So, Washington ordered action.

Homeland Security cracked down on entrance to the city, but soon found itself thwarted from taking full control by state and local political protest. The somewhat shamed governor finally agreed to send in the Oregon National Guard, only to immediately pull them back out when one of the militants in the city set off an IED that targeted a group of loitering weekend warriors. With three guardsman dead and another seven injured, the governor dropped his sovereignty protests and happily punted the ball to Washington, then intoned with great pathos on the need for renewed American leadership. He was preparing for a masturbatory presidential run.

After the bombing, DHS rethought its own position, and became content to limit itself to policing the main entry points to the city. DHS did so knowing that anyone motivated enough could bypass their checkpoints and that the carnage within Portland would continue untrammelled. If the wack jobs wanted to kill each other, so be it.

Now, control for what was left of the blood-soaked city had become a grizzly game for the remaining left and right wing militant groups to fight over.

LeMay pulled into a park near the city. Homeland Security was nowhere in sight. "Who is first on the list?"

Arminius pulled out the envelope and took out the list. Unlike when the team left the farm, there were no head shots or location lists, just five names under

the heading Portland Targets. "Eric Bray."

LeMay looked over at Arminius in anticipation. "That's it?"

"That's it. I'm guessing this is the part when we adapt and overcome." Arminius chuckled, and got out of the car.

"Everyone tool up and be ready to operate. This place is basically a war zone." LeMay said.

LeMay grabbed the forty-five, Jackson kept the bag with the AR-15, thirty-aught six, and ammo, and hoisted it over his shoulder. Everyone else took a nine millimeter pistol. The strike team began walking out of the park onto the street, not sure what to expect.

The streets seemed calm. There were even a few shops still open, though they had been converted from the checkout model to a system where people could only place orders in front and a clerk would go inside the store to get the item. Based on the prices they saw in the windows, it appeared war allowed for some incredible markups.

"You could hardly call this a war zone." Helms said, looking around the somewhat desolate but evidently peaceful city.

"ZOG disinformation campaign?" Martel wondered.

"No. Something's going on. Look at the normies scurry." Arminius said, motioning towards a group of people quickly walking towards them.

The group of people, mostly seniors, kept their heads down and avoided eye contact as they scampered passed. Well cucked and broken, they looked like

guilty dogs hoping to avoid the newspaper. They had devolved to pure peasants in a matter of months.

LeMay leaned in and whispered to the team. "We need to figure out which section of the city is ours, and which belongs to the commies."

Arminius nodded and began inspecting his surroundings looking for any clue as to who owned what real estate. Nothing seemed out of place, so they kept walking.

The longer they walked, the creepier it got. There was next to no one on the streets except the occasional old lady speed-walking home with groceries. Otherwise, an occasional cat or squirrel. Those who left had dropped everything, even leaving their doors wide open. Furniture and half packed suitcases adorned front yards. These people had run screaming.

The team had yet to see a car driving in the street since they entered the city. There was assorted debris and garbage all over.

"Shit." Arminius said.

"What? What is it?" LeMay asked, reaching inside his pants for his pistol.

Arminius pointed to decaying red roses periodically lining the street ahead, and a long line of roses leading to a Walmart inside a strip mall. They had ended up in the wrong section of the city for sure.

"Fuck." LeMay said.

LeMay motioned for the team to turn around, and they casually turned and began walking back the way they came.

"So what the fuck are we going to do?" Helms quietly asked.

"Let's just get back to the park and re-group." Arminius said.

They went in silence down the lonely streets. Scurrying like peasants.

*

It was suicide. The most ridiculous plan ever. Of the thousand ways to die in postindustrial America, this was hands down the dumbest. You needed an extra chromosome to even entertain such a stupid idea.

The argument had been raging for almost an hour in the park. LeMay and Arminius continued to make their case, and the rest of the team continued to tell them they were retarded. LeMay had floated the notion of trying to infiltrate the leftist camp to get a read on their list, and Arminius had backed him up, claiming that if the white nationalists could have gotten those targets they already would have. It wasn't going over well.

"They will kill you on sight, you dumb motherfuckers!" Helms screamed.

"They don't know us! They don't know our faces! That changes the minute one of their scouts sees us on the other side. This could be our only shot to get close!" Arminius screamed back.

"You're both fucking dumb. For real." Jackson said.

"If we fuck it up, just move on without us." LeMay said, throwing his hands up as if tossing aside the argument.

"This isn't the plan. The plan is to join our forces, and work with them to take

down those targets. That's the plan. Just stick to the plan!" Martel said, practically hyperventilating.

"Says who?" Arminius said, in honest confusion. "Nobody gave us a plan. HQ gave us a list of names to strike. Finding a way to do it is our business."

"This ain't the way." Helms said.

Arminius leaned back on the Impala, as LeMay began stretching out to release some tension. They were tired from arguing, but no less convinced on the efficacy of the plan. They had one chance to infiltrate the reds, and this was it.

"Look, we lucked into something. We may never get a second chance to get a clean read on the enemy camp. It's well worth the risk, when you consider the alternative." Arminius said.

"The alternative is joining up with our forces! That sounds a lot better to me!" Helms said.

"This isn't hit and run attacks. We are in a war zone. No one is unguarded, unarmed, or not expecting an attack. We need an edge." LeMay said.

The screaming continued for another half an hour or so, until it became obvious that LeMay and Arminius were not going to be browbeaten into dropping their plan. So the team agreed to a new plan; Jackson, Helms, and Martel would drive off to look for the white nationalist forces, and return to the park each day in the morning and afternoon for a week, in case LeMay and Arminius needed to get out, or were successful.

LeMay and Arminius walked out of the park, both armed with nine millimeter pistols. The plan was less than stellar, but the logic behind it was sound. The

truth was, it was damn risky, but that was the point. This was a war, boldness was what was called for.

They arrived at the rose decorated path and walked towards the Walmart. They instantly ran into a security detail, who pointed their guns at them. One of the soldiers in a black mask wearing a red armband demanded to know why they were walking towards the Walmart, so LeMay told them they wanted to join the revolution.

That explanation appeased the soldiers to some extent. They took their pistols and escorted them into the Walmart under guard.

Inside the Walmart, LeMay and Arminius found a red wonderland. The Walmart had been turned into a command center, with hundreds of people wearing all black uniforms with red armbands. The isles had been ripped out and tribes of grungy leftists were sitting in circles performing weird decision-making rituals. The whole place stank of weed and soy. It was as if Walmart had been invaded by a vegan restaurant, then looted.

The black-masked soldiers led LeMay and Arminius to a booth that looked like it was once an eyeglasses shop. Inside the shop, a group of what appeared to be men - though one could never be sure - sat behind a table.

One of the soldiers brought in two chairs and put them a few feet from the table and motioned for LeMay and Arminius to sit down, which they did.

Some kind of lifeform with purple hair and numerous face piercings spoke for the group in a androgynous voice. "Welcome to the security committee."

"Thank you." LeMay said, somewhat confused.

Arminius nodded and pleasantly smiled.

"My name is Joey, I go by they and them." Joey said.

"Kyle." LeMay said.

"Matty, pleased to meet you, Joey. I also would appreciate being referred to as they and them." Arminius said, with all the phony dignity he could muster.

The other equally odd looking members of the security committee just stared blankly at the two men. It was impossible to tell whether they were happy or sad, or if they experienced human emotions at all, after what looked like numerous surgeries and hormone therapies.

It was not surprising to see the committee dominated by trannies. Transsexuals had medaled well in the oppression Olympics, and were in leadership positions throughout the left. The intersectional gold medal was reserved for a transsexual black women with one leg, but they were hard to find. Nonetheless, most of the security committee was snow white, with a few beige exceptions. Nothing dark enough to cause discomfort at a Whole Foods.

"Nice to meet you as well Kyle and Matty. So, we just have a few questions before we get you to the next step in the process." Joey said, and grabbed a clipboard and a form from the desk.

"What brings you here today?"

"To destroy fascism." LeMay said. Arminius nodded.

Joey nodded and looked at the clipboard.

"And who directed you here?" Joey asked.

"Well, he said his name was Jeff Magnum, but I think that was an alias."
Arminius said.

Joey nodded again, and continued down the clipboard.

"Were you given a contact name?"

"Eric Bray." LeMay said.

Joey looked up from the clipboard. "Oh, I'm sorry to inform you that Eric was killed a week ago."

LeMay and Arminius looked at each other. Then at Joey, to get a sense of how they should react. But Joey's face, what was left of it, was inscrutable.

"This is very sad news." Arminius said, trying to mirror Joey's expressionless face.

"Yes." Joey said flatly, then continued down the clipboard.

"Do you know what task you want to perform for the revolution?"

"We know how to shoot, and would like to shoot fascists." LeMay said, finally matching Joey's monotonous speech rhythm.

"Good." Joey said, forcing its face to smile in a way that was profoundly horrifying. "We just need you to provide additional information for our security team to run a background check, and then we can place you in one of the units. Welcome and thank you for your service to the revolution."

Before LeMay and Arminius could return the mechanical sentiment, a masked soldier handed each of them a clipboard with a stack of pages on it and a pen. The soldier motioned for them to rise, which they did.

Outside the room they sat down and finished their packets, twenty-three pages in all, and handed them back to the masked soldier. While that soldier brought the packet back into the room, another soldier led them towards a group of people hanging out in a semicircle.

"New recruits." the soldier said, and a short man with patchy unkempt facial hair reeking of body odor and patchouli oil approached LeMay and Arminius.

"Hey, my name is Sam, and I'll be your camp counselor." he said in a nasally valley girl accent.

LeMay and Arminius forced themselves to laugh at Sam's lame joke and introduced themselves. It was tough to switch back to human interaction mode after Joey, but they managed.

"OK." Sam said, clapping his hands. "We'll just have you help out around here until you are cleared, then you can get in the shit!"

"Great." Arminius said.

Sam led LeMay and Arminius to what looked like a staging area. There were piles of clothes, bloody bandages, and empty bags everywhere.

"So, just need you guys - is guys OK?"

"Sure." LeMay said, and Arminius nodded.

"Alright cool, cool. Let me know if you need me to make a pronoun adjustment. Anyway, where was I? OK. So just need you guys to kinda like sort this stuff out, throw any trash in those bins, then sweep up a bit. Cool?"

"No problem, Sam." Arminius said, as he and LeMay got to work.

Sam wandered off, and someone nearby blazed up a bowl with an atomic stank that hit Arminius like a punch in the nose. LeMay reeled back as well, and had to push himself to get back to work.

Arminius looked around to see whether anyone else was nearby, and caught two black-masked armed soldiers in the corner of his eye watching them.

"We still got eyes on us." Arminius whispered. "But if our legends hold up, we should be cleared."

"If." LeMay whispered back, his words flavored with a hint of fear.

They worked in silence for the next few hours. Sam wondered back over and told them they could take a break to eat. They were introduced to the rest of the red fighters, and did their best to mimic their movements and seem like credible leftists, which mostly consisted of agreeing with what everyone else said and making fun of fascists.

The food was terrible, and after eating they both spent time shitting their guts out in the over-utilized and under-maintained Walmart bathroom. They went back to cleaning up the staging area. Then Sam told them they could take a break for the night. The store lights never went out, but they were given access to camping tents posted in the middle of the superstore, along with sleeping masks.

The next day they were back cleaning the staging area, and still under guard. It seemed they would be watched until the security committee signed off.

When LeMay and Arminius finished their lunch break and headed back towards the staging area, Sam held them up. The staging area was suddenly filled with armed fighters getting ready for a battle. They were exceedingly well armed and armored. Wherever the equipment was coming from, there was copious amounts of it. A quartermaster checked to ensure everyone had all the ammunition and firepower they needed.

Despite the anarchic nature of the red forces, they still had field commanders. One was a tall well-built white man that everyone appeared to defer to. He gave the order, and the fighters followed him out.

"Who is that?" Arminius asked Sam.

"That's Commander Darby." Sam said.

LeMay shot Arminius a look, Commander Mark Darby was the second name on their list after the now-deceased General Eric Bray.

"Cool." Arminius said.

"Yeah, he's a total badass!" Sam cheered, in a way that made it difficult to tell if he was being ironic.

With the fighters gone, there was a new mess to clean up. LeMay and Arminius got back to work.

*

It had been three days, and LeMay and Arminius were still stuck on cleanup duty. Their security status was foggy. The armed guards had stopped following them midway through day two, and their duties had been expanded to other areas of the Walmart Democratic Socialist Command Center, or whatever its official name was. But not Sam, nor anyone else ever told them they passed the background check.

The fighters, organized into squads, platoons, and companies, came and went multiple times a day. Often they would return bruised and bloody, or sometimes wounded. There was no organized procedure if someone got killed in battle. The body was apparently left in the street. If they died in the makeshift medical center near the Walmart pharmacy, their body was transported to the main part of the city and left in the street with any identifying information available. There was some informal process with what remained of the city government to handle the corpses and return them home. Or so people hoped.

Helicopters often flew over the Walmart. In some cases they were undeniably military given the amount of air they were displacing, which rattled the store walls. In many cases, it was likely news choppers. The war for Portland had become an international news story. Not that anyone in authority seemed interested in doing anything about it.

The battles were good cable news fodder, but the human tragedy and heartbreak was absorbed efficiently enough into the media bloodstream that it became just another old news item, like poisoned water in Flint or mass shootings in Chicago. The professional social media lamenters and virtue signalers eventually moved on to other, more recent, tragedies.

"We must be cleared by now. Our minders are gone." LeMay said, as he mopped the bathroom floor.

Arminius sprayed bleach onto the toilet seat and into the bowl. "After all my struggles, I still end up working at Walmart."

LeMay cracked up, and Arminius let a smile go.

"I'm serious." LeMay whispered.

"Yep. You're probably right. Not to mention that given their casualty rates, they are going to need fresh recruits. I count at least four killed and nine wounded just since we've been here."

"Except --" LeMay stopped as he saw Arminius raise his finger to his lips to indicate silence.

"Do you hear that?" Arminius asked.

He walked out of the bathroom into the hall, across from which was one of the manager offices. The door window was blacked out. But there was audible yelling going on behind it.

LeMay looked around. "Clear."

Arminius pressed his head to the door, but couldn't make anything out.

"Nothing."

LeMay pointed to the room next to the office. "The storage closet."

Arminius slipped in and could suddenly make out some of the words. The person being yelled at had apparently been stealing from the red faction, and was being threatened with execution.

"You getting anything?" LeMay whispered.

Arminius popped out of the storage room. "Yes. Keep an eye out." He popped back in.

There was a deal being made. The person, Victor, was told he could avoid execution if he helped the red faction by infiltrating the fascist camp and telling the reds who the key players were so they could target them.

The shouting went on a bit more, but Victor reluctantly agreed to spy for the reds under the condition that they agreed to continue to support his family while he spied for them, and to take care of them if he got hurt. The red interrogators agreed.

Arminius jumped out of the supply closet. "They recruited a spy. They're going to send him into our camp."

"What do we do?" LeMay whispered.

"Follow me."

Arminius jogged to the end of the hall to see who came out the door on the other end of the office. All he saw was a white man walking away flanked by soldiers, that blocked most of his view. He looked down to the only distinguishing thing he could make out.

"White sneakers, green trim."

Arminius turned to LeMay, and LeMay nodded and said that he would remember the factoid. It wasn't much to go on, but it was something. They went back to cleaning the bathroom.

After they finished, they cleaned the staging area until Sam collected them for dinner. The food was still disgusting, but caused less diarrhea as their stomachs adapted to the soy-based cuisine. They finished the remainder of their work and retired to the tent for the night.

"What's the point of staying? We've identified most of the targets. Let's just get out now." LeMay whispered.

Arminius shrugged. "We got Darby, Holt, and Mathias. We still need a visual ID on Campbell."

"Do we? I mean this thing is pretty well fucked as it is. I'm not even sure taking out these guys is going to have the effect some of the brass think it will. Target number one is already KIA. He was a general in this fag army for fucks sake."

Arminius motioned for LeMay to lower his voice. "So what are you saying, you want to run for it? Because they ain't letting us walk out the front door."

"I'm saying, we got what we need, so we hit the exits the first chance we get."

Arminius nodded and LeMay nodded back, and put on his night mask. Arminius lay looking up at the light coming through the fabric of the tent in this shopping store from hell. He tried to appreciate how strange his life had become, but was so tired from all the cleaning and intrigue of the day that he just surrendered, and put his mask on.

*

It was nearing a week inside the Walmart, and LeMay and Arminius were beginning to worry that the rest of the strike team had given up waiting for them to return.

As they cleaned the staging area for what seemed like the thousandth time, Sam approached them to say they had been cleared by the security committee, but that they should continue cleaning things up for the moment and that he "super appreciated the hook up."

Though the reds were taking heavy casualties, there was no shortage of already trained fighters. And, of course, LeMay and Arminius had no clue as to the level of casualties the red fighters were inflicting on their side.

Now that they had been cleared, they were allowed to leave the Walmart to take out the trash. It was only a few minutes, but the back entrance was hardly guarded. From what they could glean from eavesdropping, the Walmart was in the rear of red faction territory, and everything behind it was considered neutral and assumed to be policed by DHS. No need to put much manpower guarding the rear, if the fascists were limited to their section of the city, too.

Taking out the trash was really just removing it from the building. There was no trash collection anymore. The city's municipal waste workers were refusing to work after a few garbage collectors had gotten caught in some crossfire over a month ago. Trash was starting to pile up everywhere, especially at the Walmart. The stench was palpable, which also helped keep guards away from the back.

"It's got to be out the back." Arminius said, mopping the bathroom floor.

LeMay sprayed bleach onto a toilet seat. "Yeah. And sooner rather than later. I'm sick of being a janitor. Though I'm sure these shitlibs are loving watching white men clean bathrooms."

"No doubt." Arminius smirked. "We need a diversion. Either when one of the big choppers comes through or when the fighters line up or come back from battle. We take out the trash, then run for the park."

"I already have a big trash bag back there from this morning. We wait for a distraction, then bye bye."

They finished cleaning the bathroom and went to lunch. The talk was all about a major offensive being planned. A knock-out blow to the fascists, or at least one that would do serious damage. By the time lunch had ended, a large group of fighters were making their way to the staging area.

LeMay and Arminius casually walked to the back where the trash bag sat. Commander Darby started briefing the troops, and they walked outside with the bag.

"Boy will my face be red if I get shot by one of those pistols they took." LeMay said lifting the bag up.

Arminius looked around for guards and saw none. "You ready?"

"Let's go!" LeMay whispered.

They threw the bag onto the pile and ran out of the plaza into the street. They kept running, which led to the normie civilians in their vicinity to run as well, out of fear of incoming danger.

After a block and a half of running, Arminius waved at LeMay. "I don't think they saw us. Let's just get to the park."

They finally reached the park, tired but happy to be out of Walmart. They smelled something awful, from not showering for days, and spending most of that time handling garbage. No one was at the park to meet them, though it was possible they were in between shifts. They found a picnic table near the rendezvous spot and sat down.

"Next time I have an idea that stupid, shoot me." LeMay said.

"Shut up. It worked. We have visual IDs on the targets now." Arminius said, and put his head on the picnic table.

A military helicopter flew overhead, shaking the ground. It circled what must have been the Walmart. Just observing, nothing more.

"Oh, bomb the fuckers already!" LeMay yelled at the sky.

The day began fading and LeMay and Arminius both slept at the picnic table. Headlights beamed onto them and they looked back to see the Impala.

Helms jumped out of the car. "Holy fuck! You're alive!"

LeMay and Arminius hugged and shook hands with Helms, Jackson, and Martel.

"You smell like shit." Jackson said.

"I smell how I feel." Arminius said.

"So..." Helms inquired.

"We got it." LeMay said, and high-fived Helms.

"Did you get in touch with our guys?" Arminius asked.

Helms smiled and nodded. "They're going to be excited to see you."

Everyone piled back into the car. Jackson pulled out of the park and went back onto the highway. Helms was the navigator.

"We lost the nines." Arminius said.

"Don't worry, there are lots of weapons where we're going." Jackson said.

The Impala flew down Route 205, leaving the city behind.

"Where the fuck you going?" LeMay asked.

"We have to go all the way around the city. Otherwise you're driving right into the line of fire. You guys were in the southeast, that's red territory. The last stronghold, really. It's the waterfront and downtown where shit is really going off. We drive straight through it, we'll get lit up like a Christmas tree. Probably by both sides." Jackson said.

Arminius looked out the window as the Impala went off the highway into the back roads. "Have you run into any feds?"

"Nope, they ain't shit. They just sit at the major entry points and harass truckers. I was sure one guy made me when we were idling near a check point trying to figure a way in. But a hard stare and that pussy just walked away. They don't want to be here, and definitely don't want to get in no gun fight." Helms said, laughing.

"When do we cross into the city?" LeMay asked.

"We already have." Jackson said.

The city skyline came closer into view. Jackson drove into downtown Portland.

Here the peasants still scurried, but the soldiers now dressed in black and had white armbands.

The strike team hit a checkpoint with a makeshift crossbar as they entered downtown. The other street entrances were purposely blocked with debris and assorted trash. A soldier came up to the Impala and Jackson stopped and put down his window.

"How are you doing, brother?" Jackson said.

The soldier, probably in his late teens, nodded and smiled. "Good, and yourself?"

"Good. Word of the day is ziggurat." Jackson said, and held up a green piece of paper with a series of symbols on it.

The soldier looked over the paper and at the people in the back seat. He waved them through and the another soldier pushed aside the crossbar.

The Impala drove down the street and parked in front of a Trader Joe's that was teaming with white armbanded soldiers.

The Trader Joe's was repurposed into an armory, and Jackson showed them to the back where the pistols were. They picked up two nine millimeters, and Jackson filled the duffel bag with ammo clips for the pistols and the AR-15.

The team got back in the car and drove down the street to see that a church and synagogue were being used as bivouac points. The Impala continued driving and parked in front of the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center.

LeMay and Arminius began laughing.

"Trolling on another level." Helms chuckled.

The museum was teeming with soldiers, and, judging by the bullet holes on the walls, was taken after quite a fight.

"We might not get time with General Ragnar today. They are ramping up to finally take down Nordstrom's." Helms said.

"And that's important?" Arminius asked, watching the bands of soldiers coming and going.

"It's all the reds have left downtown, and if it falls, we'll have total sniper coverage of the bridges. Then all they have west of the river is what's left of the university. Which ain't much." Helms smiled and pointed to a man walking towards them.

Ragnar was well-built, with dirty blond hair, symmetrical features, and piercing green eyes. His commanding presence led everyone to straighten their posture. He was unmistakably the man in charge, and was flanked by a group of men who looked to be at his beck and call.

"General Ragnar!" Jackson yelled and waved him over. "This is LeMay and Arminius. The guys we were telling you about."

"Honored to meet anyone from White Lightning. You do great work." Ragnar said, as they shook hands. His charisma was intoxicating and contagious. "Some of my best fighters took the name Arminius, too. So I expect big things from you." Ragnar pointed and smiled.

Arminius tried to smile back, but was so inclined to grimace from his chosen name being proven - once again - to be trite and lame, that his face stayed more

or less neutral.

"I gotta run, big day today." Ragnar said, as he and his entourage sped away.

"We can visually identify Darby, Holt, and Mathias." LeMay said, finally showing some flex befitting a man from White Lightning.

Ragnar stopped in his tracks and turned to face them.

"The only names on our list we can't identify are Bray and Campbell. And Bray is dead." Arminius said.

"So is Campbell." Ragnar responded and looked them over, as if for the first time. "You're with me today then. In fact, the entire strike team is. Go." Ragnar waved his hand, and like a royal decree his staff members guided the strike team along behind Ragnar.

The team was ushered outside and practically pushed into the second of three Humvees. Ragnar's was first and was flying a black flag with a white cross. The convoy immediately started moving.

The Humvees pulled up at the back of a T.J. Maxx, and everyone got out. Ragnar and his entourage went in through the back door and the strike team followed.

The department store was filled with over fifty soldiers armed with M-16s, lined up and at attention. A sound system was set up with a microphone on a stand before the assembly. Ragnar grabbed the microphone and stood on top of a large table.

"First, I just want to say what a true honor it is for me to address you fine men

today. You have said more with your brave actions, than I ever could with my words." Ragnar spoke faintly, almost to the point that one had to strain to hear him.

"So, why do we fight? That is a question all of us need to ask ourselves as free men. We are not slaves - either in body or mind. We are not the victims of history. We are making history, here, today, now." Ragnar's voice began picking up tempo and volume.

"We fight to cleanse our people and ourselves of the sepsis of liberalism. The disease that has brought our civilization to its knees, and debased the faith of our fathers."

Ragnar now took on a menacing tone. "Liberalism is the evil in our midst, the dark cloud blocking out our sun. The liberals have turned our arts into tools of conformity. Turned our technology into engines of isolation and confinement. And turned our education system into a force for indoctrination into their wicked cult. They are the sowers of poison, the traitors within."

Ragnar raised his fist, and now took on a hyperbolic pace, and raised his voice almost to the point of screaming. "But you men here today have said no to disgrace. You have taken a stand against the violators of our sacred temples. You have taken on this holy quest to purge and destroy these evil forces. You are all that stands between the glory of our civilization, and its fall. And I am so proud to stand with you today. I am so proud to call you my brothers. It is the greatest glory of my life to say today, that I, in this time, and in this place, stood with the last free men of the West! Go!"

With the go command the soldiers began pouring out of the T.J. Maxx and into the street. Ragnar was behind them, one of this staff handed him a bull horn.

"Go! Go! Go! Everything, Go!" Ragnar yelled through the bull horn as he ran behind the soldiers. There were speakers all along the street, which presumably had broadcasted the speech. The strike team followed everyone out.

In the distance gunshots rang out and soldiers with white armbands poured out onto the streets to join the group that had deployed out of T.J. Maxx. There had to be over a hundred men under arms by now.

They reached the Norstrom's and a group of soldiers produced a battering ram, then smashed through the front door to let the other soldiers flood in. Gunfire erupted all around as Ragnar ran past the Norstrom's entrance into the street, flanked by what appeared to be a personal protection unit.

Arminius saw a group of red soldiers, perhaps twenty strong, retreating down nearby Morrison Street. The soldiers formed a firing line angled at the front of the store, preparing to fire on Ragnar's command.

"Hold!" Ragnar yelled, not using the bullhorn.

As the reds approached the intersection, he hit the siren effect on the bullhorn. A group of white soldiers ran screaming and firing from the other side of the street near a brewery.

"Fire!" Ragnar yelled.

The red soldiers were caught in a pincer as they took heavy fire on the front from what looked like machine guns on fully automatic near the brewery, and targeted bursts from the other side of the street from Ragnar's shooters, which caught the reds who ran back towards Norstrom's. Within a few seconds the entire group of red soldiers lay on the ground.

Ragnar put the bullhorn up. "Finish 'em off!"

The white soldiers on the other side of the street went through the bodies and gave each a coup de grace headshot. Ragnar turned his attention back to the store, where the gun fire had grown sporadic.

"Where are we?" Ragnar yelled at a white soldier wearing captain bars.

"Mostly done, General. Looking for cowards who hid and finishing the rest off."

"Outstanding." Ragnar said, and handed the bullhorn to one of his staff. He turned to the strike team. "Gentlemen, good to see you're still here. Do me a favor and go through the dead and see if you can identify anyone on your list, OK?"

"Sure. No problem." Arminius said.

"Let me just say congratulations, general." Jackson said, practically gushing with admiration.

Ragnar patted Jackson on the soldier and marched off, his staff and security team alongside him.

"Well, the Norstrom's isn't secure yet anyway, so let's start with the street." Arminius said.

LeMay nodded as they and the rest of the team walked down Morrison Street towards the red soldiers whose bodies were being lined up by the whites.

"That was a great move. Sliced and diced these commies." Helms said.

"General Ragnar is the real deal." Jackson said.

The team stopped at the line of bodies and Arminius and LeMay began going down the line. No one was altered beyond the point of recognition by the melee, but some had taken shots to the face that caused extensive changes to their appearance.

"You see anything yet?" LeMay asked Arminius.

Arminius shook his head. "Nothing so far."

They reached the end of the line of bodies - no Holt, Darby, or Mathias. The white soldiers looked at them as an oddity. They were out of uniform and only sporting pistols.

A sergeant came up to them. "What unit are you with?"

"None. We're a strike team from White Lightning. Trying to ID some of the red commanders."

The sergeant, obviously impressed, practically bowed and said "Good luck then." before running off.

LeMay and Arminius walked back to the team and told them none of the bodies matched, as well as the respect the sergeant had shown to White Lightning.

"People know we are the real heroes!" Martel shouted, earning a rebuke from the rest of the strike team.

The Norstrom's was a bloodbath. After the initial shooting there had been a search and destroy team that found and killed the rest of the reds. In some cases

they seemed to take their time with it. The bodies of the red soldiers were still being dragged into the entrance area. It was at least as many as in the street. The red faction had taken a lot of casualties.

LeMay and Arminius walked along the line of bodies. Arminius stopped in front of one of the bodies. He turned his head to get a better angle and waved over LeMay.

"That looks like Mathias to me, no?"

"Definitely. That's him." LeMay said, with so much confidence that Arminius lost his lingering doubt.

The body had multiple chest wounds and a big hole in the forehead that one could reasonably deduce was a close range coup de grace shot. The shot distorted the face somewhat, but it certainly looked a lot like the man from the Walmart.

LeMay walked up to the captain. "You can tell General Ragnar that that man over there is Commander Mathias. Tell him that came from LeMay from White Lightning."

The captain looked at the corpse LeMay was pointing at, then back at LeMay. The captain smiled and turned to a group of soldiers dragging bodies, and pointed at the corpse. "Take that body to General Ragnar. Tell him White Lightning identified it as Commander Mathias."

The soldiers quickly snapped to, and went over to the body and picked it up. Arminius and LeMay went back to the search for the remaining names among the dead.

There were no more men on their list within what was now one large pile of bodies stacked in front of Norstrom's. The total casualty count was fifty-two enemy dead, with six wounded on the white side, four seriously. No reds were taken alive. The lopsided victory had everyone in high spirits as they made camp for the evening. The night watch patrolled the now-expanded sector of the city under white control.

The strike team was given space to sleep under a large white canopy on the waterfront, and handed sleeping bags and pillows. They were also given military ready-to-eat meals, which didn't taste great, but did the job.

A cool breeze blew in from the water, and there was a nice view of Morrison Bridge, still electrified. It was, all things considered, a splendid night.

Arminius had been looking up at the white tent as his eyes were getting heavy, when voices got louder around him. He looked over to see General Ragnar talking to the other soldiers resting for the night. Ragnar eventually made his way over to the strike team's tent.

"General Ragnar!" Jackson said, getting to his feet.

"No. No. Don't get up. As you were. As you were." Ragnar motioned for everyone to stay seated. "I'm just doing my evening rounds. A general should always be at the front."

Ragnar crouched down. "But I had a thought. I have a sniper team going out on a mission in..." Ragnar looked at his watch "About five hours. There's a decent chance we will run into another one of those commanders on your list. Which means they are definitely worth shooting. How about you guys, LeMay and Arminius, is it?"

"Yes." Arminius said.

"How about you two go with them to ID the targets."

"Sounds great." LeMay said.

"Outstanding. Get some sleep and I'll have them come collect you before they go out. OK? Great. Get some rest, you earned it." Ragnar said, and smiled as he walked out of the tent and went back to wandering the waterfront, talking to his soldiers, and very much playing the part of the wise commander of men.

"He's Rommel reincarnated. I'm sure of it!" Jackson said, in sincere awe.

"Natural born leader. The best the movement has produced." Helms said.

"Oh, please." Arminius said.

LeMay smiled, but stayed silent and tried to hide his face so no one saw him laughing.

"Oh, please what? You don't know how reincarnation works!" Martel said.

"Oh, please as in could he be anymore in love with himself? *The last free men of the West*, give me a break. That guy calls out his own name when he cums. *Ragnarrrrrrrrr!*"

"Goddamn, Arminius. You are the most cynical bastard I have ever met in my life. If you don't believe in any of this, why the fuck are you fighting for it?" Helms said.

Arminius thought about a moment.

"It's fun?"

Everyone laughed and Arminius went back to staring at the white tent and enjoying the breeze. His eyes became heavy and sleep found him ready.

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A bright light beamed into Arminius' eyes as he was shaken awake.

"Fuck! What?" he said raspily, covering his eyes with his hands.

A soldier pointed the flashlight away from his eyes. "You're Arminius?"

"Yes." Arminius said, as he struggled to get awake. It was dark outside, the only illumination besides the flashlight came from the bridge and the stores in the city.

"I was told to bring you on today's op." the soldier said politely.

Arminius nodded, and pointed to LeMay. "Get him too. We're the ones who can identify the red commanders."

The soldier woke LeMay up as Arminius groggily got out of the sleeping bag and put on his shoes. He stepped out of the tent and felt light rain. He looked at the sky, it must have been well before dawn.

LeMay and Arminius followed the soldier into an awaiting jeep that was idling on the nearby street. The first soldier jumped into the passenger seat as LeMay and Arminius climbed into the back.

The soldier in the passenger seat said "By the way, I'm Steve and this is Alex."

Steve was of medium build with light blue eyes and Alex was tall in the seat with big holes in his ears from where a gauge piercing would go.

The jeep drove down the city streets, it was the only car on the road.

"What time is it?" Arminius asked.

"Four thirty." Steve said. "Sorry for waking you up so early. But we have to get in position before daylight."

"Early bird gets the worm." LeMay said.

Arminius side eyed him after such a lame comment. LeMay shrugged and tried to get some sleep.

As they crossed out of white territory, Alex shut off the headlights. Roughly ten minutes later Alex parked the jeep behind a building called the Ondine. They all jumped out of the jeep and Steve pulled out a large case and took it with them as they entered the building.

The inside was filled with bullet holes and dried blood smears. There must have been a real battle to win control of the building. Though now it looked totally empty. They got in the elevator and took it to the fifth floor.

"Good thing the elevator still works." LeMay said.

"Yeah, I ain't about walking up five flights of stairs with this thing." Steven said, half lifting the case to show how heavy it was.

The elevator reached the fifth floor. And Steve led them to a room facing the Portland State University campus. There was a big hole where a window had

been, letting the cool damp air fill the room.

Steve put the case down on one of the beds in the room and began assembling a sniper rifle. Alex pulled out a pair of binoculars and looked out the hole.

"We good?" Steve said, still putting the rifle together.

"We're good." Alex said, stepping back from the window.

He walked past LeMay and Arminius, dropped the binoculars on the bed. Then went into the bathroom and shut the door.

"I guess these were dorms, huh?" LeMay said looking around the room.

"Yep. The reds had a lot of support in the university. But after bodies started dropping most of the students were done LARPing and split." Steve put the rifle together, and pointed to a desk. "Can you put that by the window."

LeMay and Arminius moved the desk in front of the window and Steve put the bi-pod on the rifle and placed it on the desk. He adjusted the bi-pod and the scope until he was satisfied, then took a small towel from his pocket and put it under the rifle butt.

"That's good enough. Alex will make his adjustments too." Steve said, and picked up the binoculars Alex left on the bed and looked through them.

"Now we play... the waiting game." Steve laughed, put the binoculars on the desk, and plopped down on the bed.

What remained of the red forces on the other side of the Willamette River congregated around the university campus. With the fall of the Norstrom's

position, this was their last stronghold west of the bridges.

As morning broke, red soldiers began hitting the streets to eat and run errands. Alex and Steve played cards as LeMay and Arminius took turns watching the passersby below them.

There had been a few close calls. But as afternoon approached there was no sign of Darby or Holt, just assorted red soldiers getting food and hanging out on campus.

"Are you sure this is the right spot?" Arminius asked, beginning to get frustrated as he continued to scan the area with his binoculars.

Alex continued playing cards, unfazed by the comment. "Yes. That building straight across the way, Shattuck Hall, is the command center on this side of the river. And those lefty fags love Chipotle, which you also got in view."

"Just give it time." Steve said, looking at his cards.

Arminius handed the binoculars to LeMay and sat on top of one of the bureaus in the dorm room. LeMay began looking for one of the targets.

It was easier to see a red from far away. With distance, you could really see them. Watch their juvenile and degenerate nature express itself in the wild. It took years of indulgence and debasement to create such an abomination.

Left to their own devices, the reds would destroy strength, beauty, and anything that was good and pure. Their existence is predicated on deviancy and perversion. They are the darkness reaching out for the darkness, and deserve nothing but a bullet.

A group of red soldiers walked out of the university parking structure across the street from the Ondine. LeMay started focusing on the group of soldiers walking towards Shattuck Hall.

"Yo! I think I got something."

Arminius got up off the bureau and took the binoculars. "OK. Which one."

"Second to the right." LeMay said.

"Ehhh. I mean, same hair color, but I can only see the back of his head." Arminius said, and looked over at LeMay.

"I saw his face. I'm sure."

Arminius looked at LeMay. "I didn't see. So I can't concur."

"Just wait for him to come back out." Steve said, as he reshuffled the deck.

"OK, I'll stay on it. If I make him coming out, that's a confirmation." Arminius said.

LeMay nodded and stood near the window, finally anticipating some action.

"Trust me, I got him."

Almost two hours later the group came out of Shattuck Hall and walked towards the parking structure.

"Here we go." Arminius looked through the binoculars at the group. A blond haired doughy faced man led the group. There was no doubt now, it was Holt.

Arminius turned to Alex and Steve. "It's him. Pale, blond, and fat."

Steve jumped off the bed and took the binoculars. "The blond in the front?"

"Yes."

Alex prepared the sniper rifle and lined up the shot. "Blond in front?"

"Blond in front, there's a brown haired kid on his left." Steve said.

"Got it." Alex said.

A boom came out of the rifle that was almost deafening and shook the entire room. Arminius grabbed his left ear.

"Where are we?" Alex said calmly.

Steve looked through the binoculars for a moment. "He's down."

Alex picked up the gun and laid it on the bed and Steve handed Arminius the binoculars. Steve and Alex began disassembling the gun. Arminius looked out the window and saw Holt on the ground, his head unrecognizable. The men around him were pointing at the building, and running.

"Shit. They made us."

Alex and Steve laughed and shook their heads, as if Arminius told a great joke.

Arminius pulled out his pistol. "Are we going to have to shoot our way out?"

"Nah. They have this long procedure to flush out a sniper. It will be hours before they even dare to storm the building." Alex said, as he and Steve finished packing up the rifle.

Alex pulled out his pistol and walked towards the door. "Let's go."

Steve followed behind, carrying the case. Arminius and LeMay quickly caught up.

The elevator ride down was almost placid. Alex and Steve's nonchalance after the kill made Arminius and LeMay feel inexplicably secure until they reached the lobby. When the doors opened Arminius and LeMay pointed their pistols out, and searched for hostiles. Alex and Steve casually walked out of the door and towards the entrance of the building.

They all got in the jeep and pulled out of the parking lot. Arminius kept looking for an ambush, but none came. The streets maintained their creepy silence. It was just another day at the office for the sniper team.

Alex hit the gas and the jeep flew out of the red zone, and out onto the highway leading back to Norstrom's. The wind was a welcome relief to the humid atmosphere in the city.

"You're sure he's dead, right?" Arminius asked over the sound of the wind and the engine.

"No doubt. Fifty cal to the head at that distance. Game over." Steve said.

Arminius looked at LeMay who shrugged back at him. Arminius leaned back in his seat and tried to relax a bit. So long fuckface. One more to go.

The jeep cleared the checkpoint and stopped in front of the strike team's waterfront tent. LeMay and Arminius climbed out of the jeep. Alex and Steve nodded at them, and the jeep sped away.

A news helicopter buzzed overhead as the rest of the strike team hung out under the canopy and ate their meal packs. Arminius walked back under the canopy and grabbed a ready-to-eat meal that he presumed had been left for him.

"How did it go?" Jackson asked.

"We got Holt." LeMay said, picking up the other ready-to-eat meal. He sat down on his sleeping bag and dug in.

"What about Darby?" Helms asked.

"Nope." LeMay said.

The helicopter buzzed off, and Arminius looked out over the river as he ate his tasteless crap meal. Suddenly, a black mood overtook him. Feelings of fatigue and rage fed on each other within him until it felt like his brain had become a burnt husk inside his skull. He was truly sick of this god awful city. Even its buildings were pretentious. More to the point, he had missed the best part of the whole affair - the yuppiecalypse, when all the rich pigs cried into their lattes, and went squealing for the hills. The fun was over, there was no one left worth shooting.

Arminius dreamed of being back on the highway of all things. There was at least a kind of freedom in being without a direct chain of command, especially LARPing primadonna dicksacks like *General* Ragnar. He tossed his paltry meal aside, and stared out at the river again.

After a few moments a thought shot through his brain. "I know where Darby is."

"Where?" Martel asked.

Arminius turned to LeMay, and smiled. "He's at the Walmart. The one we walked right into because they don't cover the back."

LeMay immediately got his meaning. "Yes. And I bet Ragnar goes for it, too. We tag out Darby and he takes down a major red base."

Arminius looked at Jackson. "Think we can get an audience with the king?"

Jackson smiled and nodded, and Arminius turned back to looking at the river. He daydreamed that the river would boil and every creature inside it would die in agony.

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A young staff officer waved for the strike team to come forward. They had been waiting on folding chairs to see General Ragnar for over an hour. They followed the aide back to a grand room with its walls stripped bare of any Jewish influence.

Ragnar walked over and started shaking hands. "Great to see you again."

"We figured you'd be setup in Norstrom's these days." LeMay said.

Ragnar laughed. "Maybe once they wash the blood out. So, how can I help you?"

"So we got Holt..." LeMay started.

"Great job by the way."

"Thank you, general. Appreciate it. But, also, we believe we know where Darby is."

Ragnar's eyes grew wider and he turned his head towards LeMay and put his left hand behind his ear "Do tell!" he laughed again, and everyone but Arminius joined in.

"You see general, the way Arminius and I learned the faces of the commanders when we infiltrated a Walmart in the southeastern part of the city..." LeMay started.

"Yes. Your man Jackson told me." Ragnar said, with Jackson practically blushing at being mentioned.

"Yes. Right. So we believe Darby is there, and furthermore..."

"You want snipers?" Ragnar asked.

"No. No. Snipers won't work, you see the entire operation is inside the Walmart. So..."

"Goddamn commies. All they ever did was complain about Walmart, then the war starts and it's their favorite place to hang out. Sam Walton is spinning in his grave fast enough to solve the energy crisis!" Ragnar broke into laughter again.

Arminius stepped up in front of LeMay. "General, the Walmart is completely exposed. They don't expect an attack from the rear because of the feds, so even a small force could take them by surprise. It's a win-win. We get Darby, and you get to wipe out one of the reds' largest strongholds east of the river."

The forcefulness of Arminius' pitch was slightly inappropriate, but the plan was sound, and Ragnar seemed to appreciate the passion and the idea. Arminius, however, was the opposite of pleased in response to Ragnar's continued interruptions and arrogance, and was doing everything in his power to suppress his rage from manifesting on his face.

Ragnar looked over Arminius, then the rest of the strike team. "When I heard men from White Lightning were in town I almost couldn't believe my luck. I almost worried I was getting too optimistic. But you've proved your worth, and more. I'll give you a whole company, and the perfect commander to lead them, me!"

"Wonderful!" Jackson said, and started clapping. The rest of the strike team followed, even Arminius forced himself to fake some enthusiasm.

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It had taken a day of reconnaissance for General Ragnar to feel comfortable with the strike team's plan. But his scouts confirmed the story: the reds had left themselves wide open from behind, believing that Homeland Security was policing the roads into the city.

At dawn the next day, a convoy of pickup trucks and Humvees made its way through the park and onto the road. The strike team rode in Ragnar's Humvee.

The trucks and Humvees emptied behind the Walmart. The soldiers split up to take the multiple doors at the same time, with a special group organized to wipe out the red security detail. General Ragnar gave each unit time to get in position, then looked at his watch.

He waited a few moments then fired his pistol in the air. All the units moved in

at once.

Ragnar followed the unit on the right side entrance into the Walmart, and the strike team followed after. The soldiers fired their machine guns at anything that moved. The reds had been taken by complete surprise with few soldiers able to even get to a gun.

The most resistance appeared to come from the front entrance, but the white soldiers still broke through and were now in the front entrance gunning down anyone they could. The firing continued from all the entrances, creating a brutally efficient kill box.

After a few minutes the firing died down, the floor strewn with the dead and dying. Ragnar pulled out his bullhorn "Move forward."

The different units methodically made their way forward through the Walmart. Shooting anyone still moving and looking behind the remaining shelves and hiding places. When they found a straggler they shot them. Sporadic gunfire rang out as the unit General Ragnar was with made it to the center of the Walmart where the tents were located.

"Clear it."

The soldiers fired into the tents. Screams rang out and a few red soldiers ran for it, only to be sliced and diced by gunfire. The whites emptied their guns, then reloaded, and emptied them again.

The other units shot their way to the center of the Walmart and joined up with Ragnar's unit. Ragnar looked at Arminius. "You see your boy?"

Arminius shook his head and pointed to the back of the offices near the

bathrooms where the interrogations were done. "That's where they do intel. That's a good place to start."

Ragnar signaled for the soldiers to follow him and they moved towards the back offices. "Be ready."

The white soldiers stepped over the bodies from the firefight, and looked around for an ambush. Arminius looked to the entrance and saw that the security committee room had been blasted to pieces. There were still hiding places that would have to be checked, but it looked like a thorough job.

As the soldiers approached the room, the door opened. The soldiers all got in firing position. A white shirt was waved out the door.

"Fine. Come out then. Hands up or you're dead." General Ragnar sneered.

The door opened and a group of red officers walked out. One of them was Darby. They all looked utterly shocked and demoralized. They had to know this was the end.

General Ragnar stared at the red officers menacingly, with a self-satisfied look on his face. If he had a football, he'd surely spike it.

Arminius came up to Ragnar's ear. "The tall one. That's him."

Ragnar turned to Arminius. "OK. A deal is a deal." Ragnar then turned to the red officers. "Everyone but Commander Darby, on your knees. Darby, come here."

Darby looked scared and confused, but walked away from the other officers, now on their knees. He came up to General Ragnar who kept impatiently

waving him over.

"Hey, nice to meet you. Get on your knees for me. Thanks" Ragnar said.

Darby awkwardly dropped to his knees and Ragnar motioned for the soldiers to stand aside. Then he turned to Arminius, who smiled, pulled out his nine millimeter pistol, and shot Darby point blank in the forehead causing blood to flow out the front of his skull like a punctured water bottle.

Darby's body slumped down and blood began to pool around it.

"Am I a man of my word?"

"You are." Arminius said, and slightly bowed, before stepping back to join the rest of the strike team.

General Ragnar then stepped up in front of the red officers. "For the rest of you. You have exactly one chance at staying alive. You agree to cooperate right now, and provide us information on your so-called comrades. Anyone who wants that deal, stand up now."

All the remaining officers stood up.

"That's the problems with these materialists. They love life too much!" Ragnar laughed. "Take 'em." The white soldiers rushed up to the officers and put them against the wall and tied their hands with rope.

The bound red officers were ushered away. And Ragnar and the strike team walked into the interrogation room. There were two bodies inside, both with their throats cut.

"Damn. I think they got Victor." Ragnar said to one of the staff officers in his entourage.

Arminius looked at the man he was pointing at, lying dead on the floor with his throat cut. He suddenly noticed his shoes; white with green trim.

"Victor was a spy *for you*?" Arminius asked, confused and curious.

"Hmm, double agent I guess? He was a crook really. The reds caught him stealing food and profiting off the war. They forced him into service." Ragnar said, looking at the body with some remorse.

"I know. We saw him get strong-armed. Only knew him by the shoes." Arminius said, pointing to the shoes for LeMay's benefit.

"Oh, shit. Why did they kill him?" LeMay said.

"He came over to the camp, asking questions. An obvious spy, but I schooled him on our philosophy and our cause anyway. He was quick on the uptake. Sharp. Eventually, he agreed to feed them disinformation. Though, truth be told, he could have just ran once we let him go. We already helped his family get out. We had no leverage on him. I guess he just really believed."

Ragnar crouched over the body and closed Victor's eyes. "Sleep well, brother." He kissed his forehead.

General Ragnar stood back up energized, and straightened his uniform. "I suppose I couldn't talk you guys into sticking around, right? Killing more than one red at a time has its advantages. For one thing, you kill more reds!"

"Sorry, general. We have our own duties. But it's nice to be asked." LeMay said.

"We wish we could, but there's another list waiting for us." Jackson said.

"Speaking of which, could we get a ride back to our car?" Arminius added.

"Done." Ragnar said. "And good luck. It's going to be a long war."

General Ragnar laughed and patted Arminius on the shoulder, then exited the interrogation room. His entourage following behind him. The general walked through the Walmart to raucous applause, a hero's triumph. He was LARPing at another level. The illusion was becoming real.

One of the soldiers gave the strike team a ride back to the Impala. They piled in, and drove out of the city. Arminius was happy to be done with General Ragnar's charisma cult.

5.

It was on the highway out of Portland that the strike team turned on the radio and learned the fate of Matthew Chance. After his transition to becoming a "woman" he was accused of same-sex sexual harassment. Allegedly, Chance used his position as director of his social justice workshops to emotionally manipulate young women into romantic relationships.

The charges were never substantiated, and Chance defended himself by providing his psychiatrist's affidavit that claimed his hormone therapy had severely damaged his libido and that, in any case, he no longer actually had working genitalia. But the accusation alone was enough to convict him in the court of woke public opinion. His workshops were closed down. Alone, broke, and broken, he hung himself inside a public library bathroom.

"He just wanted to be hung one more time." Helms joked. The car filled with laughter.

Chance's undignified death was the talk of the dark web, not that normie social media wasn't laughing it up too. Evidently, no one respects weakness, and there are no innocent bystanders in a culture war: just potential recruits for either side to be captured or neutralized. The totalizing nature of the conflict renders all issues binary and, despite the many protestations of the non-conformists,

there is no middle ground. Social justice activists and the reactionary right understood this truth, everyone else lived in their wake. And, sometimes, drowned in it.

Chance thought he was going from one side to the other in the culture war, but his journey was always one of self-destruction. His enemies never wanted him to convert to the cause. No one trusts a traitor. Chance was always more useful as a cautionary tale of what happens when you transgress leftist social dogmas than as a turncoat. The more he surrendered to the social justice activists, the less they respected him, and the more they wanted to crush him. He was too weak to be valuable as an ally, but visible enough to provide public instruction on the perils of defying them. Chance didn't realize, until it was too late, that he was never going to be a powerful example, just an example of power.

It was later reported that he was evicted from his home due to lack of income and the costs of fighting numerous sexual harassment lawsuits. Personally bankrupt in all senses, Chance retreated into one of the only public spaces left for him, and made one final spectacle of himself for everyone's amusement.

"These fucks never learn. There is no mercy or forgiveness from the left! You have to name the Jew. You have to plant the flag and fix bayonets, or they will ruin you twice as bad. The communist only respects strength!" Martel said.

"Yeah, and even if you don't get wrecked publicly, you live like a slave, censoring yourself, grinding yourself down to a nub until you're dead anyway. Nothing. No one. Imagine destroying your whole life because you won't say nigger." LeMay laughed.

"I don't know, for a guy who cut off his dick, he was sure hung like a nigger!" Helms said. The Impala was practically shaking from the hilarity.

Arminius laughed too. But he was laughing more at himself, and the fears that had almost led him to the road not taken. He could have died a cuck too, and for some of the same reasons. The road not taken was an easier road, all you had to do in theory was give up and submit to leftist power. But Chance submitted, and still died like a depressed hobo.

As Arminius saw it, Chance's fears led to submission, and submission led to destruction. Some form of destruction is inevitable. Everyone dies. The point was to truly live in the interim between birth and death. To be a man, before the lights go out. That was the choice. That was the test.

As the sun set on the highway, a sense of peace blanketed Arminius. He was grateful to be a free man of the West.

They crossed into California that night, at least a day away from their dead drop. The Holiday Inn was a touch better than the normal places they crashed, but they figured they deserved it, and there was more than enough left of the \$40,000 to cover it. The Los Angeles dead drop was also supposed to include a re-supply, which they had convinced themselves included cash.

*

In the morning, the team trudged down to the Holiday Inn breakfast bar. Arminius had snagged the USA Today, and while trying to shake himself awake during his meal of coffee and a Cinnabon, the headline reluctantly came into focus: "FBI Raids Take Down White Lightning Leadership."

He began wondering if his brain was playing tricks on him. But when LeMay sat down with his breakfast, he put his finger over his mouth to indicate silence, and slid the newspaper over to him. LeMay looked down at the paper and, eyes wide, looked back at Arminius terrified. It must be real.

Arminius leaned in and whispered "Everyone, back to the room."

Jackson, Martel, and Helms gave confused looks, but followed Arminius and LeMay out of the breakfast bar. They rode the elevator and walked back to their room in complete silence.

The door closed behind them, and Arminius turned around and showed them the headline. "We're well fucked."

LeMay turned on cable news, which was breathlessly covering the story, complete with video of perp walks for White Lightning leadership. The reports claimed that the FBI had pieced together enough information to identify most of the White Lightning network, and had hit them all at once last night. Many of the leaders, it turned out, were connected to local and state police departments.

"I guess that explains those easy getaways." LeMay said.

"I don't see Cross. Or anyone else from the farm." Arminius said.

"They're only saying 'multiple arrests', I don't see a total number." Helms said.

Arminius took the paper back, and began reading through the article. The FBI was being cagey about how far they had infiltrated the organization, and about whether they were done making arrests. All of the White Lightning members who were arrested were being charged under the new anti-terrorism laws, which significantly curtailed their rights. Obviously, the goal was to get some of them to flip in exchange for reduced sentences.

"So what the fuck do we do now?" Jackson said.

Arminius looked up from the paper, and over to LeMay. There was no

contingency if the entire organization was destroyed. It was also disconcerting that there even were perp walks. Leadership, like the strike team members, were not supposed to be taken alive.

"We go to the dead drop, as planned." LeMay said.

"What?" Helms shot back. "Are you fucking thick? ZOG just took down the brass. There ain't no drop, boy!"

"We make the mark, then give them the fourteen days for the re-supply and the new list. That's the procedure. That's what we agreed to do. If nothing happens after those two weeks, we go from there." LeMay said, his own ambivalence modulating the tone of his voice.

Arminius looked to see the other men's reactions to LeMay's stance, it didn't look good. He wasn't sanguine on LeMay's position either, but no alternative was coming to mind. This wasn't the kind of job you retired from. *Victory or death*, and the fate of the 300 Spartans rang in his ears.

"If we go to the LA drop, we could be walking into a trap. If the feds compromised anyone they could learn about the dead drops, too." Martel said.

"That was always true for any of the dead drops. We have to go on the assumption that nobody gave us up. Just like we wouldn't give them up." LeMay responded.

"Nobody was supposed to be taken alive!" Jackson said, as if just realized that himself. He stood up tall, lording his superior height over LeMay. "If they followed the procedures, if they did what they agreed to, how are they still alive?"

The point was a salient one, and pwned LeMay for the time being. LeMay had invoked the rules about waiting for the dead drop, but those same rules said death before capture. That such a sound logical argument had come from the usually mildly-witted Jackson made it all the more striking.

"We have to assume the drop is a trap." Helms said, standing up as well. "White Lightning is finished!"

LeMay came out of his verbal defeat with Jackson with renewed anger. He got into Helms' face. "You thinking about deserting, bitch? Because I got forty-five things to say about that."

"Relax!" Arminius said, tossing down the newspaper. "Let's take a minute to think about this, before we kill each other. OK?"

LeMay backed off Helms, and went back to watching the news. The clip of the White Lightning leaders flanked by men in FBI jackets being perp walked for the cameras was on loop, as pundits bantered about what the arrests meant for the next round of transactional politics in Washington.

The signal within the noise seemed to be that Congress and the White House were significantly more worried about The 14 Words than White Lightning. This was supposedly due to the much heavier body count The 14 Words had racked up. In truth, the overriding concern was due to the fact that recent attacks by The 14 Words had targeted powerful people's children, including members of Congress.

Some of the so-called analysts even posited that the arrests of White Lightning leadership were a calculated distraction by the White House to dampen a news cycle revolving around the recent killing of a Congresswoman's two-year-old son by The 14 Words. Essentially saying that White Lightning had been pwned by

law enforcement some time ago, and that the president and friends had sat on the information until they needed a big political win. This was rumor-mongering at its worst, but there was a certain charming logic to the conspiracy theory.

Arminius didn't know what was more depressing; seeing White Lighting leadership paraded around by the feds like trophies, or being outshined in the elite media's imagination by The 14 Words.

"Goddamn, am I sick of hearing about The 14 fucking Words." LeMay grumbled.

"The upside to leaderless resistance is they can't arrest your leaders, and show them off for the kike media." Helms said, transfixed by the images on the TV screen.

The strike team watched cable news blather on in total silence for another hour, until the repetition became nauseating. It was apparent that the anchors were just treading water, and nothing new on the arrests was forthcoming. Once they started previewing an upcoming segment with video from a forest fire, the jig was up.

Jackson stood up, still feeling emboldened by his previous successful showdown with LeMay. "So, what are we going to do?"

"We go to the drop." LeMay said.

"That idea is just as dumb as it was an hour ago." Helms said.

"Look, we go to the drop. If there's no response, fine. If it's a trap, we sniff it out and blow. But if the re-supply and kill list is still available, then we're good and

the feds didn't get us all. What's the alternative?" LeMay said. He was done with Jackson's bullshit and was happy to put him on the spot.

Jackson hesitated and looked at Helms, then back at LeMay. "The alternative is not going. Let's just lie low until all the details come out about the arrests."

"What's the rush?" Helms said.

LeMay shrugged.

Arminius watched LeMay waffle and appear to back down. The anger began boiling over. He practically jumped off the hotel bed. "What the fuck kind of faggotry is this? This is war! You want to hide like a rat? You want to retire? Riddle me this, how far can you run? We're all on multiple surveillance videos committing murders. Not to mention, those murders are all tied to press releases from a terrorist organization. How far can you run? How long can you run? Not far. Not long."

Arminius started pointing at each person in the room. "Death penalty. Death penalty. Death penalty. Death penalty." Then he pointed at himself. "Death penalty. We are already dead men, we just haven't died yet. You are deluding yourselves if you think there's any other way out. It's victory or death!"

Martel stood up and proudly saluted. Jackson and Helms, however, recoiled.

"Every man here has risked his life, Arminius. But there's a difference between risking your life in a fight and committing suicide." Helms said, with Jackson nodding along. "I don't mind dying in battle. But I'm not walking head first into an obvious trap. You saw the news, White Lightning is finished. So is our obligation to check the dead drop."

"No one is saying leave the fight. But we can't pretend nothing has changed."
Jackson said.

Arminius stood there seething. There was no way in hell he was going to spend his days holed up in a hotel waiting for the other shoe to drop. Maybe it was a trap, so what? Blowing away some feds before hitting the end screen was fine by him.

"So what then? You want to stay here?" LeMay asked.

"No." Arminius said, suddenly realizing the source of the resistance. He let the smirk run across his face. "They want to go back to Portland. Fucking Ragnar fanboys."

LeMay was temporarily stunned by the claim, but saw the look on Jackson and Helms' faces and knew it was true. LeMay and Arminius missed the initial bonding between General Ragnar and the rest of the team. The hooks were in pretty deep, with the exception of Martel, who never bonded with anyone.

"It's not the worst idea in the world." Jackson tenderly suggested.

Arminius was happy to take the L, if the terms were right. They could go back to cosplay in the middle of who gives a shit, and he and LeMay and Martel could keep the game going. "Fine. Take two nines, and some money for the bus, and be gone then. We're keeping the heavy guns and the car."

"Fine." Helms said, as he and Jackson began collecting their belongings.

Martel joined LeMay in astonishment as Arminius sat back down and re-read the newspaper article on the end of White Lightning.

The team drove to the downtown transportation center, and parked at a restaurant roughly a block away. Everyone got out. It was the end of the tour, and a time for fond farewells.

Jackson and Helms picked out the two nine millimeter pistols in the truck and tucked them in their belts. LeMay handed them five hundred dollars. "This should be more than enough."

"You're just going back the way we came. Straight up Route Five. It'll take the day, but you'll be back with Ragnar in no time." Arminius said, giving them both an icy stare.

"Alright, then." Jackson said, and picked up his bags.

"You sure you want to do this?" LeMay asked, giving Jackson and Helms a concerned look.

"Portland is where the fight is. It's a symbol for the victory of our people." Helms said.

Helms' haughty self-stroking was too much and Arminius exploded. "A symbol? Are you fucking kidding me? A symbol? Hey, have you ever thought that the reason the feds haven't jumped in to stop the fighting is because no one cares about two groups of LARPing degenerates killing each other in a state where no one fucking lives? A symbol? No one cares about your uniforms, your generals, or any other part of your theater camp bullshit!"

LeMay motioned for him to lower his voice, and Arminius mock washed his hands and stepped back.

"Fuck all that. Good luck, guys." LeMay said, and shook Helms and Jackson's

hands. Martel did the same. Arminius shook Jackson's hand, then he and Helms locked eyes and Helms pulled Arminius in close.

"When you're in prison getting fucked by niggers, remember my face, huh?" Helms said, and glared at Arminius.

"Yo, enough!" LeMay said.

Arminius continued gripping Helms' hand, and through clenched-teeth said. "And when ZOG finally gets around to crushing you like the insects you are, please think of my smiling face, and remember that you are and will always be, a two-balled cunt."

LeMay stepped between them, and pushed Arminius back. Jackson and Helms started walking towards the bus station.

Suddenly Martel stepped up, threw out a fascist salute and yelled "Hail victory!"

LeMay and Arminius immediately grabbed his arm, as Jackson and Helms looked around in terror to see if anyone heard or saw it. LeMay waved for them to keep walking.

"What the fuck is wrong with you?" LeMay said to Martel, as he pushed him towards the car.

"What? I was wishing them luck! I'm a supreme gentleman!" Martel said, confused by the response.

Arminius and LeMay looked at each other, still in shock at the blunder.

"Maybe you should go with them to Portland." Arminius said, thinking it might

be a good idea to get the retard off his hands.

"Nopers. I don't want to die wearing a uniform." Martel said, and pushed LeMay off him. He pointed to the restaurant. "Let's get lunch."

"After your little stunt, we need to leave, now." LeMay said.

What remained of the strike team piled into the Impala. LeMay driving, Arminius navigating, and Martel in the back.

"I'm not sure that had to be so ugly." LeMay said, shooting a brief look at Arminius.

"Really? I thought it was surprisingly civil given that, technically, we are supposed to shoot deserters."

The remaining team swung back to the Holiday Inn to gather their things, then wiped down the room. Not long after, they were finally back on the road, riding the highway down to brown hell.

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Arminius changed lanes to avoid being behind a sixteen wheeler that had been kicking crap onto their windshield. One of the wheels looked ready for the fall, and the expanded burp brought about by its disintegration was unsettling enough to warrant a risky turn.

While Jackson and Helms were riding Route Five to get back to Portland, the rest of the team were riding it in the opposite direction to get to the dead drop in Los Angeles. The closer they got to the city, the more reckless the driving. The wayward motorists seemed inclined to believe they could speed their way

out of the traffic jam they were driving right into.

The hurry up to wait strategy was unappealing to Arminius, especially when factoring in the escalating dangers for him contained in each rowdy highway maneuver. Just a minor fender bender would bring the police out, and who knew if their White Lightning fake IDs were still good.

The issue became moot as they got closer to Los Angeles. The highway swiftly became a crawling parking lot.

"Fucking Christ." LeMay said, looking at a sea of cars, that stretched as far as the eye could see.

After a few hours of claustrophobia-inducing traffic, Arminius pulled off the highway towards the dead drop. He handed LeMay the kill list. "Alright, strike a line through each name, and put three lightning bolts at the bottom."

LeMay wrote on the kill list paper. "It says 'Deliver to false rock under Elysian Park Bridge.' What does that mean?"

"If you read the rest of it you'd see. We have to put the crossed out list in a rock under the bridge, then make three white strikes on a wall."

"Is that the Dodgers Stadium?" Martel said, pointing to a building on the horizon.

"Yeah, the park is nearby." Arminius said, and began the approach.

Arminius parked the Impala in the street and they walked into the park. LeMay had the forty-five and Arminius had the nine. Martel was unarmed, and hung back to look for surveillance.

"What the fuck, is that a police academy?" LeMay said, under his breath.

The Los Angeles Police Department Police Academy was in the middle of the park. Sitting pleasantly amidst the activity of the joggers and dog walkers.

Arminius nodded and took the kill list from LeMay. He looked at the bottom of the paper that gave directions to the drop.

After a series of wrong turns and misreads, they found the bridge. It was a small little passageway over a small little stream, not even wide enough for a canoe given the large rocks within it.

"Is this it?" LeMay asked.

Arminius scanned the park, looking for anything suspicious. All he saw were hikers looking at their phones as they walked.

"Yes. the false stone is on the other side of the bridge. Look out for anything off. I'll go across and find the stone."

LeMay stepped back and looked around, he spotted Martel about a football field away, but nothing else that seemed out of place.

Arminius crossed the bridge and crouched near the stream. He looked under the small bridge and saw a few rocks, nothing obvious. He looked around again and crouched back down closer to the bottom of the bridge and began feeling the rocks.

Finally, he felt something plastic. He pulled the rock out from under the bridge and inspected it. He pulled the bottom off which revealed a hidden compartment. Arminius placed the paper in the compartment, and put the rock

back under the bridge. He looked over at LeMay, who nodded back.

Arminius walked back across the bridge and he and LeMay started retracing their steps. Martel paralleled their movements in the distance, looking for any signs that they were being followed or surveiled.

"Still think this is worth the risk?" LeMay asked.

Arminius started laughing. "This was *your* plan. I think getting the answer is the risky part. If the network is compromised, we're giving them all the time in the world to set us up."

They met back up with Martel at the entrance to the park, and left together.

"Right near a police academy, what were they thinking?" Martel said.

"Well, they did get caught. Didn't they?" Arminius said, as he laughed and got in the car.

"Maybe the LAPD was in on it." LeMay offered.

Arminius pulled back onto the road and began going down Sunset Boulevard.

"Everyone be on the lookout for a hardware store. We need white spray paint."

They found a Home Depot near Route 110 and bought white spray paint, then turned to reach the signal point at 16th and Central. They were going into what looked like gang territory,

"This could get hairy. We might be overwriting gang signs." Arminius said, and got out of the car.

He walked over to the heavily graffitied wall and made three white lines diagonal lines going left to right.

Arminius jumped in the passenger seat, and LeMay sped away. The wall post-marking was almost indistinguishable from what it looked like prior.

"You sure that was big enough?" LeMay said skeptically.

"For someone looking? Yes. Martel, you see anything suspicious at the park?" Arminius said.

"No. But they would wait until the pick up." Martel said.

"Right."

LeMay pulled into the Super 8 on Sunset Boulevard. The team got out of the car and bought a room for the night.

*

Something was wrong. It started with a feeling, but then Arminius identified where the feeling was coming from - there was at least twice as much police presence on the way to the signal spot as there had been the first time. His unconscious brain must have picked up on it, and knotted his stomach to let him know that he was in danger.

"You feeling this?" Arminius said, as he gave LeMay a stressed look, trying to see if the feeling was mutual.

"Yeah. Bad vibes. I don't know though." LeMay said, looking around.

"Martel, anything?" Arminius asked.

"What do you mean?" Martel said, completely oblivious to human emotions as always.

Arminius looked back to LeMay. The feeling went into overdrive, he was getting nauseous. "We're blown. We're blown. Dump out!"

"You sure?" LeMay said, unnerved by the claim, as he put on his turn signal to change course.

"Just go. Just go."

LeMay turned right just as two more police cars passed on their left side, followed by an unmarked black S.U.V. "Holy shit!"

"Don't go back to the hotel." Arminius said, now thoroughly surrendering to paranoia.

"What's going on?" Martel said.

"We're made. Cops are everywhere." LeMay said.

"They're probably just here for gang stuff. We're in the shitty part of the city." Martel reasoned.

LeMay looked at Arminius who shrugged back. Maybe he was finally losing it, but he trusted his intuition on this one. It wasn't the typical general anxiety before a mission, it was specific and biting.

"Do we need to confirm?" Arminius asked.

"Confirm what? We agreed they would get us at the park not here." Martel said.

"Pretend you're the LAPD. Where would you rather have a potential shootout; a public park filled with rich douchebags, or a mud drug zone?" Arminius said.

Martel thought about it for a moment. "That's logical."

"Good Christ, we came all the way here. I'd rather confirm it before we piss off." LeMay said.

Arminius tried to think of a way to get confirmation just as yet another convoy of squad cars and black unmarked SUVs passed them going the opposite direction towards the signal spot.

"Goddamn." LeMay said, looking at the cops in the rear view mirror.

"Getting confirmation isn't without its risks either. We even get temporarily detained for being in the area and our IDs are bad - that's the ballgame." Arminius said.

"Yeah. But if they have us, they definitely don't have us cold. Otherwise, why not just grab us now, or last night?" LeMay said, and pulled the Impala into a 7-Eleven parking lot.

"Food stop?" Martel asked excitedly.

LeMay started laughing.

"Go ahead." Arminius said.

Martel practically jumped out of the car, and ran into the 7-Eleven. Martel's

sugar addiction was becoming a major inconvenience, but that was nothing compared to how intolerable he became when he didn't get his fix.

"We should send him to go check. Worst case scenario we can travel without constantly stopping for junk food." Arminius said, not sure if he was serious or not.

LeMay did his best Martel impression. "You can not arrest me for murder, because I am the king of fortniiiiiteee."

Arminius laughed. "I get the argument for not ditching our duty here. But I'm only willing to try if we have a reasonable chance of getting away clean."

"Agreed." LeMay said, and pointed as Martel came out of the 7-Eleven with his hands full of candy.

Martel got back in the car, and LeMay turned to Arminius. "Let's see if we can find a lookout spot. Before we take the L."

"Carefully." Arminius said.

"No doubt." LeMay said, pulling the car out of the parking lot, and driving towards the signal spot.

The closer they got to 16th and Central, the more police they saw. Coincidence was losing its explanatory power. They counted at least six different squad cars and four different black SUVs in a five block radius of the signal spot.

Arminius wrote down the license plate number of a passing police car. He compared it to the others. "Christ. That makes seven. *Seven* different squad cars and four SWAT SUVs circling the signal spot. Come on, man. What more do

you need?"

LeMay smacked the steering wheel in anger. "Fuck!" he said, and took the highway out of the city.

It had been hours since they left LA, and the next step they should take remained just as elusive. No one had a plan. The heavy traffic was gone. Only a few cars were even in sight now as the empty desert laid itself before them. There were no other options but the one road.

LeMay stared vacantly out the window, watching the clouds cast shadows on the distant mountains. They were out of immediate danger, but the worst was confirmed: White Lightning was wrecked. No orders would come, nor supplies be delivered. They were utterly on their own.

Arminius was too weary from the events of the day to give the strike team's predicament much consideration. His earlier intuitions had sapped him of energy. His brain had grown foggy, and he was resigned to give it a rest for the time being.

"Does this mean we go to Portland?" Martel asked from the backseat.

"Fuck no." Arminius said, giving LeMay a solemn look.

LeMay looked back at Arminius and nodded. "No. We have to figure something else out."

"What then?" Martel shot back.

"If I knew I'd tell you Martel. For fuck's sake!" LeMay said, and gave Martel a dirty look through the rear view mirror.

He sighed, and went back to looking at the distant mountains.

After a few more hours LeMay pulled into a roadside cafe. There were no hotels in sight, not that they knew where they were going anyway.

They sat down at one of the far tables away from the other customers, which seemed to mostly be long-haul truckers. The back of the restaurant was poorly lit, and the team ordered coffee and waited for the waitress to leave before speaking.

LeMay leaned in, and Martel and Arminius did likewise. "The way I see it, we can still carry on the mission even though HQ is down. We just pick the targets ourselves. Then after -"

Arminius raised his hand in a stop motion, and LeMay looked to see the waitress returning with their coffees.

The waitress put down the coffees and asked if they were ready to order. Arminius thanked her and said they would call her over when they were ready.

LeMay leaned back in. "After the strike. We tell the press it was White Lightning."

"I was with you up to that part. They have everything bugged. We communicate with anyone, we're pwned. You remember what Cross said, anything electronic can be eavesdropped on." Arminius said.

"Yeah, and they got pwned anyway."

"That proves *my* point, not yours. If they got pwned even after taking those precautions, we would be fucking retarded to slack off on this. The feds must be

all over our shit. The last thing we should be doing is picking up a phone, or sending an email to the press. Who, last I checked, aren't friendlies anyway. " Arminius said, and took a long sip of his coffee hoping to kick start his brain back on.

"So what then?" LeMay said, trying not to raise his voice above a whisper. "Just kill them and run. How is that revolutionary violence? People might think it's fucking street crime, or some lover's quarrel, or I dunno what the fuck. If no one knows they died for being anti-white, it's a waste of bullets."

"Does it really matter if people know *why*?" Arminius said, betraying his well-established apathy for revolutionary symbolism.

LeMay tapped his fingers on the table, trying to control his anger. "You know what your problem is, Arminius?"

"Please. Tell me."

LeMay's anger turned to a kind of demented laughter. "You just like killing people. You don't give a shit about the cause. You don't want the added risk, not because you don't think the reward is worth the risk. You don't want the added risk, because you don't think the reward means anything at all. Because you don't really *care* about the revolution, or the future of the white race, or anything about anything. It's all some bulllllshit, right? You only bought in so you could shoot mother fuckers in the face and get away with it. That gets you off, right? That makes you cream your pants. Admit it, you fucking faggot!"

Arminius looked around to see if LeMay's outburst was heard by any of the other patrons. LeMay looked to, and gained a semblance of self-control.

"We took an oath, mother fucker!" LeMay said, gnashing his teeth at Arminius

and slamming the table.

Arminius leaned back in his seat, and took another long sip of his coffee. He was tempted to get trollish, but he knew as well as anyone that LeMay was not a man to fuck with. He also wasn't sure if LeMay was armed or not.

He finished his coffee, put the cup down, and leaned back in. "Let's get beyond my own pathologies and neuroses, and *I dunno what the fuck*. Shall we? I never said I wasn't a killer. I never said that, because it isn't true. And, last I checked, everyone at this table is a killer, too. The point here is this... Why take an added risk for an organization that's already ashes? Who wins by doing that? Not us. Not anyone but the feds. And, by the way, if it's all for the cause... well, the *cause* is bigger than White Lightning. Isn't it?"

LeMay said nothing, and drank his coffee. What was the point of going on?

"I've got an idea --" Martel began to say, but Arminius shook his head, and waved Martel off, then waved the waitress over.

The waitress took their orders. And they waited for their food in silence.

The food arrived and the silence continued for the duration of the meal. After the bus boy cleared the plates, Martel decided to try again.

"Why don't we just leave something at the scene. Like a piece of paper or something."

"You mean like a nice piece of forensic evidence? Yeah, why not do that? Hmm I wonder." Arminius said.

"That says what?" LeMay said.

"Are you serious?" Arminius said.

"*Brought to you by White Lightning?*" Martel said.

LeMay laughed. "It's cute. And the police will eventually leak it to the press. So the word will get out, too."

Arminius stared at LeMay, incredulous. "This is even dumber than calling or emailing. We're literally leaving them trace evidence, on purpose."

"We'll try to make it as clean as possible. But this forwards the goal of revolution, and we'll be long gone before anyone has time to analyze that evidence and trace it to us, if they can." LeMay said, staring down Arminius. "Or you can just stay here, and me and Martel can go on. And, yeah, I got that forty-five on me, if you were wondering. So if we're going to keep going on together, this is my price."

Arminius looked at Martel and LeMay and recognized he was outvoted and outgunned. "I guess I'll have to pay then."

LeMay smiled and got up to pay the check, as Martel and Arminius followed after.

*

The night was hotter than they expected, and the sound from the open windows almost drowned out the pulsating synthwave music. There was friction everywhere. Arminius had made his piece with the post-kill White Lightning calling card, but the angry words spoken at the cafe were hard to submerge from the forefront of his mind. LeMay was a resentful little cunt, and he was happy for Arminius to know it.

But forget all that for now. They were on their way to the next kill. LeMay turned off the darkly lit highway into the shopping district. The streets were packed, with everyone decked out in their best clothes. It was Saturday night.

State Senator Christopher Levitan was walking the main drag, shaking hands and asking for support. He was running for the United States Congress after a lengthy career in state government. His platform was basic bitch Democrat talking points, but he had tried to distinguish himself from the primary field by calling for open borders and celebrating the white demographic decline. His campaign, foolishly, advertised tonight's event far and wide.

LeMay drove past Levitan and parked on a side street. Martel and Arminius got out of the car. Martel wore clear plastic gloves, and carried a white piece of paper.

Levitan continued glad-handing with people on the street, while his staff tried to get potential voters to fill out a form so the campaign would have their information for campaign fundraisers and get the vote efforts on election day.

"Senator Levitan!"

A man handed the senator a piece of paper. Levitan looked down and saw "Brought to you by White Lightning" in big black text. He looked back up, only to see a second man come forward with a pistol and fire right into his face.

Arminius blasted Levitan at close range with the forty-five, blowing his head apart and sending the people nearby into a full panic. Levitan's staff ran for it, as screams filled the streets.

The paper fell down next to Levitan's dead body, and Arminius looked around for any law enforcement response. He saw nothing but the pathetic masses

running for their lives, and the flashing lights of commerce. He smiled. "Let's go!"

Martel and Arminius ran into the Impala, and LeMay took off down the local roads. They were done with the highway for the night.

"I definitely saw people taking video with their phones." Martel said.

"Yeah, you wanted public, that was public. We better change plates soon. They definitely have readers out here." Arminius said, still a bit high off the rush from the kill.

LeMay nodded, and increased speed. The car flew down the streets, following the route they had charted out at the hotel. There was a more frenetic pace to avoid the police now that HQ was gone and they were flying without a net. The fear was colorful again, and they were back to being joyfully imprisoned by the moment.

"Anyone on us?" LeMay asked, as the Impala careened between other cars on the road.

Arminius looked back. "Nothing. But you keep driving like this, and there will be."

LeMay slowed down and began driving normally. The shopping district was far behind, but the public exposure of the killing was putting them right into the crosshairs. LeMay would get his precious press coverage for the ghost of White Lightning, and with it a full scale response from the politicians and law enforcement officials who would have to go through the humiliating spectacle of explaining why an organization they celebrated destroying was still killing people.

That a White Lightning strike team had killed a sitting public official while he was campaigning for high office would really put salt in the wound.

"There it is." Arminius said, pointing to the large office plaza.

LeMay pulled into the massive parking lot and found a spot near some brush. LeMay and Arminius hopped out of the car to change plates.

"What's the point of changing plates if all the IDs are compromised?" Martel asked.

"Just so it's different from the numbers someone got at the scene of the strike. We won't survive a close look if we get pulled over, but the plate reader cameras won't match these numbers." Arminius said, as he replaced the back license plate.

LeMay and Arminius finished replacing the plates and got back in the car. They heard distant sirens and LeMay pulled out of the parking lot, then continued the planned evasive maneuvers.

*

The strike team crashed in a dilapidated motel six hours out from the location of the Levitan assassination. The morning brought fresh angst concerning the wisdom of the spectacularly public hit. Arminius believed it was possible that the strike team had somehow avoided being positively identified up until the Levitan hit. It was unlikely, given how many cameras there were on the streets these days, but it was a glimmering thought in the back of his mind. That they were still anonymous assassins.

But with the Levitan strike, there could be no doubt whatsoever, they were

pwned. He had seen street cameras everywhere, as well as people in the crowd using their camera phones. They had sacrificed any chance of getting out clean in exchange for proving that not all of White Lightning had been destroyed by the feds. It was far from an act of revolutionary resistance: it was all ego.

They checked out of the motel and drove to the nearest diner for breakfast. At this point, there was no plan apart from staying alive and free.

Arminius slid into the booth, and Martel came in after him. LeMay took the other side. They ordered coffee and eggs and started reading through the newspapers they bought from machines outside the restaurant. There was nothing in the morning edition about the Levitan killing, which made sense given how late at night the killing had occurred.

"We need to get online for more up to date information. There could be APBs out for us right now." Arminius said.

"You're the one always quoting the rules about comsec. Now you want to get online?" LeMay responded.

Arminius leaned in. "We broke the rules when we killed a target in front of a crowd of people with camera phones. I'm not saying we buy a laptop. Let's go to a library or something and just look around the news sites."

LeMay looked at Martel who shrugged. LeMay nodded. The food arrived and everyone dug in.

They found a public library half an hour away from the diner and went in. There was a line of horrid desktop computers that grunted and huffed at the beginning of every minor task. As Arminius anticipated, the Levitan killing was front page news online. The newspaper's coverage would be following shortly.

Amateur video from the attack had been uploaded to multiple social media sites, and was featured in assorted mainstream media reports. Self-appointed internet detectives were already isolating images from the video and attempting to identify the members of the strike team.

Law enforcement were being circumspect about how much they knew, but did officially confirm media reports based on anonymous sources that the killing had been politically motivated. There were already new reports tying the assassination to White Lightning based on leaks from the FBI, with official confirmation seemingly imminent.

"Are you happy now?" Arminius whispered to LeMay, and turned his bulky desktop monitor towards LeMay, the headline on the network news site said "Exclusive: FBI Confirms White Lightning Behind Levitan Murder."

LeMay looked at the headline and smiled. "Yeah, actually, I am."

Arminius shook his head in disgust, and turned the monitor back towards him. He continued to search to find out if the team's identities had been confirmed yet, and hints at how the authorities were going to play it.

Sure enough, less than an hour later their names and photos were all over the web. A few of the internet detectives had put it together, but a few more had gotten it wrong. Now, the FBI was putting out the information along with a number to contact for tips, which gave license for the press to go wide with it. The FBI added that the suspects were driving a white Chevy Impala.

"You fucked us good." Arminius said.

LeMay stood up and motioned for Arminius and Martel to follow him. They left the library and looked around outside for anything suspicious. They were

marked men.

No one was willing to gamble on taking the highway, so LeMay stuck to the local streets. Not that it mattered much, they had no fixed destination. They rolled on going street to street, with no notion of how to escape their metastasizing infamy.

"We need to change cars immediately." Arminius said, nervously looking out the window.

"You want to risk going to a dealership? Plus, our IDs are shit." LeMay said.

"We need to at least stop traveling in the car the feds told people to look for."

LeMay pulled over onto a side street, and parked. He tapped on the steering wheel, as if trying to tap some code that would unlock his mind and reveal the right course of action. "OK. OK. OK."

"We should try to find someone who looks like one of us. Then we kill him, take his ID. That way if we get pulled over, the cop will simply match us with the ID." Martel said from the back.

Arminius and LeMay looked at each other, and started laughing.

"What do we do with the body?" LeMay said.

"Cut off the hands and head, then dump it in a river." Martel snapped back.

"Yeah, and what happens when his family or whoever reports him missing?" Arminius said, still laughing.

"That will only go state-wide." Martel said.

"Martel, we're not going to kill some random innocent white guy just to steal his identity. Jesus Christ, that would undermine everything White Lightning is trying to do." LeMay said.

"He'll die for a good cause!" Martel said. Arminius laughed louder.

"Just shut up and let me think." LeMay said, and closed his eyes trying to piece together some kind of plan.

He rubbed his temples, but nothing came. The Levitan strike was admittedly impulsive, but useful for its propaganda value. It had shattered ZOG's narrative of omniscient invincibility. The government took a victory lap, only to eat dust in the end. If other defunct strike teams heeded the call, the day would be won. White Lightning would live on as an indestructible phantasm haunting America. Always lurking and never too far away.

Arminius looked over sympathetically at LeMay as he kept his eyes closed and struggled to will himself a plan. There was only really one plan left, but it was a hard one to face.

"I know why you felt we needed to do it. And maybe it was a worthwhile psyop. But we're the ones who will be hunted now. It's time to think about *how this ends*."

LeMay opened his eyes and looked over at Arminius, a somber but resolved expression gripped his face. "I know."

"OK. Good. Now, we need to get another vehicle to buy ourselves some time to figure out how we want to do that. Right?" Arminius said, hoping to bring

LeMay back to practical reality.

LeMay turned the ignition key and the engine roared back to life. "Yeah, let's get a new car. We'll park near a dealership and pay cash for something usable."

After driving around a bit, they found a used car dealership. LeMay went alone, with Arminius and Martel waiting in the Impala across the street. At the sign of the first police car they would come across the street blasting. It would hardly be the most glorious end, but so be it.

LeMay pulled out of the dealership in a gray Ford Focus. Arminius started up the Impala and followed LeMay as he drove down the street looking for a place to turn off and make the switch.

They met up in a Walmart parking lot. They moved all the weapons and papers and wiped down the wheel and seats. They took the plates and left the Impala to rust.

"We've got next to nothing left. I had to pay extra to expedite the deal without all the paperwork." LeMay said, as he drove the Focus down the street and looked for the highway.

"We got enough to reload the ammo?" Arminius asked.

LeMay smiled. "Oh, yeah."

The Focus took the ramp onto the highway and accelerated. It felt good to be going fast again, even if they didn't know where they were going to stop before reaching the end of the ride.

It was astonishing at how fast they had faded out of the headlines. While the strike team had made the FBI's Most Wanted List, few media outlets talked much about the Levitan assassination anymore. If it was mentioned at all, it was as part of a litany of other white nationalist killings of the past year. A list that was typically only trotted out after a new killing.

LeMay's hope had been realized. Other strike teams in the field had taken the cue, and engaged in their own strikes. A few went to the trouble of issuing press releases as well, leading the media to call bullshit on the feds for claiming they had taken down White Lightning. The White House was in full damage control mode.

However, there was an emerging problem that LeMay had not anticipated. With no central organization to confirm or deny an act was genuinely affiliated with White Lightning, anyone could claim that authority and legitimacy. White Lightning was becoming a copy of The 14 Words.

In one of the most notorious cases, someone killed a black mayor of a small town in Alabama and a press release was issued, with White Lightning taking responsibility. The killer, not following basic comsec rules, was later caught when the press release was traced through an anonymous email app to his personal email account.

But then the story took a weird turn: not only was the killer not ever a member of White Lightning, he was black. As was later discovered, the killing was actually over a woman. The man had hoped to confuse law enforcement by making it seem like white terrorists had murdered his cheating girlfriend's lover. The internet had a field day.

For their part, The 14 Words were making their own headlines. D.C. was becoming a shooting gallery, children of members of Congress and other

officials were getting gunned down and blown up throughout the summer. After the National Security Advisor's daughter was killed by an IED near her private elementary school, much of official Washington started moving their families out of the city. In some cases, the officials resigned and went with them.

The relentless and merciless nature of the white nationalist terrorist campaign was beginning to collapse the ruling class' resolve. The elite were terrified and demoralized, and their pessimism thickened to the point of paralysis. The failure of the security services to neutralize or simply contain the threat had left it up to political leadership to persuade a thoroughly alienated citizenry to rally behind them to counter the insurgency. No rallying commenced. None of the lower classes seemed to care much about the fate of distant rich elites, or their spoiled children. Certainly not enough to risk their own lives and families.

Over the sounds of roaring protests from the left, an accommodationist line began to take hold in Washington. It was comically slick at first, a transparent attempt to get the white nationalists to disarm in exchange for immunity and empty promises of policy consideration related to demographic concerns. Smelling blood in the water, the white nationalists increased the attacks, and the elite finally started making real offers.

It was shocking how much of a house of cards it all was. To have it made so explicit that power was plainly just a matter of perception. And to learn that barely puncturing the sense of elite inviolability could so rapidly lead to such a humbling of the supposedly rich and powerful. Despite all the trappings of status and sophistication, the elite were just like everyone else, slightly evolved monkeys that could talk. When the pressure was turned up, the masks of refinement came down, and all that remained was the pathetic display of petrified apes pleading for deliverance.

The ebb and flow of the power struggle in Washington did nothing to reduce

the intensity of law enforcement's pursuit of white nationalist militants. Members of The 14 Words were still being arrested and killed, as were White Lightning devotees. Though it appeared none of the legitimate strike teams had been taken down yet.

"Turn that up." Arminius said, coming out of the motel bathroom, still wet from the shower.

Martel turned up the volume on the TV, it was a cable news report showing video of national guard soldiers firing on buildings in Portland. The clampdown had begun, as pressure from Washington and elsewhere led to a coalition of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to invade the city, and take it back from the now entirely dominant white forces.

The elite's strategy was purportedly to force the white nationalists to the bargaining table by hitting them all over the country at once, with everything they could muster. As far as leverage goes, it was a pretty dumb plan. The white nationalist's demands weren't going to change regardless of the pressure. It was simply a question of resistance or acceptance.

The Portland operation wasn't going particularly well, with multiple casualties for law enforcement already being reported. White force casualties were unknown. But given the strategic advantage, it appeared to be only a matter of time before the government took back control of the city if it was willing to play the bloody game of attrition.

The motel door swung open and Martel reached for his pistol, but it was just LeMay, his hands full of grocery bags. "Grab some of these, will ya?"

Martel got up and took a couple of bags. LeMay looked over at the TV, trying to decipher the flashing images before him. "Is that Portland?"

"Yep. Feds taking it back today. Or trying to at least." Arminius said, and went back to drying off.

"Goddamn." LeMay said, and went back to putting the groceries in the travel bags.

"I guess Helms and Jackson are dead." Martel said, matter-of-factly.

"Maybe." LeMay said, as he zipped up the bag. "Nothing we can do for them now, anyway."

"Hopefully they got to die in Ragnar's arms. Everyone deserves a romantic end." Arminius said, as he put on his clothes. He looked over at LeMay, who matched his gaze, then just picked up the bag and walked out.

The strike team had evaded law enforcement for weeks, but the exposure from the media had limited their options. They were out of reliable IDs, and running out of money. But more than that, they were out of the fight. No one joined White Lightning to spend their lives running and hiding like a rat.

Time began to blur, and life lost its edge. They were driving everyday from the morning until dark, then crashing at a shitty motel for the night, every night. The thread holding it all together was taut, soon to snap.

Arminius had asked LeMay how he wanted to end it, and LeMay tabled the discussion. So the issue sat there, right below their eyeline. And while the thrill of running for your life had helped distract them, it was, bit by bit, losing its luster and bringing the issue of their fate back into focus.

The day began to wither, and LeMay turned on the headlights. They had been cruising for hours, and the boredom combined with the synthwave had put

Arminius in a trance. LeMay nudged him and pointed to a sign that said "Econo Lodge 13 miles." Arminius nodded, and let his brain melt back into the seats, then into the air, and then it was gone.

The Focus pulled into the Econo Lodge parking lot. Everyone got out and stretched. LeMay went to get a room, and Martel and Arminius unloaded the car. It was only a few gym bags, and some plastic bags full of toiletries. They traveled light, all they really needed were a few outfits and their weapons.

Arminius fixated on the entrance of the motel, still in a travel sick daze. His eyes were heavy, he hadn't done anything all day, but he was still dead tired. He watched as the doors opened and LeMay walked out, room key in hand.

Plat. Plat.

With the sound of gunshots Arminius ducked down onto the ground behind the car. He looked up and saw LeMay's face, as he pulled his gun, and started running towards him.

Arminius turned around to see Martel shooting. He snapped back into reality, and pulled his pistol, and ran over to him.

Martel was standing over a brown body, bleeding from the head. The blood was already pooling on the ground. The man was completely unarmed.

"What the fuck?" Arminius screamed, looking around to see some of the doors of the motel opening and people poking their heads out.

"He was recording us!" Martel said, and pointed at a cell phone on the ground next to the dying mud.

"Get in the car! Let's go!" LeMay yelled.

Arminius stomped on the cell phone, then threw it onto the second floor roof. He grabbed the bags LeMay missed and threw them in the Focus, then jumped in.

LeMay hit the gas and pulled out of the Econo Lodge and floored it down the local roads. He had no clue where he was going. He just kept going down the first street he saw.

"Where do I go? Where do I go?" LeMay said.

"I don't even know where we are!" Arminius said, opening the glove box and looking for the right map. He looked around the passing street signs hoping to get some sense of place he could use. "What fucking state is this?"

"Fuck it. I'll just drive." LeMay said, and nervously looked in his rear view mirror.

Arminius turned to look at Martel who was calmly sitting in the back. "What the fuck is wrong with you?"

"I told you. He was recording us." Martel said.

Arminius didn't have the bandwidth to process the moment and argue with Martel. He looked over at LeMay who was practically drag racing through a residential neighborhood. "If we make it out of this. We're going to have that conversation."

LeMay nodded. The Focus hit a local highway, and LeMay eased off the gas a little. They rode it all the way down.

*

The sky was lightening up, as Arminius tried to stay awake at the wheel. They had been on the road over eight hours, just putting distance between themselves and the shooting at the motel. LeMay had given out a few hours ago, and no one trusted Martel to do anything, including drive.

It was nice and cool now. Soon the day's heat would descend and cook them like the beautiful rapacious bags of meat they were. He decided to savor this quiet time on the outstretched highway, the only punctuation provided by the changing songs on the car stereo. It might be his last cool morning.

Now the sun fully arrived, and cars began filling up the road. They had driven long enough to hit the next day's rush hour. Arminius began looking for somewhere to eat, he nudged LeMay awake. "I'm about out of gas."

LeMay squinted at the light coming into the windows of the car. He stretched and contorted from the pain in his back that came from sleeping in a car seat. He rubbed his face and looked over at Arminius. "Where are we?"

"Technically, Kansas."

LeMay was still half asleep. "Is there... a non-technical answer to that question?"

Arminius laughed. "No. But we were just in Nebraska."

LeMay looked back at Martel sleeping comfortably in the back. Not a care in the world. "Do you think he flaked?"

"I think he *is* a flake. But I dunno. We're on the most wanted list... Someone whips out a phone, eh. Maybe it's legit."

Arminius pulled into a McDonald's drive through. "Martel! What do you want for breakfast?"

Martel sat up, half-asleep. "Do they have rib-eye?"

"No. We're at a McDonald's, dude."

"OK, I'll have a hamburger. No bun."

"Mother fucker, can you not be autistic for two seconds. It's breakfast. What-the-fuck do you want for *breakfast*?" Arminius felt himself losing his mind, and he didn't care.

"Something with meat."

LeMay started laughing, as Arminius started grinding his teeth. He ordered Martel a steak, egg, and cheese McMuffin. They took off after receiving their food, too afraid to eat anywhere in public.

Arminius parked at a shopping center lot, and waited for LeMay to finish his food. He pulled the keys from the ignition and put them in his pocket. They were going to have this damn discussion before those keys came back out. He swore it.

LeMay finished his sandwich and leaned back, drinking his coffee. Arminius fixed his eyes on him.

"Where are we going?" Martel asked.

"We're going to talk about that right now." Arminius said, maintaining his gaze.

LeMay looked over at Arminius and took a long sip of coffee. "I guess it's that time."

Arminius backed off LeMay, and looked out the window at all the people hustling by with their shopping carts. All they cared about was what was right in front of them, mindlessly scavenging and gathering the things they were told to care about. The wizardry of modern marketing implanted the artificial desires that herded them to and fro. They were forever buying things they didn't need to endlessly impress people they didn't like.

He studied their movements. There was no anger, or pity, or sense of superiority. There was just abject estrangement. He was observing some other kind of life form, whose ways and motivations were both puzzling and not at all mysterious. Like him, they lived in the universe of death, but that was all that would ever connect them to each other.

He could jump out of the car and shoot one of them in the head. But it was pointless. There would be no great bells ringing, or sublime passion from the kill. A piece of metal would go through a thick skull, into gray brain matter, then out of a thick skull. Then there would be a dying, decaying bag of meat on the ground. That was all there would be, because that was all there is. No bullet - no matter how ecstatically fired - could ever open the exalted passageways of eternity.

"I'm ready." LeMay said.

Arminius turned back to face him. "We need a final target."

"Agreed." LeMay said, finally accepting the ride was over.

"We're at the end already?" Martel asked.

"Yes." LeMay said, and looked at Arminius. "We've got enough money left for one more trip. Provided we keep the Focus for the duration."

Arminius nodded and pulled the keys from his pocket. "Let's find a place with internet, and figure out the best bang for our buck."

He started the car and they pulled out of the parking lot.

*

An apology was in order. As the team searched the internet for news at the local library, they found still images and clips on social media from cell phone video taken by the man Martel had gunned down. The mud had been live streaming the encounter for his followers, riffing on what he was going to do with the reward money before Martel put some new holes in his head.

Arminius stomping on the cell phone was also featured, and quickly became a meme set to music and non sequitur cut aways. It had gotten so abstract and weird that it was difficult to tell if the content was supposed to praise or criticize the act. As always, it was best to assume it was really about getting views.

"I told you so!" Martel said, loud enough to draw attention. LeMay and Arminius motioned for him to calm down, and admitted their error in not trusting his judgment.

Martel's triumph would be short lived. It really didn't matter how much more exposure they gained now, anyway. They only needed to stay free long enough to die well.

They all agreed they wanted a send off worthy of the heroes of White Lightning. Something that even their enemies would consider impressive. In short, they

wanted a high score, a big body count.

The story seemed boringly familiar at first. They all separately saw it and moved on. Nathan Herbert had won a court case and would be allowed to give a speech at Texas A&M in San Antonio next week. The court victories were always empty victories as the campus would be shut down by militant leftists and the speech canceled for public safety concerns. The entire process was simply to show how deranged and "unAmerican" his enemies were, and expose institutional anti-white bias.

LeMay tapped Martel and Arminius on the shoulder, and they came over to LeMay's terminal. The Herbert story was up, and LeMay highlighted a portion of the article that said thousands of protesters were expected. Arminius laughed and nodded. It was the obvious choice in retrospect.

There was a police squad car outside the library. The team walked to the Focus, each with their hands near their concealed pistols. The squad car was empty and everyone did a survey of the area before getting in the car.

LeMay carefully pulled out of the library and onto the road. "Maybe we'll make our last stand here."

"Martel, you got the bitch back there?" Arminius asked.

"Yep." Martel said, picking up the AR-15, and checking it.

The car made the turn and went down the road that had taken them to the library. If there was a time and place to spring an ambush, this was it.

Nothing.

LeMay started laughing as the Focus flew down the street, towards the highway. "Alright, we can't be doing that now in front of every cop car."

"Definitely." Arminius said, and put his pistol down.

He settled in for the long ride to Texas. It would be his last road trip, so he concluded that he should find a way to appreciate it. His recent travel experiences made it difficult to find something worth relishing. But that was the trick of life, wasn't it? To find vitality in the mundane?

The car went under the overpass and turned onto the highway. The wheels clacked on the imperfections on the road, then things became smooth. LeMay hit the gas, and turned the radio up.

The evening at the park was stunning. The sun had melted perfectly with the clouds to stream pink light across the sky. Arminius breathed in and out, not to tranquilize his emotions, but to revel in them. The gnawing trivial concerns that had captured him for some many years had fallen away as sure as the daylight fell. There was nothing more to ruminate on. There were no more plans to make.

LeMay offered Arminius a bag of chips, he declined. The team was traveling at a leisurely pace. They were only six hours or so away from San Antonio, and the Herbert event was not happening for days.

"I think we lucked out on the endgame. I couldn't have planned it better." LeMay said.

"It's going to be fucking beautiful." Arminius said, and put his arm on LeMay's shoulder. "We're definitely going to get a high score."

"I want a huge score. A phenomenal score. One that makes ZOG tremble."
LeMay said, staring into the distance.

"You will." Arminius said with confidence.

"Not with a gun."

Arminius looked over at LeMay perplexed. "What do you mean?"

Martel walked over to the picnic table. LeMay offered him the bag of chips and he took them and dived in.

"I mean, I want to go out with a bang and take a whole lot of scum with me."
LeMay said, smiling at Arminius. He put his hand up, as if detonating a charge, put his thumb down and mouthed the word "Boom."

Arminius started laughing. "You sick fuck. I love it. But where are you going to get a bomb?"

"I thought we were following the White Lightning rules. The rules say no bombs." Martel said, in between loud crunches of chips.

"Our White Lightning is gone now. Just like we will be soon. It's more than us, and separate. My death is my own. It belongs to me. And I want to go out sending the shitlibs screaming in terror."

"Which goes back to my question..." Arminius said.

"We're going to have to make it. Don't worry, it won't be my first rodeo. I had quite a misspent youth." LeMay said, smiling.

"What are you a fucking chemist, now? It's going to be hard to shoot anyone if we blow our hands off." Arminius looked LeMay over, trying to see if he had lost his grip on reality.

"TATP?" Martel asked.

"Yeah. We've got just enough money left to get the supplies for it." LeMay said.

"From who?" Arminius asked, skeptically.

"Everyone. Everywhere. It's acetone and hydrogen peroxide, you can get it with over the counter stuff. Don't worry. I'll handle it. It won't cost much."

"LeMay, you're cooking that shit up in a separate room. I'm not going out like those Weather Underground faggots!" Arminius said, eyeballing LeMay, and still somewhat dumbfounded by the sudden change in plan.

"Fine. Relax, OK? It's my thing. I'll handle it. You and Martel will set up a second attack site." LeMay said.

Arminius backed off. It was readily apparent that LeMay had made up his mind, and all he could do was force him to go about it relatively safely. While LeMay's plan was a bit of a shock, it would undeniably provide an amazing exit.

There was really no point in being angry with LeMay, or being angry at all. What was the point in being disappointed? What did that matter now?

"Going out with a bang, huh?" Arminius said, chuckling and trying to relay with his tone that there were no hard feelings.

"Boom." LeMay said.

Martel finished the chips, and night came. They got back into the Focus and got back on the road. There was only Texas now.

*

It was the beginning. With the daylight the men rose and went about the usual things. They ate, shitted, and showered. They went outside to bask in the sun. They walked around a nearby lake, and looked at their faces over the water. It was good.

Arminius sat under a tree. Squirrels and birds made noises above him, the buzzing of life fathered a calmness within. He knew what was right, and what was wrong. And he was never sorry to know it.

He cast his eyes upon Martel and LeMay, his brothers in arms. He thought of the many times he had thought of killing them. But that meant nothing now. They had worked and prevailed together. They were one.

Despite their good works, there was evil in their hearts. They had flickering notions of calling off the final attack, and just running away. None of the notions were expressed, just lurked within the privacy of their own reflections. There was violence in their minds.

The sky grew dark. Rain began to fall, though it was not forecasted to rain, and the firmament had been empty and blue just moments ago. There were drizzles at first, then it came in streams, full of passionate intensity. The men retreated to safety, and the streets began to flood.

The waves of rain lifted all the garbage up and sailed it down the boulevards. Trash was the great testament to human life. So it was with all towns and cities. So it was with all people.

As swiftly as the rain started, so did it cease. The sun reemerged, proud and true. The men came out from hiding, and walked down the streets back to their motel. Martel looked down at the ugly refuse-filled streets. He saw an oil spill near a car, in the mixture there were beautiful bands of color. The refractions of the light visible to all who would only look.

Last night LeMay had dreamed a dream. When the team arrived back at the motel, he remembered the dream he had dreamed. He saw himself facing a great dark figure, so massive he blocked out the sun, and the world became shade. This was the ZOG within, the master of fear.

The figure marched toward LeMay, and LeMay did quake in terror. The figure was nearly on him, when he saw that something shined in the darkness. It was coming from his chest. He reached inside his chest and pulled out a glowing piece of rock, adorned with ancient runes. LeMay hauled back and threw the rock at the figure, it crashed through its skull, and it disintegrated into air. With his victory, he woke.

LeMay told his brothers about his dream. To his surprise, Martel said he also had dreamed a dream last night. He was hiking up the mountain at the farm in a rainstorm. He kept climbing, but the top eluded him. Finally, the rain stopped, and he saw the trail to the top.

At the top it was dry and treeless. The dirt became burning sand. A man, covered in rags, was crying near him. He looked upon him. The man looked at him, and his face was black and scarred. He pointed in the distance. And in the distance there was a temple on fire. Martel looked back at the man, who continued to wail and went back to pointing. Martel offered the crying man his hand, but then looked back at the temple, which collapsed and was ruined.

When Martel looked back, the man had transformed into a snake and tried to

bite his hand. Martel withdrew his hand, and the snake slithered away. Suddenly, thunder rippled throughout the sky, and a great rain came.

Martel looked at his hands, and arms. They were covered in red water, the sky was raining blood. The temple was laid waste, and all was once again a wilderness. But he knew that there would be a new temple, and that once it was built there would be no more crying men. Then he woke up.

None of the men knew what the dreams meant, or how they should respond. They entertained the possibility that it was their impending deaths that led them to dream such lucid dreams.

Unlike the others, Arminius had a dreamless restful slumber. That morning he felt refreshed and vivacious, an energy he hadn't felt since he was very young. Though he was gushing with vigor, his thinking was in no way distorted or scattered. If anything, his thoughts were more coherent and precise than they had been in years.

Arminius was happy to leave his life. He knew there was nothing but disease and death in the world. All his hungers and thirsts were unquenchable, and the pain of living was excruciating outside the fleeting moments of maximum danger, and the temporary exhilaration that danger induced.

They packed up what they would need for the trip. LeMay took special care with his explosive vest. He was confident he had prepared the explosives correctly, but conceded that the chemicals he had used were extremely unstable.

The car moved cautiously away from the motel, and towards the Texas A&M campus. On their way to the campus they passed a turn for the Alamo Mission.

"That would have been a good place for a white man to make his last stand."

Martel said.

"Come on. It's a tourist trap. You want to go out shooting Japs with cameras?"
Arminius said.

LeMay laughed and kept his eyes on the road. "Maybe in another life."

As they arrived on campus, there were already signs of the upcoming protest. The event wouldn't begin for hours, but the students were trickling into public spaces, gearing up with signs and organizing people with sign up sheets.

LeMay parked the car, next to one of the tables with fliers for the protest. The team approached a blue haired woman manning the tables.

"Is this where we sign up to protest the Nazis?" LeMay asked, trying to be charming.

The blue haired woman said that they were organizing a major protest for diversity on the football field, with local religious leaders and anti-racist groups. The people actually disrupting the Herbert speech were a different group, and she wasn't part of that. The protesters on the football field had been given permission from the university, whereas the disrupters were supposed renegades.

It was the typical leftist double-talk. It was almost certainly true that the university had greenlit the protesters disrupting the Herbert speech, but they wanted plausible deniability to say they had nothing to do with it. And, of course, they were happy to have an officially sanctioned protest elsewhere on campus in order to say they wanted to uphold everyone's right to free speech. After the speech was canceled due to the disruptions, they would claim, of course, to be so very disappointed that Herbert had been denied his rights.

The whole enterprise was a case study in hypocrisy. Not that the cynicism was limited to the university administrators. Nathan Herbert was surely not coming no matter what happened. He had not been able to actually give a speech for over a year, and so he never bothered to even make the trip when he won in court. All he did was get a student group to invite him, get denied, then sue the university so they had to grant him a platform. The university then sabotaged the speech, and he cried foul. Rinse and repeat.

It was hard to decode what exactly the point of the exercise was presently. Some speculated it was essentially a leftist tax. The security and post-protest cleanup costs usually ran in the thousands of dollars. There was also always footage of some out of control leftist degenerate who inevitably beat the shit out of an onlooker who had nothing to do with the event, but was white and dressed somewhat conservatively. The entire undertaking was pure spectacle for all involved.

The only thing real was the mutual hatred. Herbert had fashioned himself as an avatar for the so-called traditional white patriarchal society, and in doing so, made himself the receptacle of leftist hate. He welcomed it, and appeared to thrive on the conflict as much as the lefties did. His refusal to cuck under any circumstances, and to always counter-punch, made him a hero within what remained of white society, and those still holding traditional values.

That he had become an avatar meant all attacks on him infuriated the right, and all praise of him infuriated the left. His transformation from man to symbol made every discussion of him a zero sum game, that no one would give an inch on. Neither side cared about the truth, it was all a matter of power.

LeMay motioned for Arminius and Martel to follow him away from the tables. After they got out of ear shot, LeMay leaned in and whispered "We obviously have to split up. Do you want the football field or the building?"

Arminius looked at Martel, then back at LeMay. "Hard to say. I mean, I don't know how big the blast is, but if they bunch up on the football field you could do a lot more than we could. Once the shots start, people will start running. However, an enclosed space could trap some people inside if a fire starts afterwards. Then again, if they are trapped in a small space, with only a few exits, we can pick them off one by one."

"Yeah. That's better. You do the auditorium, I'll do the football field." LeMay said, and put one arm on Arminius' shoulder, and one on Martel's. "This is our night."

The plan agreed upon, the team jumped back in the car to find somewhere to have their last meal. They found a Jack in The Box off Route 410, and pulled in at Martel's insistence.

After ordering and receiving their food, the team sat down at one of the tables. Arminius wasn't really hungry but forced himself to eat, figuring he would need the energy later.

Martel put his burger down on the tray, and began methodically taking the bun off and wiping off the condiments and assorted vegetables.

"For fuck's sake Martel. Isn't it a little late in the game to care about carbs? You want a buff corpse to impress the mortician?" Arminius said.

"Like Warren Zevon said, the key to life is enjoying every sandwich." LeMay said, and took a big bite out of his burger.

Martel shrugged, and put the buns back on and started eating. "ummmm. Well, it does taste better."

Arminius and LeMay burst out laughing at Martel's autism for what could be the last time. Arminius half-choked on his burger, and coughed it up. Then he and LeMay laughed harder at the thought of him dying in a restaurant five minutes from their final target.

The team stayed at the table for another hour or so after they finished eating. No real conversation to be had. They just wanted to stand inside the grinding anticipatory anxiety for a while longer. It was terrifying and electrifying to realize they would never be here, or anywhere, ever again after tonight.

LeMay looked at his watch. "Alright. It's late enough to start casing before we set up."

They all got up from the table, bused their trays, and walked out the door. The declining sunlight cast a lurid glow on the parking lot as they got in the Focus for their last ride.

Arminius leaned back in the seat, and then it hit him. A wave of terror and nausea flooded his body. He thought for a moment he would pass out, and welcomed it as a relief from the feeling. Instead, his hands quivered as his heart palpitated in his chest, and he seriously thought about jumping out of the car door and running. He would run, no idea where. Just run until he burst.

He looked at LeMay out of the corner of his eye. LeMay saw nothing but the coming of his luscious death. The feeling passed. Arminius chalked the panic attack up to his unconscious mind finally absorbing that his conscious mind had decided that he was dying tonight. The death rattle, before the death rattle.

With the adrenaline waning, he smiled to himself. He was more alert than he was before, and was thankful for it. He wanted his last moments to be as keenly perceived as possible. His life may have been riddled with mistakes and regrets,

but his death was going to be done right.

LeMay parked the car and the team got out for a final walk through. They wandered alongside the auditorium and looked at the design of the entrances and exits for the football field. The event was only a few hours away, so they went back to the car to get ready.

News vans began arriving in the parking lot. They seemed to know the drill, and it looked like only local news took any interest. Just some B roll for a drive-by report on the local nightly news.

Herbert was on a bigger stage now. After months of assassinations and killings in D.C., Congress had agreed to hold hearings on enacting policies proposed by Herbert. The most prominent proposal was for restricting non-white immigration by reimposing the racial quota system that existed prior to the 1965 immigration reform law. Herbert also demanded that Congress pass the so-called "80/20 rule" that made it the official policy of the federal government to make the United States eighty percent white within ten years.

The 80/20 proposal was light on details, outside of immigration reform and pro-natalist policies for whites. Many speculated that if the carrot of racially-targeted tax incentives didn't work to pump up white birthrates, the stick would consist of reducing the non-white population through deportations and outright extermination.

That such policies were even being considered, let alone would be the subject of congressional hearings, had sent the left into a rage. Massive protests rocked every major America city. But the liberal establishment was more afraid of white nationalist terrorism, than leftist thuggery. The hearings were to go on as scheduled.

LeMay popped the trunk and handed the keys to Arminius. "If you need to come back for any reason. I'm going one way."

Arminius and Martel played lookout, as LeMay put on the explosive vest from the trunk. LeMay put on a jacket over the explosives. "Well boys, this is where we part ways. I have the strangest feeling. I want to go, but I don't want to leave."

Arminius walked up to LeMay and stretched out his hand. "The thing about life is... it ends."

"You always were the clever one." LeMay smiled and Arminius smiled back. They shook hands and gripped each by the elbow.

Martel came in for a hug, but LeMay backed off pointing at his chest to remind him he was wearing explosives. Then they shook hands.

"It was my honor to serve with you men." LeMay said.

"The honor was ours." Arminius said, and winked at him.

Martel nodded mechanically, not particularly in touch with the finality of the moment.

LeMay took a long breath, and seemed to release all the tension in his body all at once. His expression gradually morphed from grim to exultant. Everything was in its right place. He turned around and walked towards the football field.

"OK, we need to get in position." Arminius said, picking up the bag of weapons and ammunition and heading towards the auditorium where Herbert's speech was, in theory, going to take place.

Arminius and Martel looked around the auditorium for any sign of security. It seemed they had gotten there early enough to beat the crowd.

There was a stairway that had a landing that overlooked the entrance into the event room where the speech was supposed to be held. Arminius and Martel nodded to each other, then walked up the staircase with the weapons.

Arminius got to top of the staircase a floor above the landing that overlooked the entrance to the event room. "We chill up here until everyone goes into the event room. Then we come down."

Martel opened the bag and pulled out the nine millimeter and put it inside his waistband. "Think there will be a security sweep?"

"I doubt it. Herbert isn't even coming."

It started as a faint noise, then grew louder. The chants of "No Nazis, No KKK, No Fascist USA!" grew increasingly louder as they approached. The lefties were on their way.

On the other side of the campus, the protesters were gathering on the campus football field. There was all the pageantry of a sporting event, minus any indication of athletic ability. The protesters congregated around the fifty yard line, equipped with brightly colored posters and signs. Someone was saying inaudible commands out of a loudspeaker.

At the auditorium, the chanting protesters entered the building, flanked by campus security, who were apparently used to the routine of protesters shutting down speaking events. The chanting softened as they entered the empty speaking room. They were the only ones there.

"Let's go." Arminius whispered, as he and Martel walked down the stairs onto the landing with a direct shot at the front entrance of the room.

LeMay went through security, then waded through the packed crowd. It was a smorgasbord of degeneracy. Everything he hated; blacks, Jews, commies, sexual deviants, and race traitors. It was wonderful to have them all in one place. A high score was assured.

He made his way to what looked like the center of the herd at the fifty yard line. LeMay knowingly smiled, and closed his eyes. Eternal greatness was his.

The walls rumbled, and Martel and Arminius looked at each other with bittersweet expressions. LeMay was dead, long live LeMay. He went out on his own terms. He was a man.

The fire alarm sounded, and Arminius pulled out his forty-five. Martel began assembling the AR-15 and slid Arminius the nine millimeter pistol.

"Take your time. The last thing we need is a jam." Arminius said, and raised his pistol.

The protesters started walking out of the auditorium right into the kill zone. After a few came out, Arminius opened up the forty-five, the bullets tore through the crowd, with multiple people being blown back into the room. Arminius kept firing until the first clip went out. He picked up the nine and began firing again.

"Where you at? Reload the forty-five. Clip is in the bag."

Martel dropped the partly-assembled AR-15, reloaded the forty-five, and put it back down next to Arminius. He slid back to the AR-15 to finish the assembly.

A state trooper tried to get people to go back inside the auditorium. Arminius hit him twice in the back and kept striking the protesters, whose instincts to run continued to overtake their common sense.

The students kept trying to outrun the shots, and failed miserably. Some of them may have thought the shooter would need to reload, and that they could escape in the interim. It was a total gamble that had yet to pay off. Arminius hit every target easily.

Not that it required much marksmanship given the shooting location. It was even easier as the bodies piled up and running students tripped on them. Plat. Plat. Plat.

The AR-15 began opening up on the protesters and Arminius took the opportunity to pick the forty-five back up. He looked for targets, but the AR-15 had both shot most people down, and provided the necessary incentive for the rest of the protesters to hide in the auditorium.

"Let's go!" Arminius yelled, picking up the bag and holstering the nine in his belt.

Martel and Arminius rushed into the auditorium and saw the remaining protesters cowering. They opened up on anyone they could see, with Martel cleaning house.

Everyone visible was either dead or dying. So they walked methodically through the auditorium. Arminius saw a woman hiding under a table, he crouched and shot her in the head point blank, and moved on.

Martel found a group trying to hide on the side of the speakers stage and blasted them on automatic mode. He checked the remaining places near the

stage, and moved on.

A man suddenly pushed a body off of him and began running for the exit. Arminius and Martel both cut him down.

"Might as well finish off the survivors." Arminius said, as he and Martel began shooting anyone still squirming.

Arminius pulled out the nine and finished off the clip in arguably gratuitous head shots. He then finished off the forty-five clip doing the same. Then he reloaded both pistols and looked around the room for more targets.

"Nothing left to shoot." Martel said, and changed out clips.

Arminius turned to him and shrugged. "What do you want to do, now?"

"Won't be long before ZOG's foot soldiers show up. Let's get in a better position."

They had already killed a few Texas state troopers there for security. But after the shooting and LeMay's big bang, there was little doubt that the heavy guns were coming. Probably a SWAT team, maybe some feds, too.

Arminius and Martel walked towards the entrance of the auditorium and looked out onto the campus. There were a few scattered flashing lights in the distance, but they could have been ambulances.

"Man, their response time sucks. Not that I'm complaining." Arminius said.

"Maybe we won." Martel said, and looked over at Arminius.

They both began laughing hysterically to the point of almost being in tears. It

was a welcome relief from the stress of combat.

Arminius high-fived Martel. "Well played. You know, for a while, honestly... I thought you were, for real, retarded."

Martel laughed. "Nope. Just too much time online."

Sirens rang through the air, and were rapidly getting louder. They looked to see SWAT vehicles coming towards the auditorium.

Arminius put his arm on Martel's shoulder. "It's time. You ready, brother?"

"Been waiting my whole life." Martel said, as he put the AR-15 into firing position.

Arminius pulled out his nine and forty-five, and did likewise. "I'll see you in Valhalla."

"Not if I see you first!" Martel said, as he pushed Arminius back and kicked open the front door to the building, stealing all the glory for himself.

Martel started firing on the police and SWAT team members still getting organized. Men in uniform were dropping left and right, as Martel kept firing and marching towards them. He was going full berserker.

Arminius was mesmerized by Martel's kamikaze charge. The strength and beauty, the will. He was so captivated he forgot to follow him in.

Law enforcement had finally gotten it together after taking numerous casualties, and everyone with a gun started firing at Martel at once, bullets flew everywhere. He was cut to pieces.

The awe of Martel's blitz wore off and Arminius walked backwards to take cover on the curve of the nearby wall.

Something slammed into Arminius, and he hit the ground. He crawled around the corner and behind the wall as bullets kept flying. He looked down to see blood coming from his stomach. He groaned and put pressure on the wound. He had dropped his nine millimeter pistol when he got hit, but still had his forty-five. The bullets were still ripping through the entrance area, law enforcement had lost any sense of control and were shooting at shadows.

He got up and started running down the hall towards the side exit of the building. He saw students stumbling to get out, some wounded, some not. He figured they were the people who had hidden well, or were missed in the follow up shots.

Arminius tucked the forty-five in his pants and intermingled with the fleeing students and followed them out. There were police outside directing everyone to the parking lot. Helicopters overhead had them in the spotlight. Someone from the SWAT team at the front of the building was talking through a bullhorn, saying they wanted to negotiate with whoever was inside. He almost laughed.

The parking lot was a total nightmare and Arminius slipped through and got into the car. He was bleeding, but still alive. He drove right off the campus completely unmolested. The entirety of the law enforcement was focused on the auditorium and hadn't even set up roadblocks yet.

It was becoming evident that the wound wasn't going to kill him right away, but the blood loss could. He decided that was alright by him. He just wanted a nice place to die, which was definitely not here.

There was a buzzing in his brain, and the passing streetlights became blurry. The circus was leaving town, and he knew he needed to make his choice now, if he wanted to make a choice at all.

Fuck it! Make it the Alamo then. It wasn't so far away, and was certainly a proper place to leave the corpse of a white warrior.

The memories came as the blood trickled down his hand and onto his shirt and pants. A green room, with an entry into the world. Dinosaurs and spaceships. The warmth of touch. Wet brown leaves. Shortened breathe. The blue light of the TV. The restless fury of emptiness. The terror of impermanence.

He had to let it all go.

As the car rushed down the highway, he finally felt the joy come. He really did love his people after all of it.

As the blood oozed out of his stomach, he realized his love for his people was always inside him like so much blood. And he could just love them. He could just love them without any rules, without any analysis, without any conscious intervention to justify himself. He could just love his people. So he did.

And in the moment when he found his hidden love for the white race, he learned that he never had to build any grand structures in his mind to do it. All he had to do was rip apart the fences and smash the walls within. All he had to do was demolish what he had built inside to enslave that love. All he had to do was break the chains that kept his love from being free. So he did.

He turned off Route 35, onto Route 37. He knew he was close to his final destination, but worried he wouldn't make it. He was getting woozy, and found it hard to focus. The buzzing was getting louder and the light was moving away

from him now.

The car smashed into the Alamo museum street barriers. He stumbled out, forty-five in hand. He staggered down the stone street towards the Mission Church. His energy was giving out, and he had given up on stopping the bleeding.

He collapsed onto the doors of the Mission Church, and used his last ounce of strength to turn and face the street, his head against the door. He looked up at the Texas state flag, waving grandly from a cool night breeze. Here is a white republic, if you can keep it.

There was no anger, or fear, or bitterness. He had lived with passion, and loved fully. What more could he ask for? He had suffered, and caused suffering. What more could he ask for? He had lived a lifetime. What more could he ask for?

The end came, and the flag still waved in the wind. The heat of the night dried the blood, and the remains remained. A swirl of dust blew, it was too small to do any lasting damage. Soon, the sleepwalkers would come, and then there would be nothing again.

It was hard to dismiss so many wondrous projections. Life could be so very specific sometimes. He could never give in completely to randomness and chance. If there was meaning, it existed in the spaces between the projections: where the colors fled and deserts were sanctuaries.

It was a scorching August and the coming of fall almost felt like oblivion. He died a happy man.