

Phineas T Phrump's War

It was a blustery day in Washington. Phineas T Phrump sat at his desk in the Oval Office, angry with the report.

“Lockjaw, I want you to look at Rose.”

“Sir?”

“Look at her!”

The President's Press Secretary Freddie “Lockjaw” Lemon turned his head toward Ruby Rose, the Chief-of-Staff. She looked back quizzically, tossing her hands in the air. “Mr President . . .”

“One moment, Rosie! Now. Lockjaw. What do you see?”

“I see your Chief-of-Staff, sir.”

“And what else? What do you see in that face?”

“Uh . . . I, uh, see someone who looks confused.”

“Ah-HA! Exactly! She says the polls say that I'm ‘losing public support.’ But she knows better than that. Everybody—except those radical lefties—LOVE their President! ME! Of course she's confused.”

“Sir, I don't think that was what she was confused about.”

“Lockjaw! There you go again! Are you contradicting me?!”

“No, sir. But I think she just wanted to know why you asked me . . .”

“Asked you?! I don't ever ‘ask you’ to do anything!”

“No, sir. Of course not.”

Ruby Rose held up a sheet of paper she had brought with her. “Mr. President. This poll may be wrong in the particulars, but it says your approval rating has fallen to below 30 percent.”

“Nonsense!”

“Sir, it may be overly pessimistic, but not by that much. You’ve dropped nearly 20 points since you took office. And all I’m saying is that you need to do something to get those numbers back up.”

Phineas Phrump rose from his chair, agitated. He turned away from his advisors, clasped his hands behind his back and stared out over the South Lawn. Freddie Lemon and Ruby Rose sat quietly. They knew he’d bark at them if they spoke when he was in this state.

The President raised his gaze to the heavens. “Rosie. Lockjaw. I want to go to war.”

He turned back to face them.

“Rosie, we need to have a good war. Everyone loves an American war. We can show off our military might. Everyone knows that ‘might is right.’ And the people always support their President in times of war.”

Lockjaw spoke in low tones: “Mr President, where. . .”

“WHERE?! Well, where are our enemies?”

“There’s Russia and China and Iran . . .”

“No! I don’t want a long war. No one loves a long war. I want to go bomb someplace where they

can't really fight back. You know. A short war. Every President gets to have a war. I want mine now. Reagan had Grenada. Margaret Thatcher had the Falklands. You see? That's what I want: a short war. Just enough to get people thinking about how powerful we are. And how in command I am."

Ruby Rose leaned forward toward the President. "Mr President, I think you'll need to be cautious here."

"What?! Rosie, I'm *never* 'cautious.' I'm always bold! That's what got me here. That's what people want."

"Well, sir, there isn't really a strong appetite for another war just now."

"Then, let's create one! George Jr. did it. Remember 'weapons of mass destruction'? Lockjaw, you need to start drafting an announcement that we're preparing a major military operation."

"Yes, sir, but I need to know who you want to attack. And why?"

"Rosie, you're supposed to be an advisor, who do we want to attack?"

"I'm not sure, sir. You want a small nation. Maybe there's some country in Africa ..."

"Yes, Africa! But I want to get one that's mostly Arab."

"You mean, 'mostly Muslim'?"

"Same thing!"

"Yes, sir. Well, I would suggest that there will be

some people who should be involved in the decision—your decision, of course—on selecting a target.”

“Who?”

“I’d begin with the Vice President?”

“Lockjaw, has he cut off that beard yet?”

“No, sir.”

“Well, I told you I don’t want that *pantywaist* in the Oval Office until he shaves himself. He looks like a kid playin’ grownup!”

“Yes, sir.”

“He doesn’t have any tattoos, does he?”

“I can’t say for sure, but I haven’t noticed any.”

“Nobody enters this room with tattoos or piercings! Got it?”

The President turned to Rose. “Who else?”

“Well, the Defense Secretary, Roger That, needs to be in the loop.”

“You mean our ‘War Minister’ don’t you?”

“If you say so.”

“I DO!” He leaned back in his chair. “Yeah, I suppose he should be here.”

Lockjaw raised his hand. “Mr President, I’m afraid to say that he, uh, well, he has some tattoos.”

“What?!” He leaned forward toward Lockjaw. “What kind of tattoos?”

“I’m not sure, sir. He usually hides them with his clothes, but I’ve seen one on his forearm when he was gesturing to a member of the Pentagon press corps. That’s about all I know.”

“Well, what did it look like?!”

“I . . . maybe a little like military camouflage.”

“Tattoo’d War Minister! I never would have thought that of him.” He leaned back in his chair again.

“Well, maybe . . . I’ll bet it’s a tattoo of an Abram’s tank! Yeah! Ya think that’s what you saw?”

“I don’t know, Sir. It could be.”

“Take a note: Roger That is have an Abram’s tank tattoo, or he must get rid of them all!”

“Get rid of them, Sir?”

“You can do that, can’t you?”

“I’m afraid I don’t know much about tattoos.”

“Find out!”

“I’ll tell him, Mr President.”

“And there’s to be none of that black voodoo stuff!”

Lockjaw nodded.

He looked over at Rose: “OK, anyone else?”

“Your Secretary of State, Bill Blather.”

“Hmm. You know, that man gets on my nerves. Ol’ Blather Boy’s a fast talker. I don’t trust him. He’s too slick for his own good. And he talks too much. Acts like he’s in control sometimes.”

“Sir, he meets with the Press quite often. I think he should be informed. I mean you need to tell him what to say. And what questions he shouldn’t answer.”

“He’s wantin’ to become President, you know.” He looked to the air. “After he contradicted me over our plans to take Greenland, I thought I was gonna have to throw him under the bus. But I’ll give him once

last chance here. Let him come, but warn the weasel he's treading on thin ice."

"Sir?"

"What is it, Lockjaw?"

"If I may. I respectfully submit that right now people are a little tired of foreign wars. And a military operation limited to bombing a country that, quite frankly, most Americans couldn't find on the map is not going to earn you any praise."

"Rosie?! What do you say to that?"

"Well, sir, not all countries in Africa are that obscure. There's Egypt and South Africa. And most everyone's heard of Morocco, even if they don't know exactly where it is. And there's an advantage to choosing a country like, say, Libya. You can make up a story to sell your bombing campaign to the public."

"Yeah! Yeah! Well, get those two in here. Roger That and Blather Boy."

"What about ..."

"What?! Lockjaw?!"

"The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs?"

"Not now. We gotta settle on a target first."

—

Phineas T Phrump looked over the advisors now assembled in the Oval Office: Lockjaw, Rosie, Roger That, and Blather Boy. Sitting behind his desk, he

was pleased that they all showed deference to him, waiting for him to begin the session.

“Roger That, roll up your sleeves?”

He stood up, removed his jacket rolled his sleeves just above the elbow, and stood at attention, awaiting inspection.

“What’s that tattoo? I was assured it was an Abram’s tank. That’s not what see.”

“No Sir. Tanks are old school. It’s a drone.”

“Ah, I see. You can sit down. I still like tanks. Maybe you should consider one, if you have any place left on your body to add it.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“OK. The reason you’re all here is that I’ve decided to make war on an enemy of America.”

The President smiled as he saw the astonishment in the face of Blather Boy and the sudden anxious anticipation in the wide eyes of Roger That. He could feel his power as they looked on.

“I have considered many targets. Rosie has suggested we focus on Africa, but I’m thinking much closer to home. We have one of the poorest countries on Earth less than 2000 miles from our shores. As I’ve said, it’s full of *garbage people* and they are invading our country.”

Blather Boy couldn’t contain himself. “Cuba! You’re wanting to invade Cuba!”

“No, Blather Boy! I’m talking about Haiti!”

“Haiti? I don’t see much of an imminent threat

coming from Haiti!”

“Listen, when you’re the President you can make these decisions. Right now, the country is so fortunate to have ME as the Commander-in-Chief! And I’m telling you that we’re going to invade Haiti!”

“But Sir, you’ll need Congress to approve any significant military action there.”

“Oh, Congress, you say?! I don’t think so!”

“But where’s the national security risk?”

“You’ve seen ’em! Up in Ohio! They’re everywhere! Terrorizing our citizens, taking their jobs, eating their dogs! And they’re threatening our culture! Our American culture! Our white Christian culture that created this great country!”

“Sir . . .”

“Blather Boy! I don’t want to hear any more about why we can’t do what I know is right for America!”

Rosie and Lockjaw held their tongues. The tension in the room could only end when everyone agreed with the President. Roger That stood and saluted. “You have my support, Mr President. I assure you that the military will carry out your orders.”

“Of course they will. Now sit down.”

Blather Boy gathered himself to speak again. “Exactly what did you have in mind, Mr President?”

“Scorched Earth! You saw what Israel did in Gaza? That’s what we’ll do in Haiti. Blockade the country. Nobody in or out. Then, bomb the hell out of ’em until they relent!”

“I don’t understand, sir. Relent from doing what?”

“Trashing up the Western Hemisphere! That’s *what!*”

“Sir, you can’t do that!”

“Blather Boy, if you contradict me one more time, you find yourself tossed out of here?”

“But sir . . .”

“Roger That?”

“Yes, Mr President?”

“Are you prepared to carry out my orders if you’re asked to throw Blather Boy out of here and escort him off the premises of the White House?”

He stood and saluted again: “YES SIR!”

Phineas T Phrump smiled and turned to look triumphantly at Blather Boy.

Rosie broke the awkward silence. “Mr President, what do you have in mind to determine when Haiti has . . . uh . . .relented?”

“They need to be civilized. The best way to do that is to bring civilization to them! As everyone knows, I suggested we build a luxury playground for the wealthy globetrotters in Gaza. ‘Phrump’s Fantasyland!’ Five-star hotels, spas, a casino, and a marina able to dock the world’s mega-yachts. And, of course, world-class golf courses. We may get that yet, but I don’t want to wait around for those idiots who want to retain the character of old Gaza for the damn Arabs living there! I said they all ought to be deported! You know, to Egypt or Jordon.

“But they’re all holding back over there. That’s

why we'll just do it here! In Haiti. It's perfect! I can just see it! 'Phrump's Fantasyland II!' We will build it on a grand scale like no one has ever seen before!" He looked to the air, this time beaming with satisfaction.

Blather Boy risked speaking again: "If I may, Sir, what are we to do with the Haitian people? There are over 10 million of them."

"Well, Blather Boy, just how many will there be once we've finished our bombing campaign? It doesn't matter really. We'll give 'em a choice: they can go to work, under US supervision, on rebuilding their country, and afterward take up service jobs in casinos, waiting tables in the restaurants, cleaning rooms in the hotels, washing yachts in the marina, carrying golf clubs for the wealthy visitors enjoying their vacations in the tropics. There'll be plenty for them to do. And if they don't want to go along with us, we'll just send 'em on planes to some God-foresaken African nation where they can fend from themselves among their own kind. So not to worry."

Phineas T Phrump's eyes rolled back into his head as he looked once more to the heavens. "Yes! That's what we'll do. It's going to be GLORIOUS! ... Ya know, this could be FUN!"