

THE GORGE TEMPLARS

Mein Apollo

Its almost four thirty in the morning, Paul has been up all night trying to figure out why his friend's sever in Stuttgart was still off-line. His room has always been full of "geeky" items. The sound of his sever, equipped with twelve fans, overtook the low volume of heavy metal playing on his stereo. With all the posters hanging on the wall one would interest everyone the most, a large mug shot of Paul. The glamorous portrait he got when he took activism a step too far.

On one of his three large monitors, the instant messenger window showed "l33t_dIrK" online.

"WTF! been waiting for hours man!" Paul wrote.

"I was with my gf.. we were @ teh club" Dirk replied.

"I need Apollo online ASAP"

"no worries... I'll make it happen."

Paul picked up his cellphone and looked up "Geoff -cell", his close friend's number. Paul and Geoffrey have met about a year ago in a rally for action on global warming. The two were different in personalities but had a strong bond in activism. Paul pressed dial, the phone rang for quite a while. At the very last ring, Geoff answered.

"Hey.. everything alright?" Geoff said with a sleepy voice.

"Man! I think we will be up and ready in a couple of hours... I guess today will be the day."

"You know what time it is!!" Geoff is very serious about his nap times.

"You just adore to prove that you have no manners at all!"

"Whatever man... just meet me at "Urban Grind Café" at eleven. Later..." Paul then flipped his flip phone.

Geoffrey was now fully awake and fully upset. But for him, it usually takes three minutes with a cup of coffee to forget all the problems of the world. His ex-coworkers often speculated what his coffee really contained. In the old days when he was working for Northwest General Electric (NGE) he had always kept a coffee reserve for when he might "need a fix".

Geoff headed towards the bathroom. He had a nice yet quick shower; quick since his solar water heater hasn't been working at its best for a while. As for the main ritual of his morning, he usually spend most of his morning working on perfecting his coffee.

While he was waiting for the water to reach "just the right temperature", he grabbed today's Oregonian on his front door and skimmed over the main headlines. He read the title out loud "NGE's Boardman Plant's Extension Goes Live".

"What a lovely news to start the day with" he said. Geoff's love for sarcasm has often kept him in trouble with his ex-bosses. Before finishing his sesame seeds bagel, he was surprised to hear the phone. It was his sister's number.

"Hey !! what's up sis?"

"Uh-huh... yeah..." Geoff went back to the finish his cup of coffee, and maybe have another.

"Uh-huh.." sipping coffee. "Can't she..? I see..."

The call went for a while but Geoff was able to drink the required two cups. After twenty minutes on the phone he said goodbye and concluded his breakfast with yet another sip.

The Urban Life

Paul's laptop was quite the scene for the regulars at the café. With tens of stickers on the back of

its screen, all screaming out loud “Large corporations are Evil”. He not only brought his own beverage to the café, but it was the fact of being a Dr Pepper coke kept the waiters feeling unease.

“Excuse me sir, can I get you anything to drink? Cappuccino? Café au lait?” the waiter said.

“Excuse me, can I be let alone!?” Paul replied while his eyes were focused on his laptop's screen. He dialed Geoff's number for the sixth time now, and it was the sixth that finally made it.

“Hey! whats up?” Geoff answered.

“What's up !? I've been waiting for 40 minutes and trying to reach you with no luck”

“What are you doing !?”

“I had an unexpected visitor. My sister from California called and said that she had a conference at town and wanted me to take care of her daughter while she goes to attend her conference. She is a bit of a troublemaker, the daughter not the mom.” Geoff seemed to be enjoying his time. “We were just leaving the Vista House and heading towards town to meet you at the café. She said she never saw the gorge before. I had to take her to see it, you know how I just adore it!”

“Geoff my man... I really don't wanna hear your life story! Just get here as soon as possible”.

After twenty minutes of waiting, Geoff entered the café accompanied by his niece.

“And who's this ??” Paul said.

“I told you on the phone. Rachel, I want you to meet my annoying waking-people-up-at-four friend Paul”

“So, Rachel is actually about your age, studying political science at UCLA”.

Rachel wasn't paying attention to what they were talking about. She was holding a book titled “Analyzing Politics” with white earplugs attached to her iPod.

“Whatever... I got Apollo up and running.” Paul said.

“Sweet! I called Emma last week and told her that she should expect us this week. I'm so glad she is on the team.”

“I think we can finish this tomorrow. If we do this tomorrow it would look really nice in the media” Paul said while typing on his laptop. He then looked at Rachel “Are you sure you want her to be with us? she will only bring trouble and ask questions and what-not”.

“Her? Don't worry she won't get in our way. I had to take her since she doesn't know anyone in town”

“When are we going to see Emma? I'm kind of tired, is there a place where I can take a nap?” Rachel has finally spoke her first words.

“In case your uncle didn't tell you, we are not on a freakin holiday!” a typical Paul reply.

“Don't worry dear, as soon as I finish my fix of coffee we will hit the road” Geoff said.

The three were now at the table, Paul typing on his laptop's keyboard with dazzling speed, Rachel browsing her iPod's library for Gretchen Wilson's newest album, and Geoffrey reading the rest of the Boardman power plant article while delightfully drinking the rest of his coffee.

On the River, On the Way

Emma's cabin is located in Boardman, a town with a population of 3175. She and her husband were known for their hospitality and compassion towards helping people. They were also known for their efforts in spreading social awareness. Her husband, a documentary film maker, is a known veteran when it came to environmental warfare with industries and power plants most notably the ones owned by NGE.

Geoff thought that it would be funny if they scared Emma with a prank. When they reached the house he quickly pulled over, with his Honda Civic Hybrid, and pretend to be on the run. He honked twice then got out of the car and ran to the door.

“They are onto us!” screaming at Emma's door.

“Oh God! Geoffrey, whats going on!” Said Emma from behind the door.

“We were setting the wires up and two guys were driving by and they... Please let us in!”

Paul was getting his stuff out of the car and looking at the ongoing drama at Emma's door.

“Your uncle can be really cheesy you know...”

“I know” Rachel replied.

The two got their luggage out and headed towards the soap opera going on at the door.

“I heard the news from Jerry... I'm really sorry. The world has lost a great man.” “We all have our time sooner or later” Emma said with a melancholic face.

“So.. I'd like you to meet the man who's going to make it happen. This is Paul.” “Nice to meet you” said Paul while dragging the bags. “What do you have in these fucking fat-ass bags anyways?!” Emma looked at Geoff. “You will get used to him and once you know him you will love him” Geoff said with a smile.

“Hi, I'm Rachel” said the young brunette at the stairs.

“Oh! And this is my lovely niece Rachel”.

“God! you reminded me of your uncle in the old days... Back when paper mill plants polluted the river and no politician seemed to care...”

Paul interrupted her speech “Do you have Internet around here?”.

Emma has already prepared dinner for the guests. After dinner, everyone picked his plate and headed towards the kitchen. Paul, Geoff, and Emma were having discussions about NGE's current plans, the pollution coal-power plants are causing, and global warming. Just when the discussion heated up Geoff decide to go out for a drink and Paul came along. “Just don't stay late! You have a big day tomorrow”.

Resocialization

Rachel and Emma stayed at the house and got to know each other. Emma offered tea to Rachel but she wasn't that big on tea.

“So... unless we decide to change our habits and our addiction to oil, nothing much would really change” Emma's respond to Rachel's questions about the current foreign policies.

“But I mean whoever controls the oil, can control a great deal of the world” Rachel said.

“If we back out and leave things as they are, we will create a vacuum in that region and someone else will fill it out... and then only God knows what would happen!”

Emma was enjoying her time with Rachel. Having an opposing point of view helps us identify our own, thats what she always believed.

“Politician these days rarely think about the future, their line of sight is short and concentrated on cash”. Emma finished the last of the dishes and sat down on the table with Rachel.

“Take for example the Umatilla chemical dump,”

“Whats that?”

“Its a military facility a couple of miles from here... That place was and still is a total mess, with nerve gas containers laying around. That place at some point in time had 4 million pounds worth of mustard gas! Another example is the Boardman bombing range nearby... During the fourties it covered about ninty-five thousand acres... wildlife planes ready to be bombarded by the air force for just being wild”.

Rachel never liked the negative view that most environmentalist seem to hold. “But I think things have changed now and more environmental regulations are set; with governmental agencies taking care of nature and stuff”

“Dear... without the efforts of people like me and your uncle, without the thousand of voices that go out and speak about these issues, no one would move a muscle”.

“Speaking of my uncle, what exactly are they going to do tomorrow ???” Rachel asked.

Meanwhile at the city's bar Paul, Geoff, and Robert, Geoff's old friend, were discussing the plans for tomorrow at the bar's counter. Paul have ordered a bottle of Beck's, while Geoff was having his second Widmer.

“So why name it Apollo?” Geoff asked.

“Thats not the point! So anyways, the chain of connections will ensure that we don't get traced.”

Paul said with enthusiasm.

“And after we get into their systems we can retreat outside the plant and carry on with the plan. NGE will really gets it hard this time.”

“I don't know guys but this sounds really dangerous. So you are saying that you will turn off the entire network of power plants and make it look like its Boardman's fault!! I can't really get involved in this...” Robert said.

“Would you keep it quiet Bob! Beside we are only planning on taking down part of the network just for a little while... to prove a point” Geoffrey was afraid that other people at bar would hear their discussion.

“I think this is how tomorrow should workout, first thing in the morning...” Paul went on describing the plan for tomorrow's operation.

“You are from the city aren't you? What you guys talking about??” Said a drunk man at the other end of the counter.

“God damn eco-terrorists!! bunch of hypocrites driving their cars around... living in their fancy houses...” the man seemed to have heard some of their discussion.

“I think we better leave before someone gives him some attention” said Geoff while drinking the some beer of his unfinished bottle.

“Nice seeing you again Bob, try not to tell on us okay!” he then signed Paul that it was time to leave.

Back at Emma's house the women were still talking politics.

“Why are you still talking with her? She is probably a republican she won't understand...” was the first thing Paul said when the men entered the house.

“Good evening to you too... and I'm not a republican, jerk” said Rachel.

“What are you then?” Paul asked.

“I try to be independent when it comes to politics... I'm not really part of a cult like you guys” Rachel explained.

At the end of Rachel's sentence, Geoff yawned and the rest picked it up. Emma's cabin had only two bedrooms. Geoff decided not to get off the couch since he was too tired to get up to a bedroom. Paul and Rachel had to share the bedroom with the two bunk beds. Emma made sure everyone got what they needed and they were comfortable.

Paul has taken the upper bed, and the two started talking about family, college, cities they've been too, the weather, and manners.

“Okay, a personal question now, why are you pissed off all the time?” Rachel asked.

“I don't know... I just don't like ignorance”

“But you love labeling people??”

“Well.. I guess... sorry about earlier.”

“Its okay... Its just that coming from someone who hates ignorance to collectively say that republicans don't care about the environment”.

“Maybe... actually, my mom used to volunteer for the GOP campings”.

“You didn't mention your mom before... Does she live in Portland?”

“She used too... she died 7 years ago from a stroke” Paul said with a sad voice.

“Doctors said that many factors might have caused it... she was fine before her work consulting with the Centralia plant”

“So you think NGE caused her death?”

“You sure ask a lot of questions!!!... I don't think that NGE caused my mom's death... but from that time on I got interested in social issues, got involved in environmental movements, volunteered in nonprofit organizations, and even got arrested in a protest” when Paul remembered the incident he had a smile on his face.

“Well it seems like you're a caring person... an activist with a big heart... why the attitude?”

“Whatever...man... I'm tired and I have a big day tomorrow” Paul was trying to change the

subject.

“Lets just go to sleep”.

Moment of Truth

Early in the morning, the sky was hinting out to a rainy day. The house's population was awake more or less at the same time, except for Paul who's been having trouble getting enough sleep. Emma was in the kitchen preparing breakfast, one could smell eggs, bacon and sausage from the living room along with sounds of plates clanking together and of the toaster popping up. Geoff, as usual, was busy with his coffee.

Rachel was resting on the couch flipping through her book when Geoff came and sat on the other couch. “You sure like reading... thats good.. I've always enjoyed reading when my sight was better...”

“I just have to finish a couple of chapters for my next midterm...” Rachel replied.

“So... I heard you guys talking last night... what do you think of Paul???”

“I thought you were asleep when we went to bed... anyways... in general he is a jerk” Rachel flipped a couple of pages. “He tries hard... acting so idealistic... and he is cute”.

“Have you waken Paul yet Geoff?” Emma asked from the kitchen.

“I'll go wake him up right now...” said Geoff.

After the group finished breakfast, Paul and Geoff said goodbye to the ladies and drove to their destination. Geoff drove the car, Paul had the maps on his computer. He was also working on his program that will infiltrate the power plant's system and tries to spread across the power networks of the northwest. If everything goes as planed the power stations across the area will start to shutdown and the apparent cause would be Broadman's new extension.

They pulled over to a close enough area along the plant's fence. Geoff had his sources when it comes to power plants' maps and schematics.

“So you are sure we're in a good location?” asked Paul.

“Yes... we now just have to wait and try to figure out the weakness in their security measures.. If only Bob went along... He would've made our job much easier”.

The two stayed in the car and started observing the area. They measured the time between guard circulations. They tried to make an assessment on how to get to the control room where they can install their wireless unit. Both came to the same conclusion, “It's way harder than I thought...”.

Geoff looked at his watch, it was 4:53. “I guess we should buy something to eat.. this looks like its going to take long” Geoff said. “We should try and be careful not to create suspicion” Paul said. The two drove to a grocery store and bought snacks and other dry meals they could use on a stakeout. When they got back they decide to get closer to the plant's fence.

The sky started to rain, it doesn't rain that often in the area but today was a special day. It was a little after sunset with no hope of getting close enough without being spotted. Paul noticed an area were the lights were still not fully installed. “I think I found it Geoff” he opened the car's door and slowly checked the area around. “What do you think?” he asked. “It looks promising...” Geoff said.

The two slowly and cautiously moved to the fence. The new section's fence was still basic and it was easy to cut through, and the two were finally inside the plant. They followed the maps that Geoff acquired of the buildings. Their destination was a control room that had the main computer for the new extension.

There were three people inside the control room. Paul had it already figured out, he didn't need to get in to do the job. He had a map of the infrastructure with all the wires going in and out of their system.

“Hurry up!!!” Geoff was very worried since the new guards shift might check the area soon.

“I'm working on it... damn it!!”

“Okay... It's working man!! It's working!!! Apollo is now online !” Paul shouted.

The two swiftly retreated to their car, just close enough for Paul's wireless controller. Paul started navigating through the plant's system. Trying every back-door he could think of to get full access to their system. He was expecting solid security measures, but usually Paul always finds his way with computers.

“So plan 'A' will not work... Now for plan B”

“What will you do ?” asked Geoff.

“Patience man... since I can't access anything outside the plant I'm going to do all I can to bring this baby down!”. He then punched in some commands on his laptop.

Geoff was worried and excited at the same time “What are you doing??? come on, tell me what is...” and before he was able to finish his sentence the plant's hissing sound turned into clacking and loud whirring. Paul was able to override the safety measures on the maximum capacity allowed and in turn was able to make it run ten times its capacity.

The two started to hear electricity moving through the large cables. Things at the plant were out of control. Loud alarms going on, plant workers running around trying to make sense of this bizarre incident. And just when Paul and Geoff were enjoying what's going on, as if watching a comedy on TV, the whole plant shut down after a big booming sound.

With the plants shutdown the lights around went down. Every building, house, and street light that can be seen from where they were was now off. “What have we done!!!” Geoff was very shocked by the outcome. In his head he imaged something much more smaller. Paul was working on disconnecting his connection but realized it was already disconnected since all communication towers were shut down.

The two quickly ran into the car. Geoff drove as fast as he can to get further away from the area since it would be easy to spot a lone car at this time of day. “Oh God!! What have you done!” said Geoff.

“MAN! that was AWESOME!! ... you should turn off the head lights!!!” said Paul.

In hope of a faster runaway, Geoff decided to take a shortcut. The car was now driving through this, raining, pitch-black night on a poorly paved road. Geoff was thinking of stopping the car and maybe camping someplace around but the fear of being followed made him carry on driving.

“This ought to teach greedy NGE to think twice before extending their pollution farms...” Paul said with satisfaction and after his words came the silence, the silence before the storm. Their car crashed into a truck-mounted asphalt distributor that was parked on the road. Geoff shortcut turned out to be a road for a long journey...

Epilogue

Rachel has finally been granted a visit to see Paul for the last time before he starts doing time at a supermax prison in the Oregon State Penitentiary. Paul was sentenced "life without the possibility of parole" for multiple counts of unintentional murder and millions of dollars of damage to public and private property. The blackout that the templars caused have created a domino effect of multiple failures in other parts of the state. It has been recorded as the worst that the country ever had. About two hours of complete blackout in major cities including Eugene, Salem, and large parts of Portland. The blackout was responsible for 73 car accidents, 134 reported injuries resulting from loss of electricity, and 3 deaths.

Perhaps, Geoff's death had the most effect on Paul, resulting in his PTSD. Rachel came into the visiting area with tears in her eyes. She made small talk with Paul, and his only response was how sorry he felt for the lives that died because of his actions. He told her how he realized that the end doesn't always justify the means. Rachel tried to be supportive and promised she will try to visit whenever is possible. She gave Paul a kiss on his forehead and said goodbye.