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Private and Confidential

The fact of the matter is that there is a limit to everything. Not everything is possible. Advancement will stop once a limit has been reached. When you melt an ice cube in a glass of water, you can only measure the temperature of the ice until it becomes water itself. If you fill a balloon with air, you can only keep filling until the balloon inevitably pops. What I'm telling you is that the quote unquote American Dream is a lie. I'm sure you knew this in some capacity. You've had your budding suspicions watching generational poverty and other such detractors from this romantic idea of progress and equal opportunity, etc., etc. The great thing is that often when we reach that stagnant place we call « the limit », people are very keen to abandon an idea, move on to a slightly adjacent idea, and carry on as if the idea hasn't changed at all. This makes my job so much easier. Because upholding that American Dream is my job. My whole job. I work for the American Dream Upholding and Management Protectorate, or ADUMP as we're known in Washington, the agency unilaterally responsible for discerning where these limits lie based on calculation of resource necessary to progress versus resource available, etc., etc., so that we can advise those elected officials —who know exactly nothing of the science of the American Dream but who are responsible for upholding its rhetoric— as to where we should be directing progress, and where efforts towards progress will reveal their national farce as just exactly that due to the rapidly approaching limit that will bring down the rose-tinted smoke screen that makes our great country the quote unquote Land of Opportunity. We are based in Holcomb, Kansas.

My name is Darren. I build models. Not the financial/mathematical kinds of models. That's Eric's job. He puts numbers in Excel columns and tells us just exactly how much it will cost to maintain the American Dream for a given fiscal quarter or year or even a projection of that cost over five or ten years which helps us know if it's preferable that the next president be more conservative or if we can afford a president who is going to run on a platform of change and progress, etc., etc. You need that from time to time, a real go-getter. But it really throws a wrench in our calculations, let me tell you. Because you see everything at ADUMP is predictive. And when the big guy decides to do something we haven't tested, which is bound to happen from time to time, everything has to be re-evaluated. Poor Eric didn't have a family dinner for months when alternative energy sources became fashionable. Luckily, the rhetoric sometimes changes away from progress and towards projects that don't progress much of anything. Like building a wall along the border of Mexico, for example. That one really got us out of a hard place. And I know you are sitting there reading this as a political commentary, this announcement that a border wall does not work towards progress. And you're sitting there with your own political conceptions about what progress is and you feel either indignant and attacked or you've had a small chuckle, but I'll tell you now that I don't have a political stance on the matter. I don't have a political stance on any matter. In fact, I'm contractually obligated not to have a political stance. Much like the Queen of England, our job is not politics. Our job is to uphold a decided morality defined by the conceptual American Dream, and

Wilderness House Literary Review 16/2

to determine what is needed to uphold it, which is not a partisan issue but a matter of calculation and scientific process. All I mean is that sometimes the rhetoric shifts. Sometimes we want to get back to a place where we once were. And those times give us here at the ADUMP a chance to catch up on a backlog of progress that must be considered.

But me, I build the physical models. Like the miniatures you'd see at historical museums. I've built models of all of the major cities in America: Chicag, New York, Los Angeles, Seattle, even less interesting ones like Louisville and Topeka. I've built models of the small towns along the countryside in Utah, along the coasts of Louisiana and Maine. I've built your neighborhood if you live in a city or suburb or even a small village. I've probably built your house and your neighbor's house and your grandmother's house. They all exist on the model floor: the second floor of our thirteen floor, factory-style building (most of which are subterranean levels; a skyscraper would stick out like a sore thumb here in Holcomb and as with any government operation outside of the military, which is entitled to its parades and air shows from time to time, sticking out like a sore thumb is not exactly what we want). A large road map of the United State is laid out across the floor so that we can travel through the miniature America along the roads we would take in the real world version. We're lucky to have recently acquired some of those snazzy electric scooters for the purpose of traveling through the miniature map — the ones that look like the Razor scooters we had as kids but that go fast enough that if a change in Washington state causes a riot in Miami we can get from one end of the floor to the other in roughly 37 minutes, which has resulted in a massive productivity increase and allowed for much more progress in recent years. And on top of the map sits my models, as well as some other models because obviously recreating the country in miniature was by no means a one man job and we all have our specialties and expertises. We've even got a guy who does the hot air balloons and blimps and other forms or air transportation (but he's only in on Tuesdays and Fridays.)

Every model serves a purpose. They show elevation, racial distribution, quality of education, economic growth patterns, political inclination, etc., etc. But the single most important thing our models show is you. You and your neighbors and families and friends and acquaintances and all of the people you haven't met. One tiny racially, economically, socially accurate depiction of all 300 and some odd million of us here in the good old US of A because that's what the American Dream is really about isn't it? There's capital P « Progress » sure, the kind that brings us technological advancements and gets us into space and gives us fancy new objects we can look at and say « my, my, look just how much progress we've made in the last 10, 15, 25 years.» And that's important and it must be factored into the equation. But I'll be honest, it's mostly the billionaires who take care of that end of the stick, and boy do they do a wonderful job. That Steve Jobs can release a new cell phone that looks and works just like the last one and everyone is in awe of the new camera features that make your face look nicer and we've not had to sink any money into the damn thing at all. And then there's the guy with the cars that drive themselves; wow, wow, wow. We need those guys for sure here at ADUMP.

But that's not our main job. Our job is to make sure that each and every American FEELS like they're able to progress on an individual level. That

Wilderness House Literary Review 16/2

this big land of opportunity is accessible to them and that things can and will get better if they work harder to get there. And the way that happens is the continuation of these big overarching versions of progress backed up by some carefully placed headlines, some geographical redistributions of money, a new school once in a while, or new integration and mentoring programs where a new school is financially unattainable. A very publicized arrest has been a go to move lately. Really, there are two options for making progress available to an individual: show them their world is slowly getting better in correlation to their individual or community efforts or show them that their individual efforts can get them out of their own world and into one that's better.

For example: right now we're very concerned about a small town in Michigan after a recent effort to phase out Groundhog's Day - you know the holiday where a guy in Pennsylvania pulls a rodent out of a hole expecting it to make forecasts about the duration of winter weather conditions. We thought the phase out would be no big deal - it's an antiquated festivity totally counter to logical, factual advances made in meteorology and it doesn't serve the purpose of valorizing or appreciating any specific group of American's like Martin Luther King Day or Mothers' Day. So we left the calculations with Ronny, our intern, who really is a wonderful guy, but you see he failed to consider the media impact. And the numbers looked good, really good. And it was such a small change so we took some short cuts vis-à-vis model testing and we sent the word to the guys upstairs that Groundhog's Day would now be replaced with Meteorologists' Day, which we felt aligned more appropriately with the country's ideas of what progress meant insofar as advancements in weather prediction and also gave a day of appreciation to a group of people who so often and unfairly take the blame for an incoming storm's earlier than expected arrival, etc., etc. But as I've mentioned, Ronny failed to consider the media impact, and would you know it but Groundhog's Day is still covered by a shocking majority of news providers across the country every year - a shocking majority who would now have to find something else to cover on February 2nd. And in the model tests something unforeseen happened involving a small town in California where the media decided to cover the upcoming asparagus season.

Now you see I don't cover agricultural production in my models, it's not my expertise. I build the farm towns and Camilla, she's responsible for the farms. So my knowledge of the rules and regulations on agricultural production are not the authority. But in summary there are restrictions on how much a farmer may plant vis-à-vis their base acreage, all of which is a highly complex and convoluted system. But to summarize these restrictions allow us to monitor agricultural pricing and avoid price depression etc., etc. And you see a small something in this projected news broadcast from California became a big something in a small town in Michigan when it became public knowledge that these restrictions had maybe not been applied entirely equitably between the two Asparagus-producing states. This was obviously due to higher costs of living requiring increased production in order to maintain a sense of individual liberty in California, which required us to quietly amend these regulations. And the great thing about America is that it's big enough that people in Michigan don't often give two shakes about what's going on in California and we can imple-

Wilderness House Literary Review 16/2

ment these kinds of small changes without any notice of the inequality they may create in the meantime. However by eliminating Groundhog's Day the farmers of Michigan did notice, which was no small problem.

You see in our simulation the farmers of Michigan caught wind of this inequitable situation r/e the Asparagus production restrictions in the two states. But things hadn't been going too terribly well for Michigan in the first place. Detroit has been having its problems. Flint went without clean water for longer than would have been ideal. And the rest of the Midwest started listening. All of a sudden we had farmers incensed in Ohio and Kansas and Iowa, all states that don't even grow asparagus, but nonetheless they joined in the argument about the unfair treatment of the Midwest when compared to the more « prestigious » states like California and New York and Massachusetts that have their big cities and their tourist attractions (although I personally would argue that Chicago isn't doing so bad. They even had the White House from 2008-2016). And all of a sudden it wasn't just the farmers who were incensed but the electricians and the construction workers and all of the blue collared workers followed shortly by the teachers with their unions, and all because we didn't pull a groundhog out of its burrow to see if he saw his shadow so as to indicate whether or not we'd have six more weeks of winter.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the spectrum, Meteorologists' Day simply didn't take. It seems that the American people simply hate meteorologists. « The only job where you can be wrong all the time and never get fired. » And of course we failed to consider that most professions are not actually recognized in this sort of national format. What do they even contribute to society that would merit such public appreciation, the lawyers and doctors and dentists and archeologists and librarians and museum curators and electricians wanted to know.

But you see before any of this was put into the model and the little miniature farmers and all the little miniature midwesterners and the miniature doctors and lawyers and museum curators became incensed and held protests and talked boldly about « what is this country coming to », before any of this, we'd already given the go ahead to the guys over in Washington who would be setting all this in motion. Luckily things move pretty slowly over there so we figured by Eric's latest calculations that we have roughly 2.74 years to come up with a solution that will counteract the negative responses. And you're probably thinking « Why don't we just call the whole thing off? If it's still 2.74 years away from implementation and all that. » But you see that's not really how it works. We can change some little bits here and there, just like any good politician could do when he gets his hands on some new piece of legislation. He or she can withhold his/her vote if they don't throw in some pet projects or tax benefits for his/her constituents, etc., etc. Us. We can change the details. That is to say between now and 2.74 years from now we can tell the big guys « Hold it. Meteorologists' Day is a dud. We're gonna do Midwesterners' Day instead. » But you see even this change is complicated. Because if we introduce Midwesterners' Day, we also need a Southerners' Day and a Northeasterners' Day and a Westerners' Day. And this is exactly what we've got going in motion here at ADUMP. But these sorts of introductions require planning and we need to have all that work done before we send a redaction to the big guys who are already doing their own planning of sorts: the

Wilderness House Literary Review 16/2

speech writers are writing their speeches, thanking the meteorologist for their meteorological contributions to the greater good; the event planners are planning tours to the meteorological centers of the country — Kansas with their tornados, the gulf coast with their hurricanes. And they're all going to be well pissed off that this work was for nothing and all because we didn't follow protocol and jumped the model testing so that we would have something on their desks by the end of the quarter. So you see changing the fact of a change altogether is impossible. Once the big guy hears that we're offing Groundhog's Day, there is no bringing it back.

And now you're saying « Okay, Midwesterners' Day, Southerners' Day, etc., etc. All this replaces Groundhog's Day. The news has something to cover again. Problem solved. » But not quite. Because all these new holidays couldn't possibly be on the same day or else the South hears that the Northeast is celebrating Northeasterners' day on Southerners' Day and we've got a whole new brouhaha. So we're proposing January 2nd as Southerners' Day (the South has an intrinsic need to be first), followed by Midwesterners' Day on February 2nd, Northeasterners' Day on March 2nd and Westerners' Day on April 2nd. And you can bet your grandmother's dentures that on February 2nd, California is still covering their upcoming asparagus crop because nobody except the Midwest will give two shakes about Midwesterners' Day and so Michigan is still going to be incensed which brings us to part two of the recovery plan which we're hoping to achieve without going through the big guys but rather to let it be some sort of incidental discovery by some otherwise unremarkable and unknown farmer in Michigan who will skyrocket into local fame for his discovery and also give all the other Michigan farmers the idea that they could also partake in this local fame if they just keep to their farms. And but so what we're proposing is a new breed of plant all together. One that is primarily suited to the climate in Michigan and which will take the eyes of the Michigan farmers off the national asparagus production and onto this new wonder plant. So we've got our guys responsible for agricultural development working on the formulation of this new legume and Camilla is working on the Michigan asparagus field models so that we can locate the ideal point to integrate the new plant, and me, I'm dealing with the structural town changes that will result from potential farm expansions and perhaps the influx of new residents who are looking to find work on these newly profitable farms, etc., etc. And would you know it but all this and we're still looking at a positive return where the budget is concerned from the Groundhog's Day phase out.