Dr. Murderstab's big announcement

In the city of Murderstabtonia the voice of the supreme ruler of the world blasted out across the streets in an eardrum shattering volume. It was a voice that commanded respect, had brought the world to its knees, and had made ear plug manufacturers rich. The speech started simply with "I surrender!"

Redbats' eyes opened and he let out a slow groan, much like the thousands of others in the city. It was 2 AM on Murderday, formerly known as 'Tuesday', and for the next few minutes nothing with working ears would be able to sleep. The most powerful man on the planet had managed to sneak into the global radio station. *Again*.

"That is to say, good citizens of the planet Murderstab, I have reformed!" Redbats' sleepily nodded his head as crawled from his bed. "Rejoice, citizens, for the long night is over and I will officially surrender to the powers of the world in, let's say, six hours?" Someone muttered incomprehensibly to the supreme leader as Redbats went to the corner of the room that had been designated as the kitchen area with the help of a lot of imagination. He brushed aside a small impoverished family of spiders and prepared to make a strong cup of water while thinking very hard about coffee. He was going to need it. Clearly someone had failed spectacularly at their job and had allowed *guests* on the supreme leader's broadcast.

With another cup of water he went downstairs. No need to lock his doors, they had been banned ever since the supreme leader had walked into one on live television, and went to the common room downstairs. "No need to panic, good people. The transition of power will be dealt with by the best experts we can muster up. I assure you this will be permanent. Remember our motto is 'no backsies'. This meeting is of global importance and will be held at an undisclosed location on the Skull Peninsula for safety reasons. " For a second the speakers were silent. "I mean *not* the Skull Peninsula. It is in a different place."

The nail biters had already taken up all the good spots on the couch. Redbats couldn't believe there were still people who took it all seriously, but you could always find a few chumps who actually listened to the leader's broadcast instead of enduring them. "Trade you a seat for some fantastical coffee?" He offered Murmer, a skeletal looking man with thin grey hair, the glass. Murmer just loudly shushed him and went back to listening. Redbats shrugged and imagined some extra sugar inside his cup before taking a disgusting sip. It was something of a skill to drink without tasting the water.

Then something incredible and unheard of happened.

The speakers said "That will be all." There was the strange sensation of an entire city suddenly clutching its heart in a terrible anticipation, like everyone knew for certain something horrible was going to happen and it would happen specifically to them. Only Redbats was right. The speakers went back on with an electronic screech and said the most horrifying words anyone in Murderstabtonia could imagine. "Oh! And one more thing, I'm going to need some volunteers."

The sudden perfect coordination that followed was something that would have made any drill sergeant blush. The entire apartment complex, in one voice, cried out the same words: “Not it!”

The whole apartment, except for Redbats, who had the misfortune of choking on his horrible water. “Not it,” he coughed out far too late, “do over! I wasn’t ready! Do over! Come on you guys!” Strong arms grabbed him and heaved him up despite his protests. He screamed as he felt a dozen pens and markers writing on him. His neighbors shouted “no backsies” and threw him on the streets. Dazed, he looked at his chest and arms. ‘Volunteer’ had been written all over him.

All across the street he could see similar scenes playing out. Gunshots rang out, fires raged and a particularly dramatic final stand was happening on the roof of the neighboring building. At the end though, each building dumped out one volunteer.

With a screech a fleet of unmarked white vans came charging around the corner like something out of a deranged stranger danger PSA. Men in black suits with masks poured out of them whenever they stopped at a building and forcibly collected the volunteers. Redbats decided that enough was enough. He wasn’t going to sit down and take it anymore. It was time someone did something about all this! With a grunt he stood up, swore loudly, and defiantly ran away to find someone else who could go and do all that.

He didn’t get very far.

Before he knew it he was in the back of a van with his hands cuffed and a bag over his head. The whole process had only taken a few seconds. “Wow, you guys are really good at this.”

The only sounds in the van were the engine roaring and the captives being thrown around as they sped around corners. Then he heard a loud sniff and someone across from him in a fragile voice said “Thanks man, that’s really kind of you.”

Redbats heard the sound of someone poorly pretending not to cry and he leaned in. “You okay?”

“Yeah man, it’s just,” the man snorted loudly into a tissue, “it’s just so nice to be appreciated for once, you know? People are always complaining and yelling at me, but I’ve been abducting people for years now and I’m damn good at it. I just wish more people would see how hard I try.”

“It’s tough out there, but don’t let them get you down. You have to follow your dreams. I mean, I sometimes dream about eating real food and drinking filtered water, you know? Aim high and all that.”

“Thank you. You’re a good soul,” he heard the man standing up and felt a gloved hand on his shoulder. “I’m really sorry about this.”

Redbats tried his best to look sympathetic, and for someone wearing a bag on their head he thought he did about as well as could be expected. “It’s all right. Getting kidnapped isn’t all that bad.” He laughed a bit “I thought it would be a lot more violent.”

“Not what I meant.” Redbats’ air was forcibly relocated from his lungs to make room for the fist that landed in his stomach. “No talking during the ride. It is standard procedure, I’m sure you understand.”

This was a lot more like how he had imagined it. His body agreed and decided the best way to handle the situation was to pass out. So that was what he did.

Redbats was in an extremely comfortable chair. The air was nice and cool, there was soft classical music playing the background and for a moment life was good. He opened his eyes and saw he was several thousands of feet above the ground. He smiled lazily, blinked a few times, looked at the ground again and screamed.

“Whoa, whoa, son, calm down!” He wasn’t going to calm down! He was falling to his death and he was going to scream and yell until he felt better about the whole thing. “Hey, Look at me!” Hands twisted him away from the window until he looked into a face that only a mother could love. The man had a large brow, strong nose, a wild beard and in general looked like the man and evolution hadn’t been on speaking terms lately. It didn’t make Redbats feel like screaming less at all.

“You’re okay. Everything is okay. What’s your name, son?”

Redbats’ eyes went left and right as he saw several people looking at him from over their chairs in annoyance or some sort of bored curiosity. A couple of security people had their hands on stun guns and were eyeing him with outright hostility. That made him feel a lot better. Most people wouldn’t bother with social etiquette while falling to their doom. He looked back to the man. “I;m Redbats from Murderstabtonia.”

The man held out a hand that must have been a shovel in a previous incarnation, Redbats shook it. “Great to meet you, Redbats from Murderstabtonia.”

That was not something he heard very often, but today had been off kilter anyway. With some relief Redbats saw that his hand was still intact when he got it back. “Great to meet you too, sir, uh,” He glanced down the man’s shirt and saw an extremely helpful nametag. “Sir, president of the United States of America. Is that a baptismal name?”

The president laughed and shook his head genially. “I’m Ruberstar from Murderstabpolis. Unless your name is ‘aide to the president of the United States of America’.”

He looked down to his shirt and saw a similar tag that indeed pronounced him to be an aide. An aide! Redbats was furious. Him! An aide! To the president of all things. He had never

been so offended in his life. “Well, I don’t know what any of those words mean, but I don’t like this one bit.”

“I’d say you’re not the only one.” Ruberstar reached over Redbats and thankfully closed the window. Redbats had always hated it when airplanes had come roaring over his apartment and had not expected to hate being on the inside even more, but when he couldn’t watch outside it wasn’t all that bad.

In the front of the plane someone clapped their hands together and yelled out “Attention scum!” Redbats assumed that probably meant him and turned to watch. A tall woman with short blond hair and eyes as warm and inviting as a sharpened icicle stood in the aisle with her black jacket flapping in the air conditioning. “We will shortly be landing on the Skull Peninsula to meet with Dr. Murderstab. I’m sure you all heard the announcement this morning.” She rubbed her temples, “The world wide announcement. With *guests*.” Redbats had heard that government officials had speakers installed directly inside their homes and the woman’s expression was all the confirmation he needed for that rumor. “In about two hours Dr. Murderstab will surrender all political powers to the remaining governmental bodies in the world.”

“What governmental bodies?” The president spoke up which Redbats thought was a phenomenally bad decision. He sank as far as he could into his cushy chair while the woman’s eyes locked on to Ruberstar much like a turret would.

She smiled like a really mean shark. “Excellent question! There are none left. It is, however, my job to give Dr. Murderstab whatever he wants. So, if he wants governmental bodies in his doom fortress, I will provide.”

“Is ‘aide to the president of the United States of America’ a governmental body?” Redbats had seen that the president hadn’t exploded under the lady’s gaze and had gathered the courage to make a bad decision or two himself. A lot of people in the plane suddenly were nervously checking if their name tags had any of these dangerous words on them.

The woman gave the shark smile again and that pretty much told Redbats all he needed to know. “My apologies, aide, but there are no backsies in this world.”

The doom fortress on skull peninsula was actually a pretty nice place. There was a fresh breeze from the sea, a tropical forest, beaches of fine sand next to clear blue water and there were hardly any skulls around. Best of all, Dr. Murderstab’s cafeteria was serving fast food with free toys. Redbats got a sticky hand toy and the president got a small robotic fish that could sing up to two songs.

Chairmen, Monarchs, Presidents and people with other important sounding nametags were chomping down on fries and burgers and the mood was good. That is, until Dr. Murderstab had to come along and ruin it all.

He walked through the doorless door frame and stood with a light smile on his face while the room went quiet. He was a strange man, not at all like Redbats had imagined him. He didn't have a robotic limb or a scar across his eye; he didn't even wear a lab coat, the sellout. He looked more like some kindly old grandfather that just happened to be the leaders of the planet.

"Greetings, leaders of our beautiful planet."

"Hey," Ruberstar managed to say through a hamburger. A few dictators and divine emperors managed a respectful bow.

Dr. Murderstab stood in front of the cafeteria and with a gesture from his hand a projector slid down the ceiling. With another the lights in the room went dark and a bright white square appeared on the wall. "I'm sure you are curious as to why I called you all here."

"It is a simple matter of world peace." A tall muscular man with a robotic arm and a scar across his eye came in wearing a labcoat.

"Ah, let me introduce to you my dear assistant Dr. Megasatan. He is the one you can thank for my inspired broadcast this morning, along with the lovely director Evilina, who you already met on the plane this morning." The man also was decent at imitating a smiling shark and Redbats wondered if there was a school around here for that.

"It was brought to my attention by them that we have an absolutely horrible state of diminished world peace. You see, this used to be the situation before I liberated the world." A map of the world appeared on the screen where the land was divided in red and green patches. "The green countries are where there used to be peace and the red ones are where there used to be war."

He clicked once again and now a map appeared that was completely green. Dr. Murderstab scoffed. "Awful, isn't it?" Several people agreed and Redbats nodded along. This presentation really was subpar. "The amount of wars has been brought to zero, but the amount of governments at peace is now only one! An unacceptable decline!"

"So, we have declared a bold and new strategy to ensure the amount of peaceful countries will grow exponentially." Director Evilina had snaked her way into the room and had taken up position next to Dr. Megasatan.

With another click the world map was divided by a line. The left side said 'Director Evilina' and on the right was 'Dr. Megasatan'. On closer inspection that appeared to be incorrect, there actually was a small dark spot on the map Redbats had first thought to be a stain, but it was actually a network of thousands of lines.

"This new plan will create thousands of countries in this spot here. All independent and at peace." Dr. Murderstab smiled like a very unstable man who dared other people to call him

out on it. “Of course, to ensure this peace we will give the largest parts of the world to my trusted underlings. They will keep you in line. I will sacrifice my own position as leader and protector of the world in the name of peace.”

The president of Peru raised her hand, with a nod of the doctor she stood up. “How big will my country be?”

Dr. Megasatan opened a folder and flipped through its pages for a few seconds. “Peru, correct? That would be two square feet.”

“And China?” Its president wiped the chicken nuggets from his face as he looked up.

“About three and a half square feet.”

The man gave a smug smile and leaned back in his chair. “Suck it, Peru!”

That was it for the civility in the room. People stomped over each other to get to the folder. Complaints and insults were thrown around as the various leaders bemoaned their fate or rubbed it into the faces of their competition. The queen of England caught an elbow in the face while the Sheikh of Bahrain body slammed a politician through a table.

A deafening shot rang out across the room and Dr. Murderstab bellowed “Stop that! This is exactly what I was talking about! Now you will all play along nicely or else.” He waved the gun around, making it very clear that the ‘else’ would be loud and painful. “Now are there any more questions?”

Redbats raised his hand against his better judgement. “Excuse me? Dr. Murderstab? What is a war?” This all didn’t seem really peaceful and genuine to him, so he thought he’d better ask just to be sure.

The doctor smiled genuinely at that. “An old and barbaric practice that I have banned from this world as well as I could. That you have to ask what it is, well, it does a man good.” He pressed his glasses back on his nose. “You see, once the people of this world thought it was a good idea to kill people if they didn’t get what they wanted. Bad enough in individuals, but when you got countries involved it was a whole different beast. Why, I even had to do a bit of war myself to get the world in shape if you would believe it.”

“So, how did you win?”

“Well, I am an esteemed graduate of the school of psychology. I simply convinced the leaders that they were unhappy in their positions and should be at home and be depressed. If they didn’t listen I just used my personal teleporter that I built in my spare time and shot them with a gun.” He pulled a little cube from his jacket that had ‘teleporter of Dr. Murderstab, please return if found’ written on it.

Ruberstar pushed Redbats out of the way. “Son, are you telling me that to rule the planet all you have to do is win a war where you kill the people you don’t like? And then you get all the power and good stuff?”

“Exactly! It’s a good thing we don’t do that anymore.”

A sticky hand toy sprang out twice across the room and came back to the president of the United States of America with a personal teleporter and a gun.

“You stole my toy.” Redbats was heartbroken as the president lorded over the room. The sticky hand had even been snot green, the coolest color.

“Sorry son, this has to be done.” He raised his gun at Dr. Murderstab and coldly said “I declare war.”

“You can’t do that!” Dr. Murderstab cried out. “That’s illegal, you give that name tag back right now, mister!”

Fifty years of unchallenged peace was killed with three words. “No backsies, son.” He shot Dr. Murderstab, which was just kicking peace while it was down. “There is going to be some changes around here.”

“I’m not so sure about that.” Director Evilina and Dr. Megasatan stood side by side with guns drawn. The fate of the entire world would be decided in the next few moments.

Redbats didn’t stay for that part though, as he had decided to sneak out of the buildings before things got even more stupid, which they invariably did. He jogged from the building down to the beach and grabbed some coconuts that he had a fine time trying to open up. As he sat down and sipped from the cracked fruit he thought that life could be pretty good if you just sometimes could bring yourself to walk out of a room when people started to draw guns. The doom fortress exploded in the distance and Redbats nodded to himself.

As the only surviving political body in the world that wasn’t currently charred or shot he voted unanimously to pass his proposal to immigrate himself to the Skull peninsula and to settle down as a naturalized citizen. He held a little speech in front of a bunch of interested crabs about how the responsibilities of leadership had been growing too stressful lately and that he had decided to step down to spend more time on building his hammock.

A passing bird gracefully took his nametag and became the new official aide to the president of the United States of America, Redbats wished it the best of luck, but he knew it would do a great job.

Redbats knew that the best way to live a happy life was just to make someone else do your work for you.