

The Solution

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Cornelius had waited for the opportunity so patiently and for so long, that the news came as no surprise. He had told his closest friends more than once that he had but one pending concern when he hurriedly flew back home: to take revenge on the *conceited bigot* who had jeopardized his future.

The irony of the matter did not escape his analytical mind and he had acknowledged, if only to himself, that rather than endangering his future, the gruesome events actually had furthered his career. He reasoned that it was because of his demonstrated willingness to even kill for the sake of science and the pursue of knowledge that the secret development of chemical warfare had been entrusted him, now a colonel in the Army Medical Corps. It was then that he saw for the first time any real likelihood of ever being able to enjoy his long-awaited revenge.

He had come to be known in the scientific community for a hands-on approach to the solution of complex problems and this time he would make no exception. He devoted himself to his new task wholeheartedly and at the end was awarded the Legion of Merit for coming up with innovative ways of killing people by means of chemical compounds. This special recognition opened the door for him to his country's main top secret projects. Now there was no doubt at all in his calculating mind that the shocking affair had in fact launched his career as a no-nonsense medical researcher—in spite of the absurdity of its concomitant events.

The *conceited bigot* was none other than the man who had publicly accused him. He had not forgotten the *gringo* doctor after almost 20 years and frequently

made reference in his ferocious public speeches to *the physician from the metropolis who had gotten away with murder*. To him, Cornelius was just one more link in a plot by the invaders of his country to exterminate his nation under the guise of being providing free medical care to the poor. He pointed to the physician's handwritten statements in a letter to a friend describing the people of the island as *the laziest, dirtiest, most thievish and degenerate race of men ever inhabiting the sphere* and to his prescription of *a tidal wave or something to exterminate the population*. It was because of this social diagnosis that, as he wrote in a letter to a friend, he killed several men, women, and children and attempted to transplant cancer to many more. For many years, the fact that he was not even accused after his ludicrous explanation to the colonial Governor in a cable from New York that *the letter actually was not a letter, but merely a parody he had written in private for his own diversion*, was the motive of unrestrained laughter in his inner circle. His colleagues did not believe him because, as they said, *no one can be that stupid, not even a spik*.

The revolutionary leader saw in Cornelius's confession an imminent threat to the very survival of his nation. That was one of the main reasons the prominent intellectual turned radical political leader led his followers shortly after the brazen episode away from the ballots and straight toward armed confrontation with the imperial power. The subsequent murder of several of his closest followers by the Police unleashed a wave of shootouts with police agents and attacks with incendiary bombs against government property. Yet, nothing was deemed by the metropolis to be more threatening to its financial interests than the young attorney's overt campaign to pile up weapons and raise a liberation army.

The colonial Governor and the foreign law enforcement agents agreed that any sort of maneuvering, legal or otherwise, would have to be employed in order to get him out of the way, if only temporarily, and thus set in motion the necessary chain of events. This time around, the revolutionary leader's trip to the

metropolis took him straight to the *Big House*.

He returned ten years later.

—Do you have anything to declare? —the Customs officer wanted to know.

—Only what I have been declaring all along, that time has come for your government to pack up and leave.

—Do you have any agricultural goods, any seeds?

—Yes, I do. I have with me the same seed I had when I was shipped to the North: The sacred seed of freedom.

—That's all. You may proceed.

He did proceed to sow his seed of freedom picking up his revolutionary campaign where he had left it. However, his people's failure to support his armed uprising for fear of reprisals, in turn placed him in jail once more. In the dilapidated old structure built by the Spanish empire in the mid1800's in honor of a princess, he was at the absolute disposal of the government of the metropolis, which always kept a watchful eye on the island's struggle for independence. Yet, it was not aware of the fact that its famous prisoner had an archenemy who happened to be a consultant for its Atomic Energy Commission. Knowledge of it came when law enforcement secret agents inquired with the CIA about a *clean* way of getting rid of a *foreign enemy* without leaving visible traces. The question was brought by chance to Cornelius's attention after a careful study by those in the Commission's highest echelons.

The researcher's animosity toward the prisoner dated back two decades, when both attended Harvard University. He remembered that, as a medical student, he had heard about the law student's radical speeches in support of the independence of India and Ireland and of his strong leadership among students. The future physician, the spoiled only son of an ophthalmologist, was astonished to learn that the political activist could speak several languages and had degrees in military science, philosophy and letters, and chemical engineering. He

wondered why nature would so endow a *nigger* as to enable him to be at Harvard, to begin with. In no way would he have even suspected that his archenemy came from a home immersed in dire poverty.

Those memories came back at once when the question was posed to him at the Atomic Energy Commission by secret agents. The medical researcher the prisoner relentlessly had accused of genocide had designed the solution long before, for he used to have recurring fantasies about utilizing him as an experimental subject. He gladly shared the plan with them without the slightest hesitation and, deeply religious as he was, he thanked God for the opportunity of at last bringing this dream to reality.

Soon thereafter, the prisoner was transferred to a makeshift cell in a corner on the top floor of the old historic jail, with its back to a centenarian wall and facing a five-story building across the street. Agents of the Office of Naval Intelligence clandestinely rented an apartment on the second floor and shortly thereafter the solution was under way.

Listen carefully and ask no questions —the prisoner told two other prisoners who were transferred to his cell—, *you both are in danger here. In fact, everyone in this jail may be in danger, but it's more dangerous in this cell. It's not easy to understand, but you must ask to be taken out of here* —he urged them.

His comrades wanted to know more and he explained that rays of electronic origin were being aimed into his cell from the building across the street, causing burns to his body almost the size of a half-dollar coin. He showed them his horribly swollen and burned legs and arms, his charred intimate parts and the swollen and rigid neck. He told them that he felt some degree of relief only by applying to his burns towels dampened in ice-cold water, but now, for that reason, he had been denied access to both, water and ice.

I am being killed very slowly, but very definitely —he told them —. *My whole body is being turned into a cancer, cell by cell. When I die, the prison doctors will*

certify that the cause was a cardiac arrest, though my heart has always being as strong as my determination to struggle.

When word of the prisoner's torture was published by a columnist, the macabre revelations caused international protests and requests from Latin American nations for his immediate release. Leaders of all kinds of non-governmental organizations demonstrated in their respective countries in his support. Fearing that he would die in jail the colonial Governor set him free with conditions after consulting his superiors in the metropolis and forced him to leave when he steadfastly refused to accept a conditional freedom.

Graphic evidence of his deteriorating physical condition immediately became public knowledge and, as the news traveled rapidly throughout the world, the issue was brought to the medical researcher and former Army colonel, at the Atomic Energy Commission. Recalling that the colonial government had bailed him out of his murder cases only some 20 years before by claiming he was mentally ill, he once more had the solution: *Who in this world*, he asked rhetorically, *would seriously believe that our government would resort to murder as a way out of adversity? The boy merely is crazy.*

The government of the metropolis immediately requested from a psychiatrist a diagnosis of insanity upon which the Governor announced that the famous prisoner was suffering *praecox senile dementia* and stressed that he was receiving adequate treatment for his physical illness. News of the revolutionary leader's fabricated insanity spread quickly throughout the island and beyond and provoked more armed attacks against the imperial power in its own turf, at the very seat of government, and against its puppet government at home.

The colonel was kept informed of the progress of the solution, as he had requested, and it was him who consented to the Governor's recommendation that the prisoner be hospitalized after suffering a heart seizure. It was because of the need to consult the confessed killer that the revolutionary leader did not

receive any treatment while in prison until four days after the heart attack.

So as not to increase the government's involvement, public hospitals were to be avoided, but private hospitals were reluctant to keep a patient under guard because that would be tantamount to turning their facilities into an extension of prison. Neither would he be interned in an insane asylum because such was a practice that the government of the metropolis attributed to totalitarian regimes. That's how the famous prisoner ended up in none other than the very private hospital in which the doctor had killed his experimental subjects.

The solution, originally consisting of the projection from afar of beams produced through light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation, was later on substituted by the surreptitious administration of cesium 137 in his meals, as well as by frequent and massive doses of X rays purported to be of a therapeutic nature. The fiery orator, ostracized for long years from those for whom he struggled, constrained in a cold wheelchair, burned and weakened, and no longer able to speak, finally succumbed, alone in his hospital room under police custody, his head tilted toward his left shoulder with the left arm hanging, his middle finger almost touching the floor and his flag held firmly in his clenched right fist. #

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