

## Best President Ever

When the aliens in a golden ship landed on the White House lawn, the President of the United States was not there.

“We don’t mind waiting,” the message written on the side of their ship said in English and eight other languages. “It’s fine. We’ll work on the report while he finishes this round.”

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Fifteen minutes later, in the White House press briefing room, an official spokesperson for the president said, “Hey, I told you no cameras! Get it out. Right now!”

After the camera was gone, the spokesperson continued, “OK, the true fact is the president is not golfing. He’s there for a round of meetings. But he has been informed of the situation and he will be returning to the White House shortly to deal with it. Clearly he is the only one who can. Because did these aliens land anywhere else? No, they did not. They came here, because they know that any deal that doesn’t include America will eventually bite them in the butt. Shut up, everyone! That’s all. I’m not taking any questions.”

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An hour later, the president looked around the crowded situation room and said, “Where’s Jared?”

“We haven’t been able to locate him, Mr. President,” said the agent in charge.

“OK, then get Steve in here.”

“Sorry, sir, his whereabouts are also unknown at this time.”

“What about Ivanka? Don Junior?”

“They’re secure in a safe remote location, sir. Together with the First Lady, and your son Eric.”

“Well, then what about Mike? And Reince? Where are they?”

“Both currently missing, sir. Efforts are underway to locate them.”

The president looked around the room at the assembled military, cabinet members, intelligence directors, agents, and scientists. They included the best trained and most experienced people available, people trained to gather the facts and explain the options in national emergencies. Each of them ready to give their president the best counsel available in this highly unusual situation.

“It’s up to me,” the president said. “Only I can fix this. Okay, then. Nobody knows more about aliens than I do, maybe in the history of the world. Nobody knows more.”

The gathered officials and experts looked at one another, but no one spoke up.

After a long silence, the president continued, “They must be here to make a deal. A tremendous deal! An amazing deal. I think we’re going to win. Big league! We’re going to win. Because I make the best deals. Believe me.”

“Sir!” One of the generals said. He pointed at the image of the alien ship on one of the screens.

A new message was written on the side of the golden ship.

“We are ready to receive John Barron, the man you know as Wonderful Donald, also Mr. President.”

An opening had also appeared in the side of the alien ship. “Hail to the Chief” rang out from unseen speakers as a pattern of flashing red, white, and blue lights converged on the

opening. Soft golden light shone out from the opening, but nothing could be clearly seen inside the ship.

“Send in a drone,” another general ordered into a device on his wrist.

As they all watched, a drone appeared on the screen. It hovered momentarily just outside the opening, bathed in the golden light.

In the situation room, another screen came alive, showing the video feed from the drone’s camera. A golden haze, that suddenly darkened as a dim shadow slid by inside the ship. Then, nothing but the golden haze again.

The drone moved slowly into the opening, until the golden haze surrounded it.

Suddenly the screen showing the drone’s video feed went dark. “SIGNAL LOST” appeared on it in large white letters.

Everyone looked back at the first screen, where flashing red, white, and blue lights still converged on the opening in the side of the alien ship. Golden light still flowed out of the opening. “Hail to the Chief” still played.

But the message on the ship had changed.

“Nice try,” the message now said, “but we don’t serve machines. Send in the president. Unless he is a coward.”

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Ten minutes later, the world watched as the President of the United States strode boldly into the golden light. The opening immediately disappeared. The red, white, and blue lights disappeared. The side of the ship now looked the same as it had before the opening appeared.

“Hail to the Chief” was replaced by static. Then, every 241 seconds, the static was interrupted by a recording of the president’s spokesman saying “I think the president and a small group of people know exactly what he meant.”

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Inside the ship, the president walked, and walked, and walked some more. But still there was nothing except the golden haze. Very boring.

“Had to come in,” he said to himself. “I’m no coward. I won’t let them make me look bad. I am strong, tough, and brilliant!”

He kept walking. Sometimes it seemed he was not alone, but each time he jogged at a shadow, nothing was there. So he just kept walking. After a while he ignored the shadows.

Finally, the golden haze cleared somewhat, and the president found a chair. Not an ordinary chair. A really nice one. An ornate golden chair, with red and gold fabric.

“Please have a seat, Mr. President,” said a voice from the golden haze.

The president sat. He caught his breath. He waited silently for the alien to speak again.

“The worst thing you can possibly do in a deal is seem desperate to make it. That makes the other guy smell blood, and then you’re dead.” The president put that in his famous book years ago. So he followed his own advice. He sat silently and waited.

And waited.

After several more minutes, nothing had happened.

Finally, he shouted into the haze, “Who are you? Come out here. Let’s talk. There certainly is plenty to talk about!”

“We can talk, Mr. President. But for now, we will stay hidden. As a master showman yourself, I’m sure you can appreciate that we want to wait for just the right moment for the big reveal.”

“I am a master showman, I appreciate it. Because I have the biggest ratings. Always the biggest ratings. Wait, are we on the air?”

“Not yet, Mr. President. We will be soon. It will be your biggest show ever.”

“I get great ratings. The ratings will be huge! Believe me.”

“We do believe you, Mr. President. We’ve upgraded your internet and given everyone on the planet access to it. All of humanity will be watching you, Mr. President. Billions of people. We’ve also connected to a communications gateway near the system you call Alpha Centauri. Trillions of beings across the vast reaches of space will be watching you, sir. No president in human history ever had such an audience.”

“All of them watching me?”

“You are the grand finale, as some people say. The headliner. The main event.”

“Bigger than Obama ever had?”

“Very much so, Mr. President. Mr. Obama could never do what you have done.”

The President of the United States smiled.

“Do you have any more questions before we begin, Mr. President?”

“No. I am ready. Let’s do this!”

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All across Earth, people watched screens. Computer screens, mobile phone screens, television screens, theater screens, screens on the sides of skyscrapers, and screens on small handheld devices that had appeared from nowhere.

For almost an hour after the president entered the alien ship, the screens had all shown the same white text on a black background, saying “We will be with you shortly” in a cycle that ran through thirteen languages and then repeated.

Then the screens changed. There was the President of the United States, sitting on a golden chair in front of undulating golden haze, with his chin jutting out.

Then the image of the president disappeared, replaced by a text menu offering a choice of languages. After a few moments, the image of the president reappeared, and a voice spoke from an unseen location in the language chosen by the viewer. In English, what followed went like this:

“People of Earth, and fellow citizens elsewhere, thank you for your patience. We now interview the President of the United States. He has no significant previous military, scientific, or government experience or training. He received fewer individual votes than his opponent but made better use of particularities in the election process. He is among the five hundred wealthiest people among a planetary population of over seven billion. These are the things that brought him to our attention. Let us hear from him now. Welcome, Mr. President.”

“Thank you very much. It is a great pleasure to be here representing America.”

“Let’s get right to it, shall we? Let’s start with part of your inauguration speech.”

A recording played: “But for too many of our citizens, a different reality exists: Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities; rusted-out factories scattered like

tombstones across the landscape of our nation; an education system, flush with cash, but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of knowledge; and the crime and gangs and drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealized potential. This American carnage stops right here and stops right now.”

The voice from the golden haze asked, “Do you know the history of that word, Mr. President? The word ‘carnage’? Do you know what it actually means?”

“Of course I do. I know words. I have the best words. Believe me.”

“Perhaps we will. Then tell us, Mr. President, what does ‘carnage’ mean? Here’s a hint. It has the same root as your word ‘carnivore.’”

“It means what I said. My speech. My words. The most beautiful amazing inauguration speech ever. And I had the largest crowd ever, in history. Much bigger than Obama’s crowd.”

“What exactly did you say to describe a carnage?”

“Tremendous speech. Mothers and children in poverty, rusted out factories, crime and gangs and drugs. That’s carnage. Sad. Very sad. Many people said it was a terrific speech.”

“Mr. President, ‘carnage’ means torn flesh. ‘Carn’ means flesh. Carnage is slaughter, massacre, mass murder, butchery, bloodletting.”

“Wrong,” the president said.

“Carnage is the brutal killing of many people, Mr. President.”

“Wrong. I’m the president and you’re not.”

“How do your choices as president actually prevent carnage, Mr. President? Your budget, your executive orders, your words and actions in your own country and around the world. Your tweets. Your loyal people. This is your chance to explain in detail how they help end

carnage. Your answer will be heard by trillions and will directly impact billions of people. Please make your answer honest and to the point. Please justify your choices to the people of Earth.”

“I had very good talks with many great leaders. We have great plans, for healthcare and taxes and jobs. Really great. We’re going to make America great again! We are not going to let other countries take advantage of us anymore because from now on it’s going to be America first. And by the way, you’ve seen what we’ve accomplished in a short period of time. The White House is running so smoothly. So smoothly. We are not going to let the fake news tell us what to do, how to live, or what to believe. We are free and independent people and we make our own choices. Believe me. But to understand the historic progress that we’ve made, we must speak honestly about the situation that we and I inherited because, believe me, the previous administration gave us a mess. The dishonest media won’t print the facts, won’t report them, because the Washington media is part of the problem. Their priorities are not my priorities, and they’re not your priorities. Believe me.”

“Excuse me for interrupting, Mr. President, but I still haven’t heard any details from you.”

“Details to follow. Keep the big picture in mind. We’re making incredible progress. I promise you that. America, I hear you and I promise I will deliver. I promise that.”

“No details, then. That is your choice. Mr. President, under our authority as a Designated Filter, you are now made a Great Example. May all those remaining on your planet and all others watching from a distance learn from you.”



The president did not move, except to breathe. It seemed he wanted to, but could not. Many people who watched said later there was panic in his eyes, but who can truly know? Only the president himself.

“People of Earth, I will now explain.

First, there is no way for you to stop what is about to happen. Our ship, with your president the Great Example, and with several Lesser Examples, is no longer on your planet or within the reach of your weapons.

Second, many civilizations learn enough from a single Great Example to avoid the need for additional lessons. I hope your civilization is one of these. If not, we will return at a time and place of our own choosing to provide one or more additional Examples.

Third, we’re not here to hurt your planetary civilization. Quite the opposite. We are a filter that removes impediments, so your planet can advance and become part of a vast combine of planets. You have some really great things to offer, and you could gain much in return.

Fourth, what we’re doing is necessary. Every civilization that develops representative government also develops wealth differences. That is not a bad thing, of itself. But at some point on every such planet a small group of very wealthy beings also tries to take over the most powerful representative government on the planet and make it their own tool to the vast detriment of others. It always happens. Without help, most civilizations in this situation will fall into chaos and either remain there or destroy their planet. A few civilizations might avoid the harms by themselves, but even those civilizations would stumble about wasting lives before they found a solution. So that’s where we come in. That’s why we are here. Profit is fine.

Greedy corruption is not. Most civilized beings understand this, but there are always a few on any given planet that need to be taught by Examples.

We have found that the best Examples are metaphors made real. Ideas taken both seriously and literally to the extreme.

Mr. President, although you cannot respond, you can hear me. You and those close to you have used the people and future of this planet as personal resources. You received the power, and that is how you chose to use it. By abusing it. Now we have the power to use you and your Lesser Examples as the most fundamental resource. Food, Mr. President. You are food to us.

What is your saying? Sooner or later your bad choices come back to bite you? We are here to make that happen. Literally.

The Lesser Examples have already been interviewed, individually. They were each given an opportunity to explain their choices, by giving honest and direct answers. They failed.

The people on Earth who choose to do so will now be able to watch what occurred as Lesser Examples were prepared. We do not compel people to watch. Those who choose not to watch probably already know that being adored does not cleanse you of lies. They probably know that profiting from a lie does not make the lie right. If not, they will be taught those lessons, sooner or later, by us or by others.

If you choose to watch, the first recording of a Lesser Example begins with a man blessed to be close to the president. He was rinsed and pressed. After seasoning and flash drying, we grated the jerky over hash and served. Make America Grate Again!

The second Lesser Example recording shows the creation of a thick country stew with chunky meat boiled until it was almost white. We added a ridiculous amount of hot pepper and served with a slab of crisped belly fat. Abandon restraint!

The third Lesser Example was flavored with thyme and inspired by a rhyme: A ticket's a task, it's a brisket in a basket, a mint's amends a prince appends, a woman never asks it. Don't forget the sour cream in this one.

We had the meat for a fourth Lesser Example, but after we looked more closely at it, we left it jarred and unprepared, as we found it. We decided three Lesser Examples should be enough to make the lessons clear. Anyway, we hope so.

Now we turn to you, Mr. President. Mr. Big League. The Main Event. And now, the Great Example, because like your loyal people, you have also failed to give your planet's people an honest and direct answer that justifies your many abuses of power. Food for thought, and now food for us. Literally. But this is a civilized proceeding, not a witch hunt. So you may speak your final words now."

"Let me go!"

"No."

"I'll pay you, whatever you want."

"Mr. President, the only thing we want is you. We want you, to serve as a Great Example for everyone watching."

"Please, don't do this! I can do better. I'm a good person. Believe me, I have a lot of heart."

“Yes, Mr. President, you do. But we’re going start with your rump, lightly breaded and quick fried, and see how it goes from there.”

The president chose not to weep. He chose to show his largest audience ever nothing but dignity, even after a shining golden blade appeared before him.

As the blade approached, the President of the United States jutted out his chin, and he said, “But I’m the best, right? The best!”

“We really hope so,” the Designated Filter answered. “That’s exactly what we want you to be, sir. The very best president we will ever serve.”