

Wilderness House Literary Review 12/2

Gracjan Kraszewski

Mr. Potus McScotus

"Mr. President, sir...I, I just don't, I-"

Jones stops writing and looks up. "What? Spit it out. What?"

Jones looks back down and resumes writing. His oversized black pen—*The Fonz* stenciled down the stem in bedazzled Vegas gold script, size 48 Apple Chancery font— has run out of ink. "Dammit." He shakes it a few times in the air. He presses down hard. Nothing. "Dammit! Son of a-"

"Sir," Barnes says, clearing his throat. He has moved three steps closer to the Resolute Desk. "What I was saying. What I was trying to say-"

"Hey, Barnes," Jones says as he slides back from the desk, fingers locked together on the back of his head. "You hear about the new three billion dollar lottery going on in Tennessee?"

"Sir?"

"I asked if you'd heard about-"

"Yes, Mr. President. What I was trying-"

"Barnes! How bout that lottery?"

Barnes frowns. "The winner receives three dollars a year for a billion years. Yes, now-"

Jones slaps his desk, hard. Barnes jumps. Sudden frights can trigger his irritable bowel syndrome. His stomach gurgles audibly. "Son of a bitch," Jones says, laughing as he shakes his head side to side. "That one never gets old."

Jones pulls a tin out of his back pocket and throws in a formidable lip. He is the first American president to market his own line of Oval Office spit cups. The best seller is a red, white and blue 12 oz. model with a screeching pterodactyl-looking bald eagle defecating over the Louise Weiss Building.

"What's this thing I'm signing here, again?"

"Vetoing."

"Barnes, what were you going to tell me before?"

Barnes coughs into a clenched fist. "I don't think that, I don't believe, in my opinion-"

"Hold on," Jones says, standing up. "Hold that thought. Who would you say is the hottest woman of all time?"

"Sir?"

The president now has his back turned to Barnes and is staring out a frosted window beyond which light snow has been falling for hours. The snow reminds him of his triumph on *Average Joe to America's Go...Getter! U.S.A we are all in this Together!!!*. AJAGGUSAT!!! is the widely popular reality TV show that determines who will become the next president. It

Wilderness House Literary Review 12/2

debuted forty years ago following America's Second Civil War. Fifty-three million Americans died in CW II. The country lost considerable land. Japan annexed Hawaii and California. The Russian Imperial Soviet incorporated Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana soon after a six-week takeover of Canada launched from its eastern province of Alaska that an *ancien* American present had once given a Russian president as a house-warming gift.

The late states of Louisiana and Florida long ago joined the Caribbean Federation. There have been no shortages of immigration problems with the C.F.; mainly poor white Americans entering illegally in search of employment opportunities. Current C.F. Prime Minister Henrietta de Cielos Azules Cortes de Soto won reelection two years ago running on hyper-nationalist platform, deducible to her promised deportation of "large swaths" of Americans including those who while not technically American certainly did not look "Caribbean enough."

The "average joe" part of AJAGGUSAT!!! is a little misleading. A highly intricate process insures that whoever emerges triumphant from the field of 300 is one of the best, brightest and most qualified the country has to offer. Every candidate has to meet the following criteria: 6'3 or taller (5'8 for women), have published one book or released one musical album, have played a sport at the collegiate level, and have attended an Ivy League institution (earned degree preferable but not required).

Early on in the process pundits were buzzing about Jones, whom they considered "perhaps the most complete candidate in American political history." Jones met the requirements and then some: 6'6, author of the NYT bestselling *Gameswaggin': How to pick up any chick anytime anywheres* (the 'anywheres' typo went to press unchecked by which time too many copies had been printed to fix it), and an All-American quarterback in Two Hand Touch-Football at Dartmouth where he earned a B.A. in Anthropomorphic Comparative Literature. The snow was falling thick and heavy that night in Boston at election-selection HQ when Jones won 11% of the popular vote (the runner-up won 9.6% in a pool of forty-four finalists).

"Never mind," Jones says. "I'm sorry for asking you."

Jones is now sitting on the floor, aggressively rubbing his left foot while alternately saying *ooh* and *aw, man*. "Where's my tough actin' Tinactin at, by the way?"

"I think the First Feminist has been keeping it by your nightstand."

"That's right." Jones closes his eyes and grimaces as he furiously attacks the tinea pedis. "Can you please tell me exactly what this bill is that I'm about to veto?"

"It's a complicated piece of legislation," Barnes says. "The important thing is that you get on with vetoing it. It's an across the aisle joint effort from the Traditionalistas and the Libgressives seeking to repeal the federal requirements on toddlers having to be trained in urban warfare and the class A misdemeanor concerning consumption of animal products."

"So this bill, it'll say you don't have to make your kids know how to fire bazookas and shit like that and that you can also eat a cheeseburger and it's all good?" Jones asks.

Wilderness House Literary Review 12/2

"Yes. That's basically it, sir."

"Barnes, what political party am I again?"

"..."

"I'm just messing with you, Barnes," Jones says, laughing while he plays for keeps with the athlete's foot. "But, so yeah? Veto it?"

"I think that would be best, sir."

"But if I like veto it then people still have to do the kiddie RPG training stuff and can't-."

"Sir," Barnes says, arms akimbo and hands stuffed into his pant pockets. "I think it would be the proper course of action for you to veto this bill. And the sooner the better."

"This is the thing you've been trying to tell me about this whole time?"

"No, sir, actually I've been hoping we could have a word about your intention to abdicate the presidency."

"Barnes, Barnes, no, Barnes. I told you this decision was final. I know my approval ratings are at an all time high. The people love me, our nation's doing great-

"Well, actually, you know every metric, especially the economic-."

Jones puts up his hand, palm out and fingers splayed.

"But sir," Barnes pleads.

"The decision is final."

"Sir, I have served you faithfully. I have done as you have commanded even when I did not agree. I have followed you, even blindly. May I ask just one question?"

"Shoot, Turkey-Hoot."

"Am I correct in my understanding that you are going to issue an Executive Order signing over all powers of this office to a man named Potus McScotus simply because his name appears to be an acronym for President of the United States Supreme Court of the United States?"

"Damn straight. But you left out the 'Mc' part. The dude's probably some kind of bar fighting drunk leprechaun and that's what we need now. Everyone has had it up to their ears and eyeballs in political correctness. We're tired of walking on eggshells all the time. America needs a fighter, a leader with some ka-joanees."

"..."

"Look, Barnes," Jones says, getting off the floor slowly. His lower back pops twice as he straightens up. He is still beneath the window that looks out onto the steadily falling snow. Beneath his feet a small mountain of scratched off skin has begun to accumulate. "You know what has ruined America? This," Jones says, waving his hands up and down as he turns in circles. "Washington; insiders and professional politicians. You know the secret of all secrets, Barnes? It's all about the outsider; it's gotta be. The solution to a problem is always the outsider and if that doesn't work you go

Wilderness House Literary Review 12/2

for the guy who's outside the outsider. You see, the country's on the right track. All the old system did was guarantee that the same inbred politicians who'd messed it all up in the first place would keep messin' it up. Ay-JAG-you-SAT was a breakthrough. Finally, direct democracy: a government for the people by the people. Look at what we got: non-politician politicians like myself. And look what it's done for the county. Barnes, just look! Numbers never lie. We're bigger, badder, bolder than ever, in every way. Don't think I didn't read that *Origins of Specimens* book you gave me on inauguration day, Barnes. I agree. It's all about evolution; progress. Potus is the real deal. That name, Barnes he's a winner! He's got-

The goosebumps on Jones' left arm make him pause. All of sudden he realizes the room has gotten much colder. He didn't hear the sound, but he now feels the cold enveloping him. He turns and sees. The window is broken and a large hole is letting in a driving winter wind. Barnes is nowhere to be found.