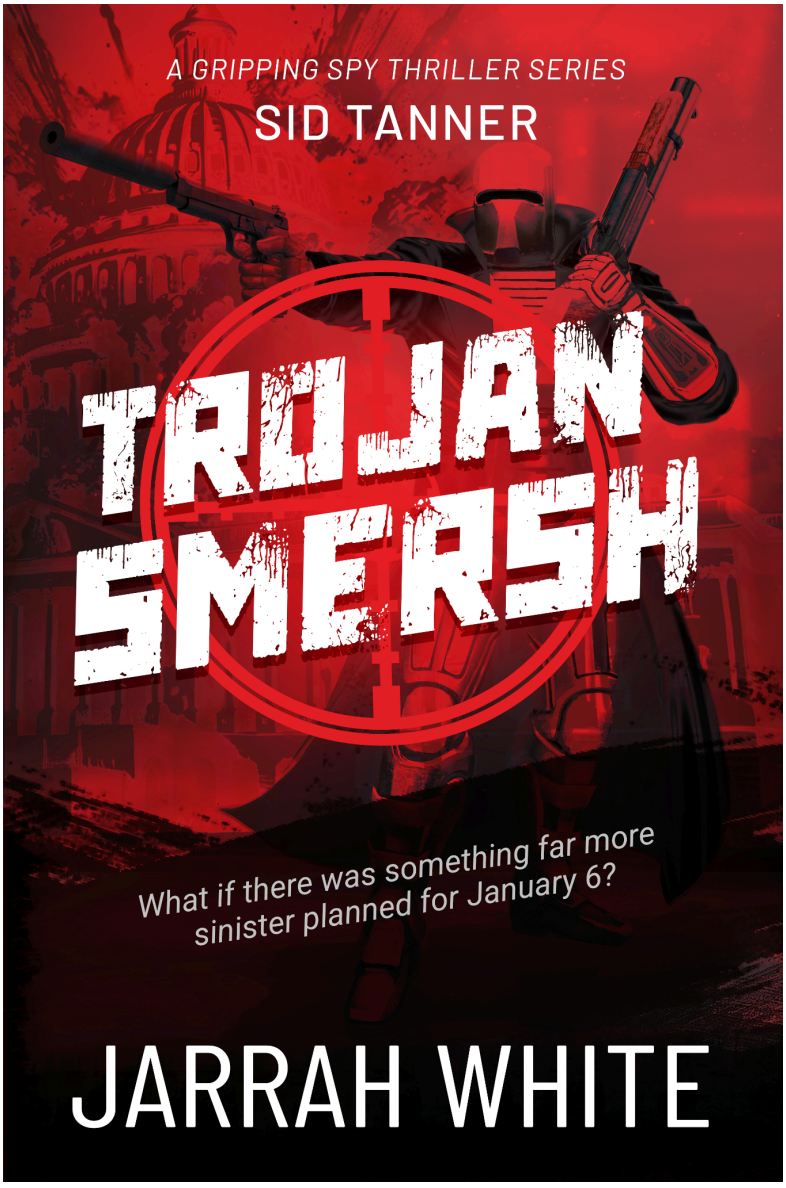

BOOK EXCERPT

"I think there is a series there for Netflix with Sid Tanner, honestly."

— Jay Katz,
Down South Anomalies Podcast

"This is an extremely well written and well thought out take on an alternate reality, that I believe is not too far from our own. Jarrah writes in the style of Ken Follett, which makes you feel like you're right there watching the story unfold at a distance."

— Robert Wagner,
Apollo Detectives

"The details behind the story are intriguing as well as being mainly based on fact, as far as I can establish. I assume [Jarrah has] taken some liberties for narrative purposes."

— Marcus Allen,
former editor of NEXUS

"*Trojan SMERSH* is an entertaining thriller, with touches of *The Bourne Identity* and Ian Fleming's *James Bond* imbuing the story. The tone, pace, and plot, throw the reader into an alternative take on history and poses the question 'what if?'"

— Nahima Kern,
Aurora House

"The story is thoroughly researched and that shows vividly on the page in authentic-sounding detail."

— Aurealis

"Readers drawn to alternate history steeped in espionage with military technology should put *Trojan SMERSH* on their reading list."

— Asher Syed,
Readers' Favorite

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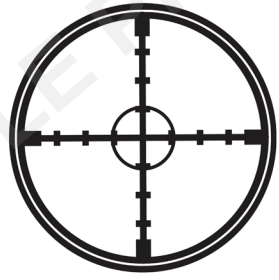
TRUMP
2020
TRUMP
WON
TRUMP
-2020-
KEEP AMERICA GREAT!
TRUMP

A GRIPPING SPY THRILLER SERIES

SID TANNER

TROJAN SMERSH



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JARRAH WHITE

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This book is a work of fiction and an exploration of alternate history. While certain historical characters are portrayed within this story, their depiction and the events surrounding them – including the historical events portrayed within this story – have been altered or otherwise fictionalised for creative purposes. The historical events portrayed within this story are based in part on actual investigations and their supporting testimonial transcripts, video evidence, and news reports, with some imaginative tweaks in accordance with the author's alternate history setting. Reader discretion advised to separate fact from fiction. Any resemblance to actual historical figures or events is purely coincidental and should not be construed as factual or representative of real-life individuals or historical accuracy.

This book describes sexual assault, sexual abuse against children, torture, and heavy graphic violence. It also makes reference to suicide, childhood sexual abuse, mental illness, incest, and forced prostitution.

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DEDICATION

To my step-grandfather, Gordon, who was entertained by Sid Tanner's adventures. And my grandmother, Yvonne, who let me borrow the typewriter.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With special thanks for the creative inspiration of my friends
Mark, Tim, Scott, Ralph, and Wendy's father Bill.
And to Marcus for his tipoff about Project Horizon.

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PREFACE

I created the character of Sid Tanner way back in the year 2000. In something of a reversal of the relationship between the *Railway Series* creator the Reverend W. Awdry and his son, it all started when I wrote a few chapters of a story starring my own fictional character to entertain my bedridden step-grandfather. For obvious reasons, my target audience was not the same age group as the Reverend's!

My step-grandfather and I were very close. He used to share stories of his service in the Australian Army during World War II. In battle, he became crippled by a gunshot wound to the leg and spent his winter years lying in bed listening to the horse races on the radio. He had quite a habit of picking the winner!

It was his enjoyment of those initial chapters I typed on my grandmother's typewriter that encouraged me to continue writing the story. Every day, I wrote a little more and then I read it to him during subsequent visits. This went on for several months, until I finally had a completed manuscript, by which point I felt compelled to write a sequel. Which I did. Then I wrote another sequel. And another. And another.

By 2004, I had drafted six manuscripts in a series of Sid Tanner stories, each of which I read to my step-grandfather at his bedside. I had plans for a seventh, but my step-grandfather left this world later that year. I vowed then to make the adventures of Sid Tanner known all around the world.

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Over the years that followed, I tried on and off to give my stories a second draft, but life's other priorities often got in the way. Then COVID-19 happened, and I suddenly found I had more time for story revisions.

Shortly afterward, the world became rocked by the January 6th, 2021, attack on the Capitol Building incited by the outgoing US President Donald Trump. In the aftermath, pipe bombs were found planted outside the government buildings mere blocks away from the Capitol, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi became horrified about leaving the President alone with the nuclear firing codes, and talk quickly spread of what might have happened had terrorists used the riot as a diversion to smuggle even more powerful bombs into the Capitol.

From all this talk of what happened that day and what could have happened, I developed an idea of my own. An idea for a new Sid Tanner story of course! *Trojan SMERSH* is a fictionalised retelling of what happened on January 6th, 2021. An alternative history thriller that dares to ask that very question: What if? What if there was something much more sinister afoot than what actually transpired that day? And what if the only chance to prevent those worst fears from being realised was the most unlikely of antiheroes?

Also explored in this novel is the US Space Force and militarisation of manned space exploration. These aspirations are not so much a silly idea; they are more an idea that is sixty years too late. Such proposals might have been welcomed during the 1950s and 1960s, back when both the US Air Force and US Army had their own proposals for manned military missions in direct competition with NASA's scientific spaceflights – long before it was decided unmanned missions were cheaper and more efficient.

Naturally, they had their share of ridiculous ideas, like the Project Horizon and Lunex pipedreams of establishing a military base on the Moon. But then there were the proposals based more in reality – those for manned space bombers and

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satellite reconnaissance missions, the Boeing X-20 Dyna-Soar and Manned Orbiting Laboratory programs being examples of such. It was difficult to read about these cancelled spaceflight proposals without getting an idea. What if such missions did take place in absolute secrecy?

This story ultimately aims to fulfil the promise I made over twenty years ago, and it will be the first in a series of many stories that have long waited to be told. I hope that you get as much enjoyment out of Sid Tanner's adventures as my step-grandfather did.

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PART ONE

"... the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country."

– Hermann Göring

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1

THE STEAL THAT NEVER HAPPENED

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Nobody in the crowd knew that among them was a man dressed head to toe in a suit of pressurised armour. His metallic suit was hidden beneath layers upon layers of clothing, a heavy leather jacket topping a black hoodie, the hood of which was pulled up and over his cylindrical helmet.

Under the hoodie, the helmet itself was wrapped in a dark grey scarf, its horizontal slit of a visor obscured behind dark sunshades. Wearing so many layers made the normally slim but muscular man appear distinctly wide.

Under normal circumstances, wearing all those clothes just to obscure his armour would have looked rather conspicuous in a crowd. But today, everybody in the crowd was conspicuous. In hindsight, it may not have been necessary to hide the armoured suit.

Through the horizontal visor, just wide enough for his eyes to peer through, Sid Tanner saw that some of the idiots who had gathered were dressed in army vests as though soldiering in war! Another was shirtless, wearing mainly war paint and Viking horns.

Tanner felt like he had wandered into a convention for the scientifically illiterate and morally bankrupt. Among the angry

mobsters all around him, many wore shirts bearing the words 'Proud Boys', the far-right neo-fascist group of white supremacists.

Others wore clothes emblemised with 'QAnon', the fringe movement of wackos responsible for spreading unsubstantiated conspiracy theories alleging the entire Democratic Party comprised of satanic and cannibalistic child molesters and sex traffickers. Many others waved Confederate flags in the air, widely regarded as a symbol of white supremacy, racism, and modern slavery.

The fact that members of such cults were allowed to walk the streets left Tanner with grave concern for humanity. He knew from personal and professional experience how bad governments could be, but the disinformation these fringe groups believed was as far from the truth as possible. At best. At worst, the delusions they spouted only served as a distraction from real reasons to take a stand against the government.

Tanner was glad his face was hidden; he was embarrassed to be seen in public with these brainwashed idiots. They all unquestioningly swallowed the Big Lies their leader fed them – lies he had unwittingly but indirectly admitted that he had no proof for. Just three days prior to the rally, a telephone call to the Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger had leaked to the press.

During that call, the protesters' psychotic leader repeated the same Big Lies over the phone in an attempt to pressure Raffensperger to change the outcome of the election. Raffensperger had heard the same Big Lies before in the media and, together with his aides, was quick to shoot them down. During that same call, the angry mob's psychotic leader told Raffensperger, "I just want to find 11,780 votes, which is one more than we have, because we won the state."

That leaked phone call should have been the end of President Donald Trump's lies that the 2020 election was stolen from him. How could he honestly make that claim when, by his own admission, he had no evidence that 11,780 votes were missing? Nobody should have taken him seriously after that.

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Instead, thousands of Trump supporters gathered outside the White House and unquestioningly swallowed the verbal excrement he spewed from the podium behind bulletproof glass.

Leaking such a phone call would certainly have destroyed any politician's campaign thirty years ago, but in a Post-Truth era of digital disinformation, any unfavourable news coverage could quickly be labelled as 'Fake News' and dismissed.

"We will never give up, we will never concede. It doesn't happen," Trump chanted. "You don't concede when there's theft involved."

His lies were met by wide applause.

Behind the mask, Sid Tanner rolled his eyes.

For the most part, he tuned out. Holding a BSc with a double major in astrophysics and geology and being a former elite RAAF pilot who had the privilege of ascending beyond the Kármán line, Tanner was far too intelligent to be listening to the crap being fed to the crowd, who were staring up at the podium mesmerised like *coprophilous* insects. The protestors waved banners high in the air with the dubious words: *"TRUMP WON"*.

"Idiots!" It was the only word Tanner could muster.

How the hell had it all come down to this?

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Election fraud was not completely unheard of in the United States. Back in the 1990s, during his teenage years, Sid Tanner remembered his parents owned a copy of the book *Votescam: The Stealing of America* by James and Kenneth Collier. He'd never read it himself, but he remembered its provocative tagline: "Why can't we vote the bastards out? Because we didn't even vote the bastards in."

As if to substantiate that claim, just a few years later came the infamous 2000 election, which saw the state of Florida stolen from Democratic candidate Al Gore and given to his Republican opponent George W Bush.

The conflict of interest was clear as day.

The first news network to call Florida in Bush's favour – while all the other stations had accurately declared Gore the winner – was the Rupert Murdoch-owned Fox News. And the man working at Fox that night, who called Florida for Bush, was none other than his cousin John Prescott Ellis.

Those responsible for counting the votes in Florida – the Governor and Secretary of State of Florida – did nothing to contradict Fox's falsehood because they were directly responsible for the steal. The Florida Secretary of State was Katherine Harris – the chairwoman of Bush's presidential campaign; and the Governor of Florida was Bush's little brother Jeb.

During the Electoral College counting, many congressmen had objected that millions of votes cast by African Americans in Florida had been dubiously excluded from the count. As the Vice President of the United States at the time, Gore presided over the Joint Session, but there was nothing he could do to uphold those objections. With not one signed endorsement by a Senator, as per the rules of the Joint Session, these objections could not be discussed or investigated further by the House and the Senate. One after another, they were dismissed.

Bush was subsequently 'certified' the winner.

Two years after the election, a study published in the journal of *Statistical Science* proved that many votes in Florida's Palm Beach County had been deceptively discounted as 'invalid' because they were either 'undervotes' (the hole puncher not going all the way through the voting card) or 'overvotes' (the hole puncher went all the way through, but the voter also wrote the candidate's name on the card for further clarification since the punch-boxes were confusingly not exactly opposite the candidates' names).

The confusion was by design.

In Palm Beach County, the ballots used a 'butterfly' design, with the list of candidates spread out over two unsymmetrical columns on the left and right sides of the card and the punch-boxes in

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a narrower central column. To vote for Bush – the *first* candidate on the left column – one simply punched a hole in the *first* box from the top. But to vote for Gore – the *second* candidate on the left column – one had to punch the *third* box from the top, *not the second*.

Indeed, the confusing 'butterfly ballot' led thousands of Floridians to *think* they had voted for Gore when *in fact* they'd mistakenly voted for Reform Party candidate Pat Buchanan, the *first* candidate on the *right column*. This led to many people 'invalidating' their own votes.

A substantial number of the 'overvotes' were double punched, with one hole accidentally punched for Buchanan and a second hole punched for Gore as correction. Hence, their handwritten clarification of which candidate they intended to vote for.

The issues with undervotes, overvotes, and mistaken votes were well known at the time, but it was ultimately the majority decision of the Republican Supreme Court judges that denied a manual recount. The study concluded that, had those overvotes and undervotes been counted, Gore would have become the 43rd President of the United States.

The 2000 presidential election was stolen.

The deliberate irregularities had cost Gore the presidency.

But that was twenty-one years ago. Such irregularities did not reoccur in 2020. If the MAGA protestors wanted to 'stop the steal', they were twenty years too late. Still, the stolen 2000 election had not been forgotten. Even though it was, ironically, the Republicans who had stolen it, memories of the steal that *actually* happened probably helped fuel the rage brought on by the steal that *never* happened.

In actuality, in 2020 the United States simply had for a president a man-child who consistently dug his heels in and refused to take 'no' for an answer.

This had become the norm since Election Night.

Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, Trump refused to admit that he had lost. On Election Night, when all

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the networks including Fox News – the biggest promoter of pro-Republican far-right propaganda in America – started calling the swing states of Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, and Pennsylvania in favour of his opponent Joe Biden, the President had his senior political advisor and son-in-law Jared Kushner phone Fox chairman Rupert Murdoch to challenge their coverage.

Murdoch said, "Sorry, Jared, there is nothing I can do. The Fox News Data authority says the numbers are ironclad. He says it won't be close."

True to Murdoch's words, the results showed Trump lost the election on both fronts, losing the popular vote by more than 7,050,000 and scoring only 232 Electoral College votes to Biden's 306.

Any other Republican would have known they were in trouble and accept that they'd lost if even their allies at Rupert Murdoch's media empire said so.

But not Donald Trump!

The counting had not even *finished* when he first called the election a fraud in the wee hours of November 4th, 2020, nor had either candidate yet come anywhere close to securing their target of 270 Electoral College votes. Biden gaining the lead by a measly seven votes was enough to make the President feel threatened.

Shortly before 2:30am that morning, he went on national television to broadcast a message from the East Room of the White House. On stage in front of a wall of American flags, President Trump told his followers, "This is a fraud on the American public. This is an embarrassment to our country. We were getting ready to win this election. Frankly, we *did* win this election."

His lie was met by thunderous applause from the audience. Clearly, none of them were going to let facts get in the way of what they wanted to hear.

Trump continued his disingenuous rant. "So, our goal now is to ensure the integrity, for the good of this nation. This is a very big moment. This is a major fraud on our nation. We want the

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law to be used in a proper manner, so we'll be going to the U.S. Supreme Court. *We want all voting to stop.*"

The president's remarks were nonsensical.

All voting *had* stopped.

What was still ongoing was the *counting* of votes.

Sure enough, whether corrected by somebody within his cabinet or realised of his own accord, no sooner had Trump stepped down from the podium, he immediately took to Twitter to reiterate his false claims in a barrage of tweets demanding that election workers "STOP THE COUNT!"

Almost comedically, such denouncements of the election led to mass nationwide protests by the President's supporters, who gathered outside facilities in Georgia, Arizona, and Michigan where ballots were still being counted. If Trump was *winning* in a county, the protestors would demand the count be *stopped*; if he was *losing*, they demanded the count be *continued or recounted*.

Adding fuel to the fire, two days after his first speech, Trump addressed the nation a second time to denigrate the legitimacy of the mail-in ballots still being counted. "If you count the legal votes, I easily win. If you count the illegal votes, they can try to steal the election from us."

All mainstream networks, except Fox News and CNN, promptly stopped airing Trump's rambling and incoherent speech when it was clear that what he was spouting was not based in reality.

After it was done, CNN's anchor Jake Tapper said, "What a sad night for the United States of America to hear their President say that. To falsely accuse people of trying to steal the election. To try to attack democracy that way with this feast of falsehoods."

Anderson Cooper, another CNN host, added, "That is the President of the United States, that is the most powerful person in the world, and we see him like an obese turtle on his back, flailing in the hot sun, realising his time is over."

Fox News, on the other hand, turned a blind eye.

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It was just the beginning of the manic insanity to ensue, and it only worsened after November 8th, 2020, when Joe Biden was declared the victor.

Trump inundated all his social media accounts and appearances on national television with unsubstantiated allegations of widespread voter fraud. Some of his claims were completely bonkers, and none could he prove in court. The President also pressured and harassed government officials in swing states to change the election results. Even the federal judges that Trump himself had installed rejected his allegations in court due to lack of evidence.

When his federal cases didn't work, President Trump tried to take it up with the Supreme Court.

Most egregiously, he went so far as to conspire with Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton to file a frivolous lawsuit with the Supreme Court against the swing states that Biden had won. The suit became known by the shorthand of *Texas v. Pennsylvania*, but its full title was significantly lengthier: *State of Texas v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, State of Georgia, State of Michigan, and State of Wisconsin*. It falsely alleged that all four of these swing states had violated the US Constitution and breached the independent state legislature doctrine. To try and push the suit, Louisianian congressman Mike Johnson had succeeded in soliciting signatures from all but one of the GOP members in Congress.

The President was banking on his appointed Supreme Court judges to steal the election for him. But again, much to his further embarrassment, the case was wisely dismissed. The Supreme Court ruled:

> The State of Texas's motion for leave to file a bill of complaint is denied for lack of standing under Article III of the Constitution. Texas has not demonstrated a judicially cognisable interest in the manner in which another State conducts its elections.

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Instead of trying to turn his negative image around and make the remainder of his one-term presidency worthwhile and memorable like any other outgoing US President would have, Donald Trump instead preferred to play golf and chase his delusions, while hundreds of thousands more of his citizens continued to die from the COVID-19 pandemic that he had downplayed.

Even though, on Election Night, Fox News had accurately reported that their man had lost, almost immediately after Donald Trump denounced the election as "a fraud on the American public," virtually the entire Murdoch media empire across America and abroad toxically entertained his fantasies of an election victory that had been stolen from him.

Over the weeks that followed, the outgoing President appeared on Fox News to spout the Big Lie. The channel's irresponsible anchors echoed and amplified his Big Lie in their commentaries and propaganda, giving the Big Lie unwarranted attention and credence, while everybody else in the mainstream and social media was quick to rightly shoot it down.

Practically everyone who was not a brain-dead Trump supporter had seen this coming. Even before the 2020 election started, Trump had spent the majority of his re-election campaign casting aspersions on the legitimacy of mail-in ballots and claiming it would be 'rigged' against him. It was the same script he had pushed since the 2016 election that had brought him to power. Trump had openly stated he would only accept the outcome of the election if he won. And now it ultimately had come to this: an angry mob, who bought the lies, being riled up by a seventy-four-year-old child who couldn't accept he'd lost.

What was now happening had all been foreseen years prior.

On October 20th, 2016, during the third presidential debate, the moderator had asked Trump directly, "There is a tradition in this country, in fact, one of the prides of this country is the peaceful transition of power and, no matter how hard fought a campaign is that at the end of the campaign, that the loser concedes

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to the winner – not saying you're necessarily going to be the loser or the winner, but that the loser concedes to the winner and the country comes together, in part for the good of the country. Are you saying you're not prepared now to commit to that principle?"

Trump refused to give a yes or no answer, simply stating, "I'll keep you in suspense."

His opponent at the time, the former first lady Hillary Clinton, saw this as an opportunity to bolster her own campaign by calling Trump out on his long, sad, and pathetic history of falsely and belligerently claiming the world was conspiring against him.

She said, "Let me respond to that, because that's horrifying. You know, every time Donald thinks things are not going in his direction, he claims whatever it is is rigged against him. The FBI conducted a year-long investigation into my emails. They concluded there was no case. He said the FBI was rigged. He lost the Iowa caucus. He lost the Wisconsin primary. He said the Republican primary was rigged against him. Then, Trump University gets sued for fraud and racketeering. He claims the court system and the federal judge is rigged against him. There was even a time when he didn't get an Emmy for his TV program three years in a row and he started tweeting that the Emmys were rigged against him."

As if to illustrate his rival's point, Trump smiled stupidly and promptly interjected with, "I should have gotten it!" much to the audience's laughter.

Clinton gestured at him as if to tell the crowd 'I told you so' and continued, "This is a mindset. This is how Donald thinks, and it's funny but it's also really troubling. No, that is not the way our democracy works. We've been around for two hundred and forty years. We've had free and fair elections. We've accepted the outcomes when we may not have liked them, and that is what must be expected of anyone standing on a debate stage during a general election."

Hillary Clinton's words ultimately came back to haunt her on Election Night 2016. But, four years later, they became all the

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more relevant and haunted Trump with a vengeance. Video clips of her enumerating his history of crying foul were used prominently and mercilessly in televised news specials and documentaries and on social media posts debunking Trump's claims of a stolen election. Everything Hillary Clinton had said that day now seemed eerily like a premonition of what was unfolding on January 6th, 2021.

Tanner frankly couldn't care less about the election. As far as he was concerned, no matter who got in the White House, it just meant more corruption, more wars, and ultimately more money funnelled into deep pockets.

He had far more important fish to fry that day. Tanner's concern was the two men standing a few metres in front of him. They had backpacks on and were wearing dark jackets that ran all the way down to their feet. It was these two men that Tanner had come to see.

For the past three weeks, he'd had the two of them under surveillance. Their hotel room had been bugged, and he had listened in on their phone conversations. They had been talking with some of the highest-level members of Trump's administration. He was sure they were going to make their strike today.

The man on the left was very tall and sported extraordinarily broad shoulders, probably the result of a mild case of gigantism. It was hard to gauge his figure, but the bulging beneath his sleeves and the way his jacket and shirt hung like curtains from his enormous pectorals suggested he worked out. He had black hair and a short beard, with a large nose and large forehead that always seemed to naturally cast shade on dark, very cruel eyes. A thin scar of unknown origin cut from the bottom of his right eye down his cheek to his lower jaw. Overall, his face looked something akin to an ogre's.

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The man on the right was shorter, his build suggesting he was equal portions fat and muscle. There was no hair on the big round cue ball of a head, and his mouth and nostrils were flared. The lack of hair made his ears seem more pronounced; they already looked enormous as a result of his big, coiled sausages of ear lobes.

Both had set up shop in New York and Washington DC some five years ago. They had used American passports at hotels and anywhere else they needed to identify themselves, but facial recognition and other background checks had proven they were not who they claimed to be.

The CIA dossiers listed both men as agents of the Russian counterintelligence organisation SMERSH. Supposedly shut down three quarters of a century ago, it was once an umbrella of three agencies within Stalin's old Red Army, with the mission of snuffing out Soviet defectors and Nazi spies infiltrating the USSR during World War II. Now, it was the clandestine death squad of the Russian Federation, tasked with assassinating foreign agents and conducting political terrorism abroad under the direct orders of Vladimir Putin. The agency's name was a portmanteau of their motto: *Smert Shpionam*, which translates to 'Death to Spies!'

Watching the SMERSH agents from afar, Tanner's focus was fixed squarely on the backpacks both men were wearing. He had listened in on the phone conversations in the nights leading up to the January 6th, 2021, rally. He had followed them out of town to where the transaction was to take place. Tanner knew exactly the contents of those bags and what they planned to do with them.

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2

TEAM CRAZY

Some three weeks earlier, in the late-night hours of December 18th, 2020, President Trump called the craziest of his aides and legal team members to the White House to discuss what would ultimately become their last resort.

The President sat back in the overstuffed, leather-padded swivel chair behind the Resolute desk. His elbows perched atop the armrests, and his little fingers intertwined to support his jutted chin, which was made more pronounced by a straight-bridged yet bulbous-tipped nose and small lips that always seemed to purse.

As usual, the juxtaposition of his hands against his face made President Trump's complexion appear unnatural, if not inhuman. While his hands were a pale grey, his entire face was discoloured an unusual shade of orange that almost blended in with his excessively combed-over blond hair.

Whether the result of a catastrophic tanning malfunction or just a shortcoming of his being a septuagenarian, Donald Trump always dubiously blamed his orange skin tone on 'the lighting'. Only along the outskirts of his hair and on his slightly bulged eyelids did his natural skin colour prevail.

The grey eyes themselves stared out piercingly beyond the desk, framed by a broad forehead with bushy eyebrows and

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pronounced cheekbones that protruded from otherwise fat cheeks that sagged with old age.

Dressed in his well-tailored black Brioni business suit with a white linen shirt and a red necktie that inelegantly hung well below his trouser belt, Trump had assumed a seated position that made him look less like a world leader, or even an armchair general, and more like a mafia boss coordinating his criminal associates.

In many ways, since November, that had ceased to be a mere analogy.

Seated directly opposite from the President sat his former National Security Advisor, General Michael Flynn, a red-haired, squared-headed former US Army General, still in uniform. Long had he been a staunch ally for the President. He had even taken the fall for him when the Russian interference scandal unravelled.

During the Mueller investigation, General Flynn eventually pleaded guilty to "wilfully and knowingly making false statements and omissions to the FBI" regarding his dealings with Russia during their election meddling in 2016. But, in an egregious abuse of power, President Trump directed his Attorney General William Barr to drop all charges against General Flynn, and, just a month prior to the meeting, the President had even gone so far as to pardon General Flynn.

Now, General Michael Flynn was doing everything in his power to ensure his boss would remain in office.

Also present within the Oval Office were the White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows and two of the President's lawyers, Sidney Powell and Emily Newman. As if to emphasise the craziness of Trump's desperation to stay in power, even Patrick Byrne attended the meeting. Byrne had been, until the previous year, the CEO of Overstock.com. He had left his company after admitting to being in a sexual relationship with a woman nearly half his age who turned out to be a Russian spy. Now, he was a die-hard conspiracy theorist infamous for peddling COVID-19 denialism,

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Deep State disinformation, and false allegations that the 2020 election had been stolen. Byrne had never even met the President before, nor had he previously served in the campaign or administration. He had simply tagged along with Powell's group.

It seemed anybody and their dog was allowed on the White House premises, so long as they denied Joe Biden's election win and had some wacky conspiracy theory to bring to the table.

Many other loyalists within Trump's innermost circle joined in via teleconference on the secure line.

Among those phoning in were Peter Navarro, the Director for Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy; Donald Trump Jnr, the President's eldest son; and five more of Trump's lawyers: Rudy Giuliani, John Eastman, Kenneth Chesebro, Jack Wilenchik, and the Soviet-born Boris Epshteyn.

All had conspired with the President in what history would call the 'fake electors scheme' – an attempt to swap the electoral college votes in swing states with fraudulent ones on December 14th, 2020, the deadline when the electoral college delegations met to cast votes for the certified winner in each of the fifty states, and the certified electoral slates were submitted to the National Archives. This was done in a last-ditch hope that Vice President Pence would count the fraudulent votes in place of the real ones on January 6th, 2021, when the election outcome would be certified.

But now, the December 14 deadline had passed, and the master plan had hit an embarrassing snag.

Trump spoke. "What is the latest on the alternate electoral votes?"

In the President's innermost circles, 'alternate' was code for 'fake'. It was Wilenchik who had suggested the term, because 'alternate' sounded better than 'fake'. Being the one who had coined the term, Wilenchik took the initiative to answer.

"We have eighty-four signatures from alternate electors – eleven in Arizona alone, including Chairwoman Ward and her husband," Wilenchik said. "She tells me that she and the rest of

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Arizona's alternate electors think it would be in our best interest to keep it under wraps until Congress counts the votes on January 6, then it'll be quite the surprise for the Democrats and the media."

"Didn't see the Fake News, did you?" Trump berated Wilenchik. "The element of surprise is now gone! Last week, the Fake News reported that the National Archive rejected our alternate electors."

"Well, in the meantime," Peter Navarro interjected, attempting to quell the President's temper, "I've just prepared a thirty-page report proving it was statistically impossible for you to have lost the election. Not after winning Ohio."

Quoting from his own document, Navarro emphasised, "'No Republican has ever won a presidential election without winning Ohio, while only two Democrats have won the presidency without winning Florida.' It'll give the Fake News something to cry about."

Trump seemed less than enthusiastic and unassured. "Yes, I've already seen what the Fake News said about your brilliant report. *The Washington Post* is calling it 'the most embarrassing document created by a White House staffer'."

"Are you saying my report is no good?"

"Of course, it's good, you idiot!" Trump snapped. "It's a brilliant report. It's the damn Fake News calling it an embarrassment. They are the embarrassment! Them and the National Archives. They are both rigged against me!"

Chesebro, the mastermind of the fake electors scheme, could tell the President was again getting distracted by unfavourable news coverage and felt the need to bring the topic back to his master plan. His master plan had already failed, but still Chesebro compelled himself to offer reassurance, if not false hope.

"Getting back to the subject of our alternate electors' signatures, Mr President," Chesebro said, "it won't matter what the media says about them. As Dr Eastman has assured you, all you

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have to do is get the Vice President to send back the official ballots and count our alternate ones."

Wilenchik saw the opportunity to salvage some credibility following the verbal shootdown he received earlier. "Just have somebody raise an objection in Congress when they start counting and argue that our alternate votes should be counted."

Eastman broke in, "Mr President, as General Flynn and I have suggested in our memos, you still have the Pence Card."

This was the pet name Trump's inner circle had been applying to a felonious fringe legal theory circulated on social media – that the Vice President had the unilateral authority to reject electoral votes from states if he deemed them fraudulent, or in Trump's case, inconvenient.

"Have you spoken to the Vice President?"

"Of course I fucking have!" Trump bellowed. "My running mate is a complete wimp! Claims he spoke to Dan Quayle for advice, who filled his head with bullshit about not having the authority to send it back."

The President growled. "Even Bush Senior's fucking VP is conspiring against me! It's practically a given that Mike won't reject the electoral votes. Now's the time for our last resort."

General Flynn and Sidney Powell's eyes lit up.

General Flynn asked, "Does that mean we shall be initiating Executive Order 13848 and having the military seize the voting machines?"

Powell added, "And that I will be appointed to the position of special prosecutor to oversee this operation and institute all criminal and civil proceedings?"

The fat orange head of the President nodded coldly. His eyes were piercing and seemed to burn with fanaticism.

What he said next came with a deep and eerie sense of foreboding. "Executive Order 13848 is not enough. How many people turned up to our recent protests in Washington?"

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Patrick Byrne sensed this question was for him. He had personally attended many of the recent Stop the Steal rallies and could speak from firsthand experience. "About 10,000 supporters turned up to the Million MAGA March at the Freedom Plaza last month. Alex Jones of *InfoWars* and Marjorie Taylor Greene spoke there. You might remember seeing us wave your support when you drove past in your motorcade.

"It was a fun protest. We even got to smash the heads of Lefties who thought they were wise guys and tried to crash the party. Remember, we draped the *TRUMP: LAW & ORDER* banner over the Black Lives Matter Plaza?"

Trump chuckled, and his eyes lit up as he reminisced about the BLM and anti-Trump protestors getting brutally beaten.

It was at that moment that the President's son's voice crackled in over the speakerphone. "We've had thousands of members of the Proud Boys, QAnon, and the Oath Keepers gather here at the War Room and also at the Command Center," Donald Jnr said.

"Just last week, about two hundred of them showed up in army gear and marched their support from the War Room to the Plaza. Then there were another 5,000 or so from the Women for America First group showing their support."

"Excellent, excellent," President Trump answered. "I propose we send out some invitations for another rally. A more massive one that will dwarf all the others and really make a statement. Get more folks down there. I'm talking record-breaking crowds, folks!

"On the scale of things, I'm talking the October Revolution all over again! The likes of which no country has ever seen before. This is not simply a matter of the military seizing the voting machines and our supporters cheering them on. I think this time we should make a bigger, stronger show of force. Get a lot more folks down there. We need to make this a very, very big and powerful statement."

Trump gazed solemnly at General Flynn.

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"General," he said, "out of all the people who attend this rally, I want Davy to be there. He will ensure that Mike never certifies the illegal votes ..."

By 'illegal votes', Trump was of course referring to the certified votes for Biden.

"... I trust you have friends who can pick him up?"

The colour in Flynn's face suddenly drained as though all life had been sucked from his body. Whereas before his eyes had conveyed the enthusiasm of an obedient and fiercely loyal soldier, now he just contemptuously glared as if to say, 'You can't be serious.'

Then, hiding any hint of reservation or disapproval, the bravado and loyalty were promptly switched back on; his whole face was stark with the remorselessness of an executioner. He did not show it on the outside, but the former National Security Advisor was shocked to his very core. With this direct order from the President, General Flynn knew without question it was time to take off the gloves.

"You can rest assured, Mr President," he answered, "I know the perfect men to assist Davy on his mission. Of all my contacts, I trust Mr Morgan's team will ensure that Davy completes his objective. They have been assets to us these past years. They have studied the ins and outs of Operation Trojan Horse for years, trained for this very scenario, and been on standby since you took office, awaiting your call to arms."

Epshteyn's voice came in over the speaker phone.

"I can confirm," he said, "as I have personally worked with Mr Morgan's group in the past. Your son and I had dinner with them a few years ago. Even socially, Operation Trojan Horse was always something of an obsession of theirs. Their devotion to mission success is unquestionable. I can assure you, Mr President, their proficiencies and capabilities are beyond anything we could hope to achieve with the National Guard alone. I fully support General

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Flynn's recommendation. They are exactly who Davy needs to carry out Operation Trojan Horse."

"Great." Trump smiled like a crocodile and turned to the conference telephone. "You have all been called to this meeting because we need a unanimous decision. Executive Order 13848 will ensure the total confiscation of Dominion machines, but we need to ensure that our alternate elector slates are counted. Since it seems the schmuck I picked for my VP is no longer a team player, we need a ... final solution of our own. But, before proceeding, we need a unanimous answer. We need to know who's a team player and who's a wimp. Of all the options that have been put forward, are we all in favour of Operation Trojan Horse?"

There was a moment's pause.

Not everybody on the conference call, or even all those present in the Oval Office, knew who Davy was or what Operation Trojan Horse entailed. Many had only been given partial information. But, as sycophants, they all blindly followed along and agreed.

Donald Jnr answered over the speaker phone, "All present at the War Room are in favour."

Moments later, Rudy Giuliani's voice came in over the speaker. "Operation Trojan Horse passes at the Command Center by majority vote."

In the Oval Office, those present showed their support by show of hands.

Nobody raised any objection, not even Byrne or Powell, who were not official members of the White House team and had been invited to attend the meeting out of desperation. They had only heard Operation Trojan Horse vaguely mentioned in passing in prior meetings and did not know for sure who Davy was. Some gangster or secret agent who could *make* Vice President Pence change his mind? Did the President even know himself?

Trump smiled and gave a sinister smirk. "Then so be it."

The President and his co-conspirators were about to continue their discussion when the door to the Oval Office opened.

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President Trump promptly put the conference on mute and looked past the row of heads to the door.

Since losing the election, it had become the President's custom to mute conference calls with his schemers whenever those not in the loop were present. Those on the other end of the line could hear what was being said, but realised they were muted only when they heard the voice of the seventh person in the room.

It was the White House advisor Eric Herschmann.

He was astonished by the sheer number of non-White House officials in the Oval Office. Never before had he met General Flynn, but he remembered seeing his picture in news articles covering his various controversies. Herschmann had met Sidney Powell a few times after the election was lost, but he had no idea who Byrne and Newman were.

"What the hell is going on here?" Herschmann said. "How the hell did Sidney Powell get in the building?"

"I granted her security clearance," President Trump answered. "She and General Flynn are here to discuss our initiation of Executive Order 13848."

Herschmann was thunderstruck. "Mr President," he said, "That is neither constitutional nor legal. Order 13848 is only to be implemented in the event of foreign interference with our elections. The last election was the most secure in history."

Trump seemed ready to explode, but it was Sidney Powell who spoke up and quelled him. "That is categorically untrue. Our evidence suggests that Venezuela – and not just Venezuela but China and Iran as well – conspired with Smartmatic and Dominion to ensure that the votes digitally changed. As you know, the voting machines have a fingerprint recognition feature to identify the voter.

"Smartmatic, Dominion, and all the other voting machine companies rigged their systems to detect the fingerprints of Trump voters and flip them to Biden. The fingerprint scan would be tied to a record of the voter's identity as having voted, but that

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voter would not be tracked to the changed vote, such that the machines could change the votes without detection."

"Hold on a minute, Sidney," Herschmann said. "You're part of Rudy's legal team, right? Rudy's been promoting this idea that Democrats changed the rules – that there was widespread election fraud, no observers, invalid ballots, and so on. Now, you're proposing a completely different theory. What's the story here? Is it your theory that the Democrats got together and changed the rules, or is it that there was foreign interference in our election?"

"It's foreign interference," Powell replied adamantly yet unconvincingly, her claims becoming increasingly haphazard. "Rudy hasn't understood what this case is about until just now. The Dominion Voting Systems, the Smartmatic technology software, and the software that goes in other computerised voting systems – here as well, not just Dominion – were created in Venezuela at the direction of Hugo Chávez. Under that direction, they have used the software to flip votes from Trump to Biden."

Herschmann looked at Powell incredulously. "Hugo Chávez? You *do* know he's been dead for seven years, right?"

Powell, now visibly embarrassed, tried to save face. "Yes, but ... the software came from *his* Venezuela. When he was still alive, Chávez was most insistent that Smartmatic design a system that could manipulate the outcome of the elections. Its electoral technology was called *Sistema de Gestion Electoral* ..."

Herschmann's patience grew increasingly strained. Powell was doing what she always did with her flock of crowds: try to impress the gullible with her ability to memorise foreign tongue twisters. It wasn't working on Eric Herschmann. What he was hearing were the exact same unsubstantiated and debunked allegations that Powell had pushed exactly a month ago during a press conference – the same infamous press conference in which Rudy Giuliani's hair dye had melted down his sweaty face on live television.

"... Once it was put in place, it was used to manipulate votes. Chávez used it himself to steal his election from Rosales in 2006.

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It was used again in the Venezuela elections of 2013 and 2017, during which millions of votes for Nicolás Maduro were flipped. The software runs an algorithm that probably ran all over the country to take a certain percentage of votes from President Trump and flip them to President Biden.

"We have twelve affidavits from former Smartmatic employees. The companies are in cahoots with the Clinton Foundation. It is apparent that the same Smartmatic cyberattack was used to flip votes in Milwaukee County, Fulton County, Wayne County, Antrim County, Madison County ... the list goes on."

Herschmann's expression suddenly froze. His eyes squinted and narrowed before he glared piercingly at Powell almost as if he could see through her. He knew he'd caught her in a lie.

"So," Herschmann began, "your theory is that Dominion intentionally flipped the votes so we could *win* that county?"

"What do you mean?"

Herschmann had had enough.

"Listen to yourself!" he snapped at her. "You just claimed Antrim County was hacked by Dominion and Smartmatic. Antrim is one of the counties that *we won!* Trump won that county by 9,448 votes to Biden's 5,960."

As soon as President Trump heard that, he glared at Sidney Powell as if to say, *Stupid bitch!*

In the top drawer of his desk was a speech he had prepared just two days earlier, announcing his executive order to "seize, collect, retain, and analyse all machines, equipment, electronically stored information, and material records required for retention".

The opening of the second paragraph cited Antrim County among his 'justifications' for such actions. The President planned to deliver it proudly upon completion of Operation Trojan Horse. Now, he scorned the thought of needing to rewrite that section all because of Powell's incompetence.

Powell attempted to cover herself. "Yes, but Antrim County was initially declared in favour of Biden. Thankfully, on that

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occasion, Venezuela's Smartmatic vote rigging program was caught in the act—"

"Oh, please," Herschmann rebuked. "I read the report released by Sheryl Guy, the woman in charge of the vote counting in Antrim – a Republican, might I add. She said Biden's initial lead was due to human error, not fraud. The machines glitched due to an improper system update. Nothing more.

"And, furthermore, Smartmatic was created in Florida, not Venezuela! And it certainly was not created under the orders of Chávez. Granted, the founders of the company were of Venezuelan descent, but immigration and the FBI confirmed they had no ties to any foreign government. Nor does Dominion. They've no ties to Clinton either.

"You're just making shit up as you go at this point. This makes no sense whatsoever, nor is it consistent with what Rudy has been saying in courts and on national television this whole time!"

So began a shouting match between the President, his loyalists, and Herschmann, who felt he was the only sane one in the Oval Office.

General Flynn stood up from his chair, took out his iPad, and full-screened a map of the world. It was covered with dots marking various locations, with lines connecting the dots.

Herschmann, in his exacerbation, asked, "What the hell is that supposed to be?"

"This," General Flynn asserted with an authority in his voice, "is a diagram of worldwide IP addresses of foreign spies who managed to hack into the voting machines. We have a lot more proof than just the affidavits. This map shows the locations of the hackers: Venezuela, Iran, and China.

"There is a strong network of cyberattacks targeting our systems. They are communicating with each other via the machines, coordinating their attack to maximise the number of votes changed. All those votes changed were Trump votes. The map shows us how they did it. They hacked into the systems and

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changed the votes, all without the voting machine operators noticing."

"And just how did they hack into the machines?"

Patrick Byrne answered, "There's a company in China, whose name is already at the periphery of some of this mischief, who were accessing the voting machines through the internet, through a hidden port in the Nest Labs thermostat in the voting rooms. They got on the Dominion machine that was being used for vote counting in the middle of the vote counting in swing states."

Meadows nodded in agreement and added, "I have put the FBI, Pentagon, National Security Council, and the Director of National Intelligence on official notice that there is substantial potential evidence to suggest a massive Chinese hack on our election using thermostats to change results in voting machines."

Herschmann couldn't imagine such a ridiculous notice going very far. He could already picture the recipients of said notice on the floor belly laughing at the absurdity of it all.

"Thermostats? Seriously?! This is absolute nuts! Do you guys think the toaster is conspiring against us too?! A minute ago, you were telling me Venezuela had inserted a program in the Smartmatic and Dominion machines to flip votes from Trump to Biden. Now you're telling me China somehow magically hacked into the voting machines via thermostats. Which is it?"

Now, General Flynn was furious.

Instead of attempting to address the contradiction Herschmann had pointed out, Flynn resorted to shouting. He pointed his finger angrily at Herschmann. "You're a quitter! You're not a fighter! Your disloyalty to the President will not be tolerated!"

Unintimidated, Herschmann replied, "What the fuck is wrong with you? What you two are babbling on about regarding thermostats is physically impossible. Extraordinary claims demand extraordinary evidence. If you've got evidence to the contrary, don't scream at me. Come over here and present it. If not, sit your ass back down."

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Byrne stood up beside the General. Wagging his finger at Herschmann, he said, “Michael is right; you are a quitter! You’ve been interfering with everything. You’ve been cutting us off.”

Herschmann raised a confused brow at Byrne, unable to believe what he was hearing. Almost exactly a year ago, Herschmann had stood before the Senate to make his case that President Trump should be acquitted of impeachment, arguing that the House’s motion to impeach was politically motivated and that the American people were ‘happier’ under Trump. Those words had aged poorly, and Eric Herschmann knew it, but never before had said words left any doubt as to where his allegiance aligned.

He asked Byrne, “Do you even know who the fuck I am, you idiot?”

“Yeah, you’re Patrick Cipollone.”

Herschmann facepalmed.

“Wrong! Wrong, you idiot! I’m Eric Herschmann, Senior Advisor to the President. God, who let these outsiders in the White House?! Tell you what, how about I bring the *real* Pat Cipollone in here and see what he reckons of your theories about Chávez and China hacking the voting machines with thermostats?”

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3

TEAM NORMAL

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Some ten minutes later, White House Counsel Pasquale Anthony 'Pat' Cipollone was brought into the Oval Office. How anybody could have mistaken Herschmann for Cipollone defied comprehension. Although both were middle-aged, greying men, they couldn't have been more dissimilar in appearance.

Herschmann's complexion was significantly more tanned, and his receding hair was neatly slicked back. Cipollone wore glasses, and his grey hair was more parted on his left; his chin gave his head a more triangular appearance than Herschmann's more oval-shaped one.

With Cipollone came Derek Lyons, the Counselor to the President, and the current National Security Advisor, Robert O'Brien.

Lyons, the youngest of the quartet of aides, had announced his plans to retire before the year was out when it became indisputable that Trump had lost the election. In fact, the night of December 18th, 2020, was to be Lyons's last shift in the White House.

He had just finished packing his stuff and was looking forward to going home and spending Christmas with his family, when he got the call from Herschmann urgently telling him to get to the Oval Office.

When the four of them stepped into the Oval Office, he cringed at the sight of Sidney Powell and General Flynn.

Not those nuts, again, he thought. This was not how he wanted to spend his first night of retirement.

Likewise, Robert O'Brien was especially none too pleased, being the *third* person to succeed General Flynn. President Trump seemed to go through National Security Advisors like they were disposable pawns, but his disgraced original choice always seemed to find ways to rear his ugly head. Every time he did, it always meant more trouble and the beginning of more scandals and sleepless nights.

Cipollone recognised everybody present except Byrne. He disliked him on sight. He seemed so uncharismatic – even more so than President Trump – and out of place in the White House wearing denim jeans and a hoodie where everybody else was dressed in either suits or military uniform.

As soon as Cipollone saw him, he asked, "Who the hell are you?"

"I'm Patrick Byrne, founder and former CEO of Overstock.com. Perhaps you've heard of me?"

There was disdain masked as sycophantism in Byrne's voice, as if trying to sweet-talk his way around the issue. Cipollone immediately saw through it.

"Yes, I've heard of you. You're that guy who got busted having an affair with that Russian secret agent."

"That was fake news," Byrne protested, the false diplomacy in his voice gone.

Ah yes, Cipollone thought, *the typical label for any unfavourable publicity.*

Like a madman, Byrne sprang up from his chair before the president and waved his finger in the air, then at the White House lawyers, raving. "I was set up! The FBI instructed me to have romantic relationships with that woman as part of their investigations into Russia, Clinton, Trump, Cruz, Rubio, and others. Then the Deep State threw me under the bus! Turned out the investigation was more about political espionage than law

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enforcement. Everything you think you know about the Russia and Clinton investigations is a lie. It's all a cover up; it was all political espionage. They wanted to control whoever became the next president."

Cipollone and Herschmann exchanged a look of incredulousness as Byrne ranted.

General Flynn, in particular, having pled guilty and been subsequently pardoned for his involvement in the Russian interference scandal, knew firsthand that Byrne was either a confidence trickster or a delusional wacko. He didn't say a word, but Flynn turned to Powell and Newman as if to ask, *Which of you two bitches brought this guy along?*

Byrne proclaimed, "I know how this all works. I bribed Hillary Clinton $18 million on behalf of the FBI for a sting operation!"

"What the hell are you talking about?" Herschmann said. "Why would you say something like that?"

"Because," Byrne rambled, unconvincingly, "*I* was part of the Deep State's plan to bribe and blackmail Hillary Clinton! I was part of the Deep State set-up of the Russian collusion delusion; they had me construct the early stages of the Russia collusion delusion sting. I know for a fact that there's a Deep State trying to take over the US government. And I was hoping the President here could give me a pardon in exchange for what I know about the election."

"That's Patrick Byrne being Patrick Byrne," Cipollone muttered. "He has quite the reputation for exaggerating his importance and making false claims to push his Deep State conspiracy theories."

Herschmann scoffed. "Wait 'til you hear his *reasons* to justify 13848."

Byrne, General Flynn, and Powell proceeded to argue the same dubious pieces of evidence that they had previously presented to Eric Herschmann. And again, Cipollone immediately saw the transparent fecklessness of their lies and conspiracy theories. It

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was clear that what Flynn and Powell were proposing was nothing more than desperate attempts to cover the fact that the President had lost the election.

After listening to their nonsense for close to thirty minutes, Cipollone felt his sanity going. He put his foot down. "I have seen no evidence of massive fraud in the election. Initiating Executive Order 13848 has no legal basis. It's a horrible idea. And, quite frankly, it's a dangerous idea. Mr President, you should want nothing to do with what these interlopers are proposing. They are essentially suggesting we take away people's right to vote and replace it with military rule. It would be the worst day in American history since 9/11."

Trump didn't listen. "We are not the ones who took away the people's right to vote. That would be Venezuela and China." He pronounced it as an exaggerated, 'Chai-NAH!' "They are the ones who stole the election by hacking into the machines and flipping the votes from Trump to Biden."

Herschmann shook his head in both disagreement and what should have been disbelief. But, in fact, he *could* believe Trump would be foolish enough to feed on this thermostat hack nonsense. Throughout his administration, the President had gained quite an anti-science reputation, becoming the direct antithesis of his own technical staff and scientific advisors. Now, here he was, endorsing outlandish claims without technical merit.

Herschmann turned to the National Security Advisor. "Robert," he asked, "have you seen *any* evidence of election fraud in the voting machines or foreign interference in our voting machines?"

O'Brien answered, "My team has already extensively looked into every last extraordinary claim that my predecessor has foolishly advocated tonight. We've found no evidence to suggest the machines were tampered with or that they were compromised by outside interference."

Cipollone nodded and added, "If you have evidence, where is it?"

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Powell said, "What do you mean, 'Where's the evidence?' You should know."

At this point, Derek Lyons felt the urge to get involved. He waved a handful of Powell's court papers in the air. "We have thoroughly investigated every charge put forward, and there is nothing to go on. If you're going to claim there has been widespread voter fraud or foreign interference, the onus is on you to back up that claim. You've brought these claims up in sixty cases, and you've lost every case you've had!"

"Every judge is corrupt," Powell said. "We can't rely on any of them."

Herschmann glared at her with intensifying incredulousness.

"That's your argument?" he snapped, the growing irritation in his voice becoming increasingly more apparent. "Every judge is corrupt? Every one? *Every* judge in *every* single case in *all* the counties that you guys lost? Even the judges that we appointed?! Are you out of your fucking mind?"

Lyons added, "If I were the judge, I probably would have thrown it out too!" He began flipping through the pages of Powell's court documents. "These haphazard lawsuits you hastily cobbled together are riddled with errors, wild and unsubstantiated conspiracy theories, and do not even meet high school expectation levels of presentation. You even somehow managed to misspell the word 'district' at least three different ways in your suits. Did you not run these through spellcheck?! A goddamn kindergarten student could spell better than you!"

Cipollone reiterated his challenge. "I ask again: if you have the evidence, where is it, and why did you not present it in any of the courts that you lost?"

Powell responded, again rather clumsily, "Well, we don't have it now, but we will have it at the next court hearing."

Herschmann shook his head. He looked at the President and gestured at Powell. "This is your ongoing problem, Mr President. Sidney Powell always makes extraordinary claims and promises evidence but never delivers."

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President Trump dug his elbows into the red leather top of the Resolute desk, buried his forehead in his hands, and sighed.

"Lawyers," he muttered. "I have nothing but lawyers that stop me on every front. I'm very embarrassed by my White House lawyer staff and the Justice Department."

He gestured at Sidney Powell standing to his left.

"At least she's giving me a chance, which is more than what I can say of all you pussies! None of you guys are giving me any solutions to my problem. But she and her team *are*. Why not just go with what they're proposing?"

"Sir, what she is proposing," Cipollone argued, "is both illegal and unconstitutional. Nor is it something you have the authority to allow."

"Incorrect," Powell said. "President Trump has already appointed me in the position of Special Counsel to oversee the seizure of the rigged voting machines and pursue criminal charges with all resources necessary as I see fit."

To Powell, the President's earlier nodding at her request to be put in the position was official enough. But to Cipollone and his fellow advisors, it was an egregious abuse of power. None of them saw her asserted position as an official one.

Herschmann protested, "There is no executive privilege that allows the President to just declare somebody a member of the administration!"

Like a child wanting a second opinion from their other parent after the first one had already said 'no', the President turned to Cipollone.

"Pat, do I have the authority to name Sidney Powell my Special Counsel?"

"Well, yes, but—"

"Okay, great," the President interrupted, not really listening. "I'm naming her that, and I'm giving her security clearance—"

"Mr President, let me finish," Cipollone felt the urgency to clarify. "You can *name* this woman whatever title you want, but

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that doesn't make it so. No one's going to pay attention to it, not without all the necessary procedures. I mean, in terms of your presidential ability to grant a security clearance, the President has that ability to *arrange* whoever they want to sit all those pre-appointment procedures and background checks. In the end, only the Attorney General can cast the final judgement on whether or not the appointment is approved. You saw what Bill said on television three weeks ago, right?"

"Yes ... I ... did ..." Trump seethed.

Cipollone noticed too late that Chief of Staff Mark Meadows standing beside the President was frantically waving his hands, shaking his head, and silently mouthing, *'No! Don't go there.'*

Meadows had been on the receiving end of the President's wrath when Attorney General William Barr's interview with *Associated Press* had aired. At the time, President Trump was in the dining room just a door away from the Oval Office. He was having lunch and watching television.

When he heard Barr say, "To date, we have not seen fraud on a scale that could have effected a different outcome in the election," the President got so enraged that he threw his lunch against the wall. Despite his staff's best efforts to clean it, three weeks on, said wall still showed discolouration left behind by the splattered ketchup and would need repainting.

Cipollone tried rephrasing his words to avoid a repeat rage moment.

"Based on all the crazy shit Sidney has put forward tonight, she would be Bill's absolute last choice for a special counsel position. Might even deem her an unacceptable security risk."

"Then get me a new Attorney General!" Trump demanded. "That gutless pig, Bill, will be gone in four days from now! The wimp's already given me his resignation, and I've accepted it!"

This was an understatement.

In fact, when Barr personally delivered his resignation, President Trump had slammed his fist on the table because he had just

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been robbed the opportunity to fire him via a publicly humiliating tweet.

"Mr President," Cipollone continued, "any judge worth his salt would block her application for security clearance. I fully agree with Eric, Derek, and Robert that it is a very bad idea to appoint her Special Counsel. Frankly, I don't think she should be appointed to anything."

"You guys are a bunch of pussies," General Flynn snarled at Cipollone and his associates, his eyes blazing with hate.

The President nodded his head solemnly.

General Flynn and Sidney Powell, together with Rudy Giuliani, had been the most ardent among his loyalists. Though their efforts had been largely fruitless, they were the ones who had pushed the hardest in their efforts to reverse Trump's election loss.

President Trump looked at Powell, his eyes rolling.

"You see what I deal with?" he said, jerking his thumb in the direction of the four White House aides. "*This* is what I deal with all the time!"

Trump then turned to Chief of Staff Meadows.

"Mark," he said, "make Powell a special counsel. That's an order."

Herschmann and Cipollone looked at Meadows almost pleadingly.

When alone with the President, Meadows was a complete doormat. But, in the presence of his advisory peers, he knew he had to be professional or at least give the appearance of being professional. He knew what the President was asking was criminal.

Still, Meadows's fierce loyalty to the President and his commitment to keeping him in power, coupled with his own fear of being yelled at by the President, clouded his ability to uphold the Constitution.

Meadows said, half-reassuringly, "I can get her a position, but it doesn't work like that. You can't wave a magic wand and say, 'There, she's Special Counsel.' Pat is correct when he says there are

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procedures that must be taken to getting her appointed. There's a lot of paperwork that must be prepared. And, as Pat said, it has to go through the Attorney General's office. It's not something that you can get done overnight."

General Flynn chastised Meadows's obvious attempt to appease both camps. "Don't you be a pussy too!"

"Damn it!" Trump shouted back. "I want to get these machines! I have the presidential right to do so under the *National Emergencies Act*."

"This isn't the Great Depression! There is no national emergency to act upon," Herschmann protested.

"Yes, there is!" Byrne interrupted.

"You shut up!" Cipollone said, his patience wearing thin. "Mr President, even if you got Sidney Powell a counsel position, there is nothing she can do to secure you the election. The Electoral College has already been called in favour of Biden. The time has come to bow out gracefully and concede defeat."

Trump ignored him.

"If this were a free and fair election," Trump growled, "I'd have no hesitations in bowing out gracefully!"

The liar! all aides present thought.

Trump raged on. "Do you have any idea, any fucking idea at all, how easy it'd be for me come January 20 to just climb aboard Marine One and fly home!? There's a whole life of luxury waiting for me. I got mansions. I got high rise condos. I got golf courses. I got luxury casinos all over the fifty states. I got all the money in the world. And I probably got a million bitches all waiting and lining up to suck my dick when I get back! The world is literally my oyster! But the election was rigged and stolen, so I'm gonna fight it to the end!"

He turned back to Meadows. "Mark, you get Sidney the forms to get her on board! I'm getting Rudy on the phone!"

"That's a *great* idea," Herschmann said sarcastically. "Sidney, why don't you tell Rudy what an idiot he's been making of himself

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in front of the world? Spinning his wheels in corrupt courts with judges *we* appointed, spouting fantasies about illegal ballots and counting irregularities, when all this time Chávez has come back from the dead and ordered the communists to steal the election from us with Nest thermostats!"

While Herschmann and Cipollone were distracted arguing with Powell and Flynn, the President discreetly put the phone off speaker and pretended to dial for Rudy Giuliani. After a few moments, enough to conceivably account for the time it would have taken a phone to ring and be answered, Trump unmuted the other end of the line.

"Rudy, you there?"

The sounds of Powell's team squabbling loudly with Herschmann's team indicated to all co-conspirators on the other end of the line that it was still not safe to talk about Operation Trojan Horse. All but Giuliani kept their voices down.

"Hello, Mr President, I'm ... err ..." Giuliani trailed off as he thought up an alibi quickly. "I'm just having dinner with some friends at that Italian place over in Georgetown," he lied.

"Well, you're gonna have to skip dessert. You gotta get your ass over to the White House now. I'm making Sidney Special Counsel to the President. Need you over here right away to oversee the paperwork and give us your professional assessment and stuff."

"I'm on my way," Giuliani said. "I should be over in fifteen minutes."

Again, Trump muted the conference call.

General Flynn, recognising the President's impatience and, still reluctant to commit himself to Operation Trojan Horse, took it upon himself to offer an alternative. One even more unconventional and radical than Powell's proposal yet, in his authoritarian mind, the definitive answer to the problem.

"Mr President, sir," he began, "I see no reason for you to wait for all the paperwork hurdles to be finalised just so you can appoint Sidney to be your Special Counsel. Given the crisis this nation is facing, I think a military solution would be more decisive."

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"A military solution," Herschmann muttered with sarcasm. "Can't wait to hear this!"

"As President," General Flynn continued, "you could declare a national emergency and place the entire country under a state of martial law. This would allow you to order the Secretary of Defense not only to deploy the National Guard but also to get the Army, Air Force, Navy – all branches of the military – involved and place the fifty states under armed lockdown. They'd not only seize the voting machines but also oversee the running of a *new* election in Arizona, Georgia, and all the other swing states where the election was stolen. The military will *ensure* that a repeat of what happened last November *will not reoccur*."

"Let me translate that," Herschmann interjected cynically, seeing right through what Flynn was proposing. "This disgraced ex-general wants you to turn this great nation into a Naziesque totalitarian state just so you can send in the military to steal the voting machines and have them conduct a rigged election in our favour."

"You make that sound like it's a bad thing," Trump said, stupidly.

Cipollone stated, "Mr President, you don't have the authority to do what General Flynn has just proposed."

Byrne interjected again.

He pointed at Cipollone and shouted like a crazed lunatic, "This guy is lying through his teeth! He and the rest of his cronies all want you to lose!"

Cipollone took a step towards Byrne, upon which Byrne's pointing hand drew back and coiled into a fist.

"Come one step closer, and I'll bury my knuckles in your throat."

Cipollone scoffed. "Go ahead, you'll be doing us a favour! The penalty for striking a government official is a minimum of two years in jail."

Seeing the General's proposal threatening her new self-asserted position, Powell felt the need to bring the topic back to Executive Order 13848.

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She said, "What should be signed now is that Executive Order. As Special Counsel, my first order of recommendation is to seize Dominion and Smartmatic machines and conduct a forensic analysis on the software within. The fact is the Venezuelans and the Chinese are using these machines as a back door into our computer systems, including those of the Pentagon. It is imperative that we seize the Dominion machines ASAP."

"And how exactly are you going to do this?" Herschmann asked.

"There are guys with big guns and badges who can get these things done."

"What are you, three years old!?"

"All of you, shut up!" the President shouted, standing in his chair. "We can settle this later when Rudy gets here. Now, all of you, get out of my office. We'll reconvene in the Yellow Oval upstairs when he arrives. And Sidney: for this to work, it is critical that you work well with Rudy."

Those words cut Sidney Powell like a knife. She saw the President's final say on the matter for what it was: a dig at the notorious internal fighting that had plagued her and Giuliani's respective legal battles. Despite the President's tweets praising Giuliani and Powell's supposed 'truly great' and 'wonderful' teamwork, behind the scenes, nothing could be further from the truth.

Cipollone, Herschmann, Lyons, and O'Brien all kept an eye on Powell's group as they left the Oval Office. They were understandably concerned about these outsiders being left alone in the White House unsupervised. The discussions had been so heated that, by this point, Herschmann's group had begun referring to themselves as 'Team Normal' and Powell's group as 'Team Crazy'.

When the last of the two teams had stepped out and the doors had closed behind them, the President returned to his conference call and unmuted.

"What's the story with Rudy?" Trump asked.

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It was his eldest son who replied. “He left about five minutes ago,” said Donald Trump Jnr. “He’s probably another ten minutes or so away.”

“Good,” Donald Trump Snr acknowledged. “All of you stay on the line. We’ll discuss Operation Trojan Horse later when we’ve dealt with Herschmann and the others.”

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4

BE THERE, WILL BE WILD!

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Rudy Giuliani sat in the backseat of his limousine as it thundered through the streets of Washington DC. Although the so-called Command Center was just a few blocks away from the White House, merely a four-minute drive, Giuliani had to instruct his driver to go round in circles for a few minutes so that his cover story of having dinner in Georgetown would hold. Had he actually been at that Italian restaurant in Georgetown, it would have been a ten-minute ride in the car.

In any case, he was not looking forward to the meeting at the White House.

He knew that Executive Order 13848 would inevitably follow the success of Operation Trojan Horse. But he was miffed by, if not envious of, Sidney Powell's attempts to assert herself as a special counsel to the President. Giuliani felt *he* was more entitled to that position.

On top of this, he hated working with Powell in general.

Both of them had lied repeatedly in courts and on national television for President Trump, but together they were not a well-oiled machine. As his limousine passed the Abraham Lincoln Memorial on its precautionary detour, Giuliani was reminded of something the 16th President had once said: "No man has a good enough memory to be a successful liar."

Such a philosophy was worsened by his having to work with Powell. Never could they keep their stories straight or even consistent between each other. While Giuliani would chase windmills pushing lies about alleged vote counting irregularities caught on security camera, Powell seemed to chase 'krakens' as she called them.

She would pull whatever nonsense she could out of the air – often without first cross-examining her notes with Giuliani before going public with such nonsensical allegations – like the ridiculous one about Hugo Chávez, who died in 2013, being responsible for rigging the election.

The first time Giuliani ever heard of that preposterous assertion was mere moments after he handed the mic over to Powell at their press conference a month ago. All he knew prior to the conference was that she intended to indict Venezuela. But, when Powell brought up the late Venezuelan president's name, Giuliani thought he was going to die of embarrassment.

In the same breath, she accused Germany, Cuba, China, and other countries too. Giuliani didn't know what was worse: that Powell had been stupid enough to blame Trump's loss on a dead man or that he now had to play along with her on live national television pushing this lie.

The press conference had gone so disastrously wrong that, less than a week after it aired, Giuliani publicly denied Powell was even part of the Trump legal team. This dysfunction between the two was not a bug but a feature.

Powell would outright refuse to brief or share such pieces of 'evidence' with Giuliani's team, fearing he would 'leak them'. She considered his press conferences 'leaks'! Often, Powell's actions were the cause of Giuliani's own detriment. Without any basis for her claims, Giuliani and his aides would find themselves scrambling to find something to fabricate as supporting evidence to present to the world – *when* they knew what it was that she was claiming. And then her gross exaggerations and falsehoods would

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turn out to be just that, and Giuliani's team would be left with egg on their faces.

Or, in Giuliani's case, melted hair dye.

But, ever the brown-nosed sycophant, he was not one to let his President down. Giuliani remained committed to helping Trump's attempts to steal the 2020 election and to ensuring the success of Operation Trojan Horse, even though he loathed Sidney Powell.

When the limousine finally arrived at the White House, he was let out by the Secret Service and escorted down the hall through the large arched door to the Cabinet Room. Giuliani felt privileged to be in the room where many administrations had gathered before to discuss matters of national security.

Spread out atop the long mahogany conference table were twelve affidavits in brown leather folders, copies of Sidney Powell's lawsuits and proposals, and various other pieces of paperwork concerning appointing members of the cabinet.

The Secret Service agent said, "The President wants you to evaluate all these, then give him your assessment upstairs in the Yellow Oval."

Giuliani nodded, acknowledging these instructions, then watched as the agent left the room and closed the door behind him. Giuliani pulled up a seat, sat himself down at the table, and started reading through the papers. He noticed there was also a copy of Executive Order 13848. This he had already read about a hundred or so times before and was intimately familiar with. Nonetheless, Giuliani found himself cross-referencing Powell's proposition with the criteria and guidelines that the Executive Order propounded.

As much as he hated Powell, overall, he agreed with the goal she was trying to advocate.

But whether or not a call for such action would be considered necessary all depended on the validity of her evidence of foreign interference. Giuliani took out a pen and notepad and began reading through each of the twelve affidavits.

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All of them only consisted of a few pages at best, and all but one had the same thing in common. These affidavits were mostly *not* firsthand accounts. They were all written second-hand, each one referring or alluding to the same alleged anonymous primary source from Smartmatic. After nearly twenty minutes, Giuliani finally came to the primary-source affidavit. But it didn't give him much more to go on other than what was already said in the previous second-hand affidavits.

Finally, Giuliani rested his temples on his thumbs and started rubbing at his forehead with his fingertips. He could feel the cringe coming.

As usual, Sidney Powell had talked the talk but hadn't walked the walk, and Giuliani knew he would end up getting screwed by it. Giuliani knew that what he was going to read would be bogus. *All* the lawsuits Giuliani and Powell had presented on the President's behalf were bogus. But, if even Giuliani himself could see through the bogusness of these affidavits and lawsuits, what good would they be in convincing the Federal and Supreme Court judges that they justified military intervention and Executive Order 13848?

Giuliani looked at the clock hanging on the wall. Some forty minutes had passed since he had arrived.

Hurriedly, he finished writing his shorthand notes, got up from the table, and stepped back out through the arched door and into the hallway where the Secret Service agent was waiting for him. At once, the agent led Giuliani through a series of halls and corridors and up stairs to the Yellow Oval, the residential drawing room.

It was one of the most, if not the most, ornately decorated rooms in the White House. The only light came from an elaborate crystal chandelier hanging from the very centre of the oval-shaped ceiling and a roaring fireplace, both of which cast an ominous glare against the curved yellow walls.

The President was standing by the fireplace.

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He seemed to be resting the weight of his body by pressing his right hand against the white marble mantlepiece, the kind of slouching forward position that a weary person assumes after a long and stressful day at work. His left hand clutched a can of Diet Coke. President Trump had his back to the rest of the room, but he could see Giuliani enter in the large wall mirror hanging above the mantlepiece.

Sidney Powell's and Eric Herschmann's respective teams were also present. A small group of three stood by the windows locked in what appeared to be heated conversation. The rest sat on one of two luxury sofas and sipped from glasses of wine or brandy, the latter of which came from a crystal decanter on the coffee table.

Giuliani also saw the White House caterers had already provided Team Crazy and Team Normal with a spread of refreshments on the coffee table. These refreshments seemed a stark contrast to the distinctly formal décor of the Yellow Oval and selections of fine wines. They comprised mostly Swedish meatballs, cocktail hotdogs, and other unsophisticatedly casual finger foods more fit for a redneck's backyard barbeque party.

Patrick Byrne ate most of it. He was still stuffing his big moon face with meatballs when Giuliani walked through the door. Byrne had been eager to meet the former mayor of New York City, hoping Giuliani could find him an official place on the Trump legal team. But, from the moment Giuliani walked in, the animosity between him and Powell was on full display.

"So," Trump said, still gazing in the mirror without turning around, "what's your take? Am I in the clear to make Sidney my Special Counsel and seize those voting machines?"

Giuliani fumbled with the knot on his necktie and braced himself to be yelled at. "If she wants your legal suits to pass scrutiny, I suggest she starts keeping me in the loop. No more surprises like this nonsense I just wasted forty-five minutes of my life reading through."

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"You never get back to me when I do!" Powell snapped back. "For once in your life, why not read your damn texts?"

Giuliani rolled his eyes.

"I do," he said. "Half the time, you keep me in the dark, and the other half, all you ever send me is gibberish and partial information."

"Enough!" Trump bellowed, crushing the half-empty Diet Coke can in his hand and causing its dark contents to squirt upward through the tab. "So, what's the problem this time!?"

"Well, Mr President," Giuliani began, bracing himself, "I've read through all twelve of these affidavits, and I've concluded that Sidney doesn't really have twelve sources for her charges against Venezuela. These affidavits all read as secondary sources, not primary sources. In fact, she only has one primary source, and I think she managed to find a way of repeating it twelve different times through other people.

"I've gone through this shit with Sidney before. She always tells me she's found the next Deep Throat and then provides the scantest evidence to support her alleged witnesses' claims. From these affidavits, I can't possibly see how you could warrant using the military. There is no legal basis for any of this. You couldn't possibly sign this Executive Order, not on the grounds Sidney is citing."

"That's exactly what we've been telling him!" Herschmann said.

The members of Team Normal were surprised that Giuliani agreed with them, but, inside, Giuliani was trembling at the earful he knew he'd receive from the President. He neglected to mention he also suspected the anonymous primary source from Smartmatic did not even exist.

"Mr President," Giuliani continued, "If you were to try and appoint Sidney as Special Counsel and send in the National Guard based on these suits, this would be the only thing that I know of that you ever did that could possibly merit impeachment."

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Without warning, President Trump turned around and threw the crumpled can at Giuliani. The lawyer dodged it just in time.

Then, the President yelled, "God damn this shit! Can none of you give me a fucking break and do something for me!? Is this the best you can do!? Are you guys all just a bunch of pussies like Mike says!?"

He clutched at tufts of his blond, combed-over hair and began yelling and hollering illegibly for several minutes. Then he stormed over to the desk and, with his back turned to everybody in the room, rested both hands atop it with his shoulders hunched up. He seemed to be looking down at the desktop and muttering something to himself.

After a few moments, he spoke up. "Eric, Pat, Derek, Robert: please step out of the Yellow Oval room and wait downstairs. I need a word alone with Rudy, Sidney, and Mike."

Team Normal hesitated.

After a moment, Trump persisted. "That's an order. Get out of here now."

There was another moment of hesitation, then Herschmann said, "Mr President, I think it is *these* disreputable outsiders who you should be asking to get out of here now."

"I will in a fucking minute. I just need to have a word with them first. *Alone*."

Another hesitation went by, then Cipollone said, "We can give you ten minutes. After that, they gotta leave."

And then, with reluctance, Team Normal did as they were told. They knew the President was entitled to a moment of lawyer–client confidentiality, but the looks of concern on their faces were evident.

Team Crazy watched them go while Trump remained hunched over the desk listening to the sounds of the footsteps heading out the door. They waited until the others were gone, the doors closed behind them.

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When it was clear they were alone, President Trump reached for the intercom phone and toggled his conference call off mute. The co-conspirators calling in from the War Room and Command Center had heard everything. They all confirmed they were still on the line, but none were brave enough to speak up about what they had just heard.

It was the President who broke the silence. "Why'd you tell them that, Rudy?"

"What else was I supposed to say?" Giuliani said defensively. "Had Sidney given me this stuff to look at weeks ago, maybe I could have done something to make it stand up better in court. Instead, she waves it 'round, warts and all, and makes us all look like bloody fools again. Hacking into voting machines with thermostats? Hugo Chávez? Seriously?! This entire suit Sidney presented is just another unsubstantiated steaming pile of crap! If *I* can see that, do you really think it'd last two seconds before the judges?"

Trump sighed, a long, drawn-out sigh that quickly turned into an animalistic growl. Then, at last, he spun around to face Giuliani and the others, livid. "Don't get me started on the judges! Those bastards I appointed to the Supreme Courts couldn't even uphold Ken's *Texas v. Pennsylvania* suit! They're just as bad as my staff! We can't trust Cipollone, Herschmann, and the rest of those traitorous clowns. They are hindering our every movement. Even more than that traitor Mike Pence!"

"If I were you," Powell said, in a bid to excuse her failures, "I'd have them all fired and escorted out of the building immediately."

President Trump sarcastically dismissed her suggestion.

"Fire them? Pah!" he yelled and began pacing through the room. "Like that'll stop them from talking to the Fake News! If I'm gonna fire them, we should fire them *permanently*!"

The emphasis carried a great deal of weight.

General Flynn asked, "You want the CIA to deal with them instead?"

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Trump snorted. His reply came as an almost Hitleresque roar. "The CIA are a bunch of spineless wimps! Refusing to investigate Dominion. You heard what that traitorous bitch who I appointed as CIA Director told the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff? 'We are heading for a right-wing coup.' The CIA are probably onto us!

"What a schmuck I was to appoint Haspel! Putin and Kim Jong Un would never have put up with such treachery! I want them dead! All of them. I want the traitorous wimps dead. I want Fake News reporters dead. Anybody who is not a team player – I want them all dead.

"Anybody who does not believe that the election was stolen, I want them dead too. The Radical Left, the weak Republicans, *I WANT THEM ALL DEAD! D-E-D. DEAD!* I am the greatest and most powerful leader the world has ever known, and the world deserves me and only me as her rightful leader! Those who oppose me *MUST DIE!*"

By now, several of Trump's own team players had backed away in fear. A wise move. In a fit of utter rage, the President grabbed the brandy decanter off the coffee table and threw it across the Yellow Oval. It shattered against the wall, splattering its alcoholic contents.

Everybody who had backed away all thought the same thing: *At least it wasn't his lunch this time!*

That relief only lasted a fraction of a second.

The President drew back his foot and kicked the coffee table with every ounce of force he could muster. The table lifted diagonally off the floor and crashed over onto its side, spilling its spread of meatballs, hotdogs and drinks all over the floor. Some pieces of food splattered against one of the two expensive luxury couches.

General Flynn was the only one still unintimidated.

"Well, we both know I have contacts who could fix the leaks," Flynn replied, the subtleness of his words now pointless. "The

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same contacts who can assure the running of the Trojan Horse. Matter of fact, they are already on the job fixing any and all leaks. You want Herschmann and the other quitters added to the list?"

This was in reference to something that had been discussed only two days ago during a luncheon at The War Room. The events were still fresh in the minds of Team Crazy.



General Flynn was present at that War Room luncheon on December 16th along with Sidney Powell and many other co-conspirators. Among other things, together they helped the president draft his speech initiating Executive Order 13848 to seize voting machines.

At the time, Operation Trojan Horse was but one of many proposals under discussion. Everybody was throwing out ideas to try and overturn the election. Constantly, they had been marred by failures and setbacks in the courts. Such failures and setbacks had occurred in full view of the public, and it was becoming increasingly difficult for damage control to spin.

It had also only been two days since the official Electoral College votes had been submitted, awaiting certification in the Joint Session scheduled for January 6th, 2021, and their Fake Electors scheme had been exposed. Already, it had pushed the President off the deep end.

Still angered by Bill Barr's interview 'betraying' the administration earlier that month, President Trump had bellowed to the co-conspirators gathered around the table, "I want a full list of everybody who has opposed our charges against the 2020 election results. And I want it in ten minutes or less! That's not all. If there are any hero wannabes out there who think they can be wise guys and interfere with Operation Trojan Horse or my executive orders, I want them dead too! Do we know of any potential threats to our last resort?"

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General Flynn had paused to rack his brains to unravel the rogues' gallery of all potential enemies of the state. As did the others present in the War Room.

The President was growing increasingly paranoid. But, then again, he had every reason to be paranoid. The White House had become the house of cards that was now crumbling all around him. There had been four assassination attempts since he first declared his candidacy for President: one shooting attempt at an election rally in 2016; one attempt to ram his motorcade with a forklift the following year; and two incidents of being sent letters in ricin-laced envelopes, one of which had been only three months prior to the luncheon!

But all the recent would-be assassins were behind bars. Surely there were other potential assassins and saboteurs at large. But who?

So many names to remember. So many potential enemies of the Trump administration to target for assassination. Who was there who might be considered an endangerment to the success of Operation Trojan Horse? What was the name of that fugitive? That mercenary who—

General Flynn finally spoke up.

"There is a man called Tanner. They call him Sid Tanner."

"Sid Tanner?" The President looked at Flynn with a raised eyebrow. "That name rings a bell. I know I've heard that name before. Who the hell is he? How much does he know about the election, and what is he capable of doing to stop us?"

Flynn continued, "He was an Australian Air Force pilot who flew ASIS reconnaissance flights and resupply missions during the East Timor crisis. Later, he served as an exchange officer to the US Navy and Air Force Space Command during the early years in the War on Terror."

"The US *Air Force Space Command?"* Trump seethed through gritted teeth.

"Err ... excuse me, the US Space Force ..."

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General Flynn had forgotten that the President venomously hated having his thunder stolen – which, in this case, was being reminded that his 'creation' of the US Space Force was nothing more than a glorified rebranding of the USAF Space Command that predated the Trump presidency by many decades.

"... without wasting time on a history lesson, Sergeant Tanner has been a nuisance for us and the two previous administrations on multiple occasions. He broke ranks with the Coalition of the Willing during a mission in 2003 and spent ten years of his life sentence in Abu Ghraib before that prison break in 2013. Somehow, he managed to find his way to the United States and has been the cause of troubles for years since. You may remember the murder of Colonel Phil J. Roberts at the Rice Hotel in Houston."

"That astronaut who went to Mars and Venus?" one of the co-conspirators asked.

Flynn nodded. "That's the one. Sid Tanner is the prime murder suspect. Then there was that massacre at the Kentucky estate of General Tony Roads of the US Air F— err ... US *Space Force*. One of our greatest and most decorated officers. He was Director of Secret Operations and a staunch supporter of US space militarisation. The General was murdered in cold blood, along with a hundred or so of his personal bodyguards on loan from the US Army reserves. Again, the prime suspect was Sid Tanner."

"I don't remember seeing him on *America's Most Wanted,*" President Trump said.

General Flynn cringed on the inside, remembering the President got his information primarily from Fox, rather than intelligence briefs.

He clarified. "Officially, he's dead. Due to the classified nature of his compromised mission, the Bush administration and Howard government in Australia figured it would save them a lot of embarrassment by pretending he died long before said missions. He was never publicly identified for the killings. But the

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press initially dubbed him 'The Tuxedoed Desperado', because the murder of Roberts took place after a white-tie screening of digitally remastered footage of the Venus–Mars–Moon triple flyby, and security cameras showed a suspect matching Tanner's appearance fleeing in a tuxedo detailed with gemstones. Later, he became known as 'The Titanium Desperado', as security footage from the General's estate showed him wearing a full-body suit of armour."

At last, recognition showed on President Trump's face.

General Flynn continued, "Since the murders, Sid Tanner has been behind frequent attacks on the CIA's many fronts for ongoing MK-Ultra experiments, not to mention various black operations orchestrated by us and the previous administration. These were all operations that the CIA and the Pentagon would prefer were not discovered by the public and have worked hard to suppress. But, every time, this Tanner has repeatedly sabotaged our efforts. Most recently, you might remember your approval of the old Operation Dirty Trick some months ago."

This was a Cold War-era false flag proposal that had been rejected by President Kennedy. It suggested blaming a potential failure of John Glenn's spaceflight aboard Friendship 7 on Cuba as justification for an invasion. President Trump had secretly reapproved it for the first manned SpaceX launch in May 2020 with the repurposed goal of blaming the catastrophe on Iran and Venezuela.

"Some of my *contacts* had the means to ensure the success of Operation Dirty Trick. But, once again, it was Sid Tanner who thwarted it and killed some of my best associates. If there is even the slightest chance that he has any inkling about Operation Trojan Horse, the entire operation could be compromised."

Trump nodded and, without a moment's pause, ordered, "Kill him. Now, who else should we have assassinated?"

For the remainder of that luncheon, the co-conspirators had compiled a lengthy list of the President's perceived enemies. They

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had been written down on both sides of several sheets of paper. Some of these papers the co-conspirators had brought with them in their briefcases; other names of targets were scribbled down on the backs of napkins at the table.

Later that night, the lists were sent via fax from the War Room to the Command Centre, each list requiring six or seven pages to print.

General Flynn produced his phone and took photos of the lists they had prepared before leaving the meeting, and President Trump returned to the White House that night with the originals and the finished draft of his Executive Order speech in his jacket. Later, he concealed them in his drawer.



When General Flynn suggested adding Team Normal to the hit list they had prepared two days prior, President Trump felt no hesitation. He asked, "How soon can they be taken care of?"

Flynn replied, "We can give Herschmann, Cipollone, Lyons, and O'Brien a Criticality 2 priority."

"Why not Criticality 1!?"

"Mr Morgan informed your son and me this morning that his fixer is currently in position to deal with their Criticality 1 target. It is one thing for a few pen-pushers to object to an executive order. A rogue-agent-turned-vigilante thwarting our black ops projects is a whole different ball game. Mr Morgan's team can deal with Herschmann and the rest of those quitters after they've neutralised their Criticality 1 target – Sid Tanner."

President Trump didn't acknowledge General Flynn. Instead, he walked to the overturned table and picked up a nearly full bottle of Koskenkorva vodka from the crashed pile of refreshments. For several moments, he gazed into the clear liquid, his eyes distant, as though in a trance. Then, his hand clutched the bottle tightly to the point that cracks started to appear in the glass.

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The President said, “Then this Tanner should be dealt with swiftly and painfully, along with Herschmann, Cipollone, and all the other traitors who oppose me.”

He violently threw the vodka bottle into the fireplace. The bottle shattered against the inner wall, and its highly potent alcoholic contents erupted in a massive ball of fire so large and powerful that the heat could be felt all the way to the far end of the Yellow Oval.



After the ten minutes of lawyer–client confidentiality had expired, Eric Herschmann’s group returned to the Yellow Oval. By then, the unhinged meeting had lasted for over six hours, and it was now the early hours of December 19th, 2020.

The first thing Team Normal saw upon their return was the overturned table and mess of refreshments all over the floor and couches. Derek Lyons was about to ask, “What the hell happened here?” but he hesitated, realising he already knew. By now, the president’s temper tantrums were legendary around the White House.

No one said a word about the mess.

“It’s time for these people to go,” Cipollone said.

Trump pretended he didn’t care. “Throw them out! And I don’t want them back here again.”

Each member of Herschmann’s group led one respective member of Powell’s group out of the Yellow Oval, while Chief of Staff Meadows escorted Giuliani out.

As soon as they were gone, President Trump took out his iPhone and opened the Twitter app. Operation Trojan Horse would soon commence, and it was time to send out invitations for the main event. Of course, the President used the opportunity to yet again spout his Big Lie that the election had been stolen from him.

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Peter Navarro releases 36-page report alleging election fraud 'more than sufficient' to swing victory to Trump, he tweeted in the first person. A great report by Peter. Statistically impossible to have lost the 2020 Election.

As usual, Twitter was quick to slap Trump's post with a fact check, complete with a link to an online rebuttal debunking the report he cited: This claim about election fraud has been disputed.

Trump's December 19th, 2020, post was only the latest in a long line of digital propaganda that the moderators at Twitter had to clean up. But this latest tweet took his obsession to a whole new level.

It concluded with: Big protest in D.C. on January 6th. Be there, will be wild!

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5

THE WORST PILE OF CRAP ARCHITECTURE

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Sid Tanner did not know the significance that January 6th, 2021, would soon have in his life, but he had seen the President's soon-to-be-infamous tweet floating around in the newspapers and on television that day in December. It was difficult to miss.

Almost twenty years ago, when he first came to the United States, having a mobile phone and internet access were luxuries. Now, practically everybody and their child could not be separated from their phones – their primary access to the internet.

At the café, as Tanner partook of his usual steak and scrambled egg breakfast burrito with a large orange juice and flat white, he could not help but glance across to the other tables and see fellow patrons too preoccupied with their phones or iPads to eat their breakfasts. While their food got cold, they sat and read the President's tweet or read Twitter's rebuttal below it or they watched online newscasts debunking the report by Peter Navarro mentioned therein.

Later, while walking down the street on his way to the local florist, Tanner saw random pedestrians also reading the tweet or sharing it with their friends online. Even when he got to the

florist, customers seemed more fixated on their phones than the flowers for sale. Again, the hot topic was the President's tweet, his latest dubious claim about a stolen election, and his announcement of a protest on January 6th.

After about ten minutes of browsing the florist, Tanner found some lilies he liked and walked up to the counter to make his purchase. Hardly had he placed his money on the counter when he noticed a little television set by the cash register. It was broadcasting a news report about the tweet.

It was everywhere! Tanner had seen it on the train. He had seen it on the bus. Earlier, it had even been shown on the oversized television screens in Times Square Plaza.

Tanner didn't pay much attention, aside from the obvious eye roll.

He had heard it all before. Same old stupid.

But ignoring it didn't make it go away. As he averted his gaze from the Times Square television screens, Tanner found himself encountering New York's resident jester. His real name was Robert Burck, but most New York residents knew him by his stage name: the Naked Cowboy.

True to this name, he stood in the middle of Times Square wearing only a white cowboy hat, cowboy boots, and shorts, his fit body on full display. He held his guitar, plastered with 'NAKED COWBOY' stickers, in front of his shorts to make him look strategically covered.

As a voter for the President, he sang,

Donald Trump tried to build a wall,
That wall would've protected us all.
Sounds like a good idea to me.
Donald Trump says come on down to DC.
'Wild' he says January 6 will be.
Sounds like a good idea to me.

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Many gawkers and tourists had already stopped to watch the Naked Cowboy sing. Sid Tanner didn't acknowledge him in the slightest, despite the street performer's attempts to get the attention of him and anybody else passing by. The Naked Cowboy admittedly had a good country singing voice, but Tanner couldn't dance to his song's message, nor did he have any idea how much foreshadowing the song's latter verse contained for events soon to be.

Strolling past a block of flats deeper in the city, Tanner saw a group of thugs sitting on the stoop. He noted their shirts and jackets. Each bore symbols and phrases of far-right extremist groups: the Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, Three Percenters.

It was unusual, even out of character, to see these groups of fascists together. They were essentially rival street gangs. But, as he walked by, Tanner overhead the thugs chatting amongst themselves. A common goal had brought them together briefly in unity.

"Trump says there's gonna be a wild protest."

"You reckon it's the coming of the second revolution?"

"Of course it is, dumbass! He wants us to make it wild!"

"Yeah, he wants us to take the country back by force!"

"You remember what he told us during the presidential debate: 'Proud Boys, stand back and stand by!'"

Further down the street, New York residents were coming out of their apartments and packing their cars in preparation for the protest. Disturbingly, it was not just *Stop the Steal* and *Keep America Great* picket signs these people were bringing. He saw them loading their backseats and trunks with baseball bats, hockey sticks, crowbars, nightsticks, lead pipes, and other melee weapons. Some even packed electric cattle prods. He also saw tactical and hunting knives, machetes, and other bladed weapons.

One group of thugs gathered in a sedan plastered with Trump propaganda as well as American and Confederate flags. Together they chanted, "Stop the steal! Stop the steal!" Tanner passed by in time to see one of the thugs close the trunk over what he recognised as a collection of AR-15 assault rifles.

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Passing the local hardware shop, Tanner saw a medium-sized group of men in Trump 2020 shirts exiting the premises carrying newly purchased pitchforks. They raised their pitchforks in the air in solidarity, as though they were medieval peasants on their way to a witch burning.

Not my problem, Tanner kept assuring himself, doubtful they'd get very far past the DC police brandishing those weapons.

By evening, yet another Trump scandal was making the news. Carrying his bouquet of lilies, Tanner passed by an electronics store, its windows filled with television sets on display for the Christmas sale. Each set was tuned to CNN. The news ticker read in huge capital letters, *BREAKING NEWS: HEATED OVAL OFFICE MEETING INCLUDED TALK OF MARTIAL LAW TO OVERTURN ELECTION.*

Sitting in the CNN anchor room against a live backdrop of the US Capitol at night, Wolf Blitzer was mid speech. "... we are learning some stunning new details of talks in the White House that turned into screaming matches. One unbelievable subject discussed during a meeting in the Oval Office on Friday with President Trump in attendance was using martial law – believe this or not – martial law to help try to overturn the democratically held presidential election in the United States. Those in the room included the former national security adviser, Michael Flynn, who the president recently pardoned, and it was Flynn who first raised the idea of martial law ..."

Tanner continued his trudge through the snow and walked straight by the store windows. He ignored the newsfeed, oblivious to the fact that his impending assassination had been brought up at the meeting that had just received coverage.

The only news that had marginally piqued Tanner's interest that day concerned what was happening on the International Space Station. Earlier the previous day, astronaut Michael Hopkins had been officially transferred from NASA to the US Space Force. The astronaut had taken the oath of service to the 'new'

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branch of the military during a televised ceremony aboard the Space Station conducted via video conference.

Tanner didn't bother to watch the live coverage of the event, instead only seeing articles about it after the fact in newspapers adorning the stands or, again, seeing random pedestrians reading about it on their phones. But, because Hopkins was in orbit around the Earth during his transfer ceremony and even though he was technically flying for NASA, the media heralded Hopkins as the *first* US Space Force astronaut to fly in space.

Tanner knew this was far from true. Hopkins was not the first US Space Force astronaut to get to space, just the first the public *knew* about. There were many other such astronauts that the public *still* didn't know about.

Twenty years ago, such a publicised ceremony would have been unheard of. The public knowing of any military space expeditions was considered a threat to international security, and anybody who dared to leak such classified information would be silenced promptly.

But that was all in the past. Old history to Tanner. It was now late at night, and what concerned Tanner was more meaningful to him than what the public did and did not know about the US Space Force or whatever crazy shenanigans the President was raging about on Twitter that day.

As Tanner stood by the abdomen-high bronze parapet, he held the bouquet of white lilies he had purchased close to his chest and gazed out across the enormous square abyss into which the man-made waterfalls descended. With his free hand, he caressed three of the nearly three thousand names that had been carved into the wall surrounding the pool.

JACKSON 'JACK' TANNER
SHEILA TANNER
SID TANNER

The name Sid Tanner was obviously included for dubious reasons. It wasn't added by mistake; it was added as part of a convenient

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cover story. For his former employers at the so-called Coalition of the Willing, it was better to pretend that Sid Tanner had died alongside his parents and deny his years of service than admit to the war crimes and atrocities they had tried to involve him in.

His death was a lie – but at least, in writing only, they were still together as a family.

Tanner placed the bouquet over his name and held back tears as he read his parents' names above it. He took one last look over the edge of the wall. No matter how many times he came here, no matter how many years went by, Tanner never liked the design of the 9/11 Memorial. The pools were not even aesthetically built and instead looked disrespectful, like two big gaping wounds in the ground where the Twin Towers once stood.

He never participated in the annual anniversary ceremonies – too much security. Tanner chose to only show himself on the night of December 19th for one reason: it was his parents' birthday. His father was born and bred a New South Wales country boy, and his mother was a Tasmanian city girl. Separated by the Bass Strait, they were born on the same day. It seemed tragically poetic they also died on the same day.

Even then, Tanner always kept his face hidden at the memorial. Hidden from potential assassins. The fact that December was America's first month of winter always worked to his advantage. He had an excuse to conceal his identity. Sometimes, he wore a ski mask over his face; other times, it was a scarf.

This year, he'd opted for a black neck gaiter pulled up and over his nose. Together with his woolly, black hooded parka pulled over his head, the only parts of him still visible were his eyes. Throughout the year, his neck gaiters had seen their fair share of use.

A year before, Tanner would have looked like a bandit wearing such masks during any season other than winter. Now, at least half the population of the United States were keeping their faces covered. Only during a global pandemic would walking around in public dressed like a bank robber be socially acceptable.

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Typically, most of the people Tanner saw not wearing masks instead opted to wear baseball caps or shirts or some other item of clothing with the words *MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN* or *KEEP AMERICA GREAT* stitched into them.

Great?

This was their idea of great?!

It was no wonder Trump had lost the election. When COVID-19 first came to the United States, he had actively ignored or contradicted or downplayed the recommendations and warnings from the country's top health experts, dismissing it as "just the flu" and claiming it would be "gone by Easter". Now, they were closer to Christmas, and the virus seemed to be here to stay.

Trump's constant downplaying of the seriousness of the pandemic effectively gave anti-vaccination fear mongers and COVID-19 deniers an unwarranted platform that had culminated in making *not* wearing a mask a political statement.

Still fresh in Sid Tanner's mind were the newscasts of Trump supporters in Minnesota protesting the lockdowns and harassing reporters for wearing masks, shouting, "Take it off! Take it off!"

Then there were all the viral videos that Trump supporters themselves had posted to social media – videos of themselves not wearing a mask in public and, for the most idiotic and selfishly reckless of reasons, taking a stand against grocery store policies of wearing them. And that was only in May, back when the pandemic was still in its infancy.

By Election Night in early November, more than 300,000 Americans had died. Back home in Australia, for all the resentment Tanner had for his former employers, his government had been quicker to act. Thus, by December 2020, the coronavirus had killed just under 1,000 Australians.

There were many other reasons why Trump had lost the election, mainly to do with his cavalier attitude to climate science and his ongoing racial discrimination.

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2020 alone saw record-setting heatwaves and associated wildfires in California that left thirty-three dead. Trump had previously and infamously pulled out of the Paris Agreement and installed global warming deniers as administrators of the EPA and NASA. But, even as California burned, Trump purely blamed "bad forest management". Then, during a televised roundtable discussion with California's environmental experts, he continued to frivolously stick his head in the sand and ignore all evidence presented to him of climate change in action.

"It'll get cooler, you just watch," he told his panel of experts, dismissively.

"I wish science agreed with you," Wade Crowfoot, the California Secretary for Natural Resources, replied.

To which Trump retorted, "I don't think science knows, actually."

Earlier that same year, in response to the murder of George Floyd by Caucasian police officers standing on his neck, the President had gone so far as to tear-gas Black Lives Matter protestors so he could have a campaign photoshoot in front of a church.

He deployed the National Guard to disrupt and attack nationwide peaceful protests against the senseless killing of Black people. Later, he paraded Confederate battle flags at election rallies, which further cemented his publicly perceived image as a racist and white supremacist.

Whereas President Bush had declared war on the Middle East nearly twenty years ago, Trump had effectively declared war on the American people themselves, using his speeches and Twitter

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