

DETAINEE 39

The only sound was the incessant ticking of my office clock as I scanned the pitiful report that lay on my desk like a landed fish. The two lowly officers who had submitted the travesty before me tried to appear calm as I perused their pathetic work, but their shared glances and profuse sweating betrayed their well-deserved apprehension.

I sighed audibly, removed my glasses, and glanced up at a portrait of Respected Comrade Kim Jong Un. I sometimes find that merely gazing at the smiling face of the Supreme Leader fortifies my strength and increases my resolve.

“There’s nothing new here,” I said, striking the report with my glasses for emphasis. “No new information of any kind.”

“Comrade Chief Superintendent General,” one of the officers said. “This Detainee 39 — we can’t break him.”

“We’ve been working him over for weeks,” the other said, “but he just won’t crack.”

“This man is a defector and a betrayer of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea!” I shouted, banging on my desk with my fist for emphasis. “You must use more extreme methods!”

The two shared a conspiratorial look, each using his eyes to urge the other to speak first.

“That is the problem, Comrade Chief Superintendent General,” one said sheepishly. “We *did* use extreme methods. *All* of them. And I’m afraid we’ve...

“You’ve *what?*”

“We’ve... overdone it.”

“Yes, Comrade Chief Superintendent General,” the other added, “I’m afraid Detainee 39 has developed...”

“Developed *what?*” I cried.

The pathetic underling could barely spit out the words. “*Stockholm Syndrome,*” he choked.

Fifteen minutes later I found myself in Room 73 of People’s Interrogation Center 12, determined to give Detainee 39 my *own* interrogation, one actually worthy of the only and unique successor and leader of the Juche Revolution, His Excellency Marshall Kim Jong Un, Beloved Father and Sun of Juche Korea.

As I entered the prisoner lay insensate on a stainless steel medical table. He struggled to stir, barely able to raise his bruised and bloodied head. Eventually his eyes found focus.

“What a lovely balaclava,” he said. “And it goes so well with that black rubber apron. It really suits you.”

“Detainee 39!” I shouted. “Up to this point you have been uncooperative, but I will be utilizing more persuasive measures than those of my predecessors!”

“I made you some cranberry muffins,” he said, offering up a tin of the enticing baked goods, as I attached a pair of electrodes from a car battery to his testicles. Switching on the power elicited a powerful scream of pain as the tin rattled to the floor.

“Give us the names of your associates, or I will increase the voltage!” I threatened.

“*They told me you have IBS,*” he spat through gritted teeth, “*so they’re gluten-free.*”

Clearly more severe procedures were in order. I switched off the power and opened my black leather instrument case, the home of my most effective and diabolical means of eliciting responses from unwilling detainees.

There, much to my surprise, nestled amongst the power tools and medical instruments, was a hand-made card. *Thinking of You During This Torture Session* it said on the outside. Inside, in exquisite penmanship, was written:

Each time you use these drills and pliers
To force me to obey
It just increases my desires
For you to have a special day.

Have a great torture session!

Detainee 39

I know I should have been filled with rage, but the photo of a puppy he had affixed to my bone saw was too adorable for words.

I left the room in a panic, determined to regain the focus of my endeavor. I find it sometimes helpful at such times to smoke a cigarette and ruminate upon the desires of the Brilliant Comrade and Beloved Father, Kim Jong Un, the Peerlessly Great Leader of our Party, State, and Armed Forces.

As I expelled wisps of wafting blue smoke into the dimly-lit corridors of People's Interrogation Center 12, I was approached by my colleague, Comrade Chief Superintendent General Park. He glanced at the room I had just exited.

"Still working on 39, eh, Comrade?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered, somewhat embarrassed, "but it's not going well. He appears to have developed Stockholm Syndrome."

“You’re telling me,” Comrade Chief Superintendent General Park exclaimed. “Last week I pulled out his fingernails. The very next day he FedExed me a darling macramé planter. Made it himself. How he managed to do it without fingernails, I’ll never know.”

“A true enemy of the Democratic People’s Republic,” I said, stubbing out my cigarette.

“Indeed,” Park replied. “Good luck with him, Comrade,” he added, offering an encouraging pat on my shoulder, as he ambled down a hallway that echoed with the screams of prisoners no doubt more compliant than the one that awaited my return.

It was obvious that traditional methods held no sway with this wily defector. I would have to use what is perhaps the most potent weapon of all: Psychology.

I re-entered Room 73, steeling myself for our next encounter.

“Canapé?” Detainee 39 asked, offering me an assortment of small, decorative hors d’oeuvres.

“Yes, thank you,” I replied, sampling a small cracker topped with garlic herb cream cheese, avocado, and Dungeness crab. “You seem to be enjoying yourself here, Detainee 39,” I said.

“Oh, yes, very much so, sir.”

“Yes, well, that’s why it pains me to tell you that we’re setting you free.”

“Free, sir?”

“I’m afraid so. It’s just, well, the interrogation’s not working out the way we’d hoped.”

“Not... working... out?” he stammered, tears filling his eyes. “But you haven’t even waterboarded me yet!”

“39, 39,” I cooed, stroking his blood-matted hair, “It’s not you, it’s me. We knew this was never going to last. It’s time we both went our separate ways. New challenges. New horizons.”

“Oh, my God,” he sputtered. “Are you saying you want to torture *other people*?” He broke down, dissolving into a sobbing, snotty mess. “Please! I’ll tell you anything! Just don’t stop torturing me!”

I picked up a pad and pen, ready to take down everything he had to say. As he began rattling off names, dates, and times, I looked up at the portrait of the Respected Comrade Supreme Leader, the outstanding successor and leader of the Juche revolution, the symbol of strength of our State and the Banner of all Victory and Glory, Kim Jong Un. It seemed like he was smiling for me, and me alone.