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| The Meeting |
| Short Story Competition |
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| By Louise Farrell |
| 1532 Words |

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The Meeting

The oval boardroom table could easily seat twelve; today only eight members of the Agency were present and the meeting had been underway for half an hour.

“This is absurd, doesn’t the UK’s safety and heritage mean something” exclaimed Daniel.

“Financially we can’t do it anymore Daniel, it has to be moved, there is no other way.” Responded David, “look, I know you’re a relatively new member of the board but there are certain decisions which have to be made and this meeting is to inform you and your counterparts.”

“But it leaves the South-East open to attack!” Each member looked at Daniel and each other, there was tension building in the air. Daniel stood up, pushing his chair quickly away. “If we don’t keep Dane John Mound, we can say goodbye to Canterbury, Sandwich, Dover and everything south of the Thames. The mound in Sussex can’t cover the cities here also.”

“Daniel, Daniel, sit down” commanded David, “it has been done, we’ve signed the deal with China, and the mound will be on the move soon.”

“Daniel, I understand your concern, and I also have them, but it is of vital importance this happens. I know it’s a big step up from intelligence to working with the Agency but understand, all that we do has a definitive reason.” Angela said calmly.

“Has anyone asked it if it wants to move, I know you haven’t sent me over there to ask?” quizzed Daniel.

“Irrelevant really, the US moved one from New York and it went smoothly, no problems occurred during the excavation or the journey, so we surmise all will be fine with this move.” David responded with a slight lilt of trepidation in his voice, although masked in authority.

“And when did they move it? And what happened after?” exclaimed Daniel.

“Listen Daniel, we all know what happened after but this is the risk we have to take.”

“This is my point, since before Roman times, our one has protected those that feed it and you are giving it away to China, it is truly unbelievable.” Daniel flung his arm in an easterly direction, “you know full well that the majority of cities around the world need mounds otherwise they fail to function. You are risking the stability of the country.”

Angela tried to talk over the raised voice of Daniel “How much is China giving us for it David?”

“Six billion”

“I can’t believe this, you can’t put a price on our safety, if we are attacked, it will cost far more than that to rebuild,” shouted Daniel at David.

“The deal is done” stated David.

“I won’t let this happen.” Daniel vented.

“Daniel, I suggest you calm down, otherwise you will find yourself in a very difficult situation.” David calmly stated “you were placed in the Agency because of your knowledge, however, there are many other people who would eagerly take your place and I would assume are less prone to outbursts.”

“Well, as expected, threats, I tell you what, if you drop me in the mound, I’ll explain everything and then we’ll see how it feels about moving to China.” Daniel warned.

Angela interjected again, this time with a concerned yet calm voice, “Daniel, the deal has been done and you are going too far in your reactions. We won’t let you do anything to disrupt the plan, you must understand, it is your choice, but we will stop you. You are one of us now and you must trust the decisions.”

A stony silence shrouded the meeting room; David stared at Daniel, while the others shifted uncomfortably in their seats. Daniel walked towards the window and looked out. From his vantage point he could see people heading to work or university, the shops beginning to open for business, children running after their parents on the way to school. The office workers were hurriedly grabbing a shot of caffeine before heading to their computers. Daniel saw his world beneath his feet, the post van travelling on its errands, the restaurant air vents kicking in for prep time, the tourists arriving in their coach loads.

“Daniel” called David, “I don’t think you’ve yet seen the other reason for the deal.”

“What other reason?” questioned Daniel, walking back to his seat.

“This maybe should have been the one I started with, as it is more suited to your area of expertise and you will understand that what we do here, will affect the whole world.” David calmly assured Daniel. “Take your seat and I’ll explain.” He began to describe the predicament China was in “with its borders so close to unstable countries, an attack on China could start a World War. There is the possibility the Dane John Mound, sited at a prime strategic location could thwart any mobilisation of terrorists or armies against China. As you are aware, the destruction of the mounds in the Middle East has been an absolute catastrophe. But by us stepping in, we hope that it halts further spread of violence. So you see Daniel, this is not just local, our decision affects all the major cities in the world, this is a global decision. One which if not undertaken will have serious consequences”

Daniel listened intently and said “why not send one of the Comrie ones in Perth or Kilross?

“I’ll answer that” said Angela, “Volatility Daniel, they have been appeased for couple of centuries but they are still prone to outbursts. If you remember from your induction, those mounds became very angry in the 1800’s, we can’t have outbursts like that, we don’t trust them as much as the Canterbury one”

“But so is the one here,” said Daniel, “look at the earthquake it triggered this year in May and the ones in 1246 and 1382, because it wasn’t fed on time. How do you think it will feel being moved and heading out towards deep sea, we’ll be lucky it doesn’t cause a Tsunami.”

“We’ve considered that” said Angela, “but ours is easier to placate, we’ll just have to fill it up before the journey. Jones and Carpenter start tonight on gathering sacrifices. We estimate that after filling, it will require seven more people for the journey and once in situ, it’ll be up to the Chinese to feed it, hence the importance of you and the ancient texts”

Jeff Jones and Vince Carpenter nodded at Angela. Daniel shook his head slowly in deep thought. The bigger picture made more sense than monetary gain but he could not help feeling guilt for those who lived in Kent. He knew he was bought into the agency because of his knowledge of arcane languages, but he never believed he would be an integral part of the World Peace Agency and he knew he would be heading to China tonight, if he disagreed he would be heading to the morgue.

“Ok, so I trust there are no more disagreements with the plan of action?” David looked at each individual for assurance, stopping for a while on Daniel. “Right, the plan to tell the local populous is underway, an email has been sent to the local press, regarding an unexploded bomb underneath the mound, this will explain its disappearance. Once the mound has been moved, we’ll fill the hole in with rubble and cover with soil, grass seed and so on. Then once it’s stabilised we’ll put the statue back on top, it will look the same in a few years.”

“Have the church been informed? What’s their view on it?” asked Daniel.

“I must admit, I thought the church might kick up a stink over this” smirked David, “but they are happy to see it go, in fact the Archbishop said ‘good riddance to Satan’s demon’, he is very pleased with the upcoming removal. Although, for the Cathedral to remain standing depends very much on them. Now, are there any other questions?”

“It’s not a question as such, but just to let you all know, the PM knows but the others in Parliament are not to be told of this, as it does not concern them.” Explained Angela, “as they cut our funding, we will recoup it from China, at the same time we’ll maintain stability. If they were to get involved, it would take too long for any of this to happen and by then, WW3 could have started. So stay tight-lipped.” Angela began to develop a wry smile, “I will also be relocating to Sussex and I suggest once the mound is moved you also relocate.”

“Ah, yes Angela, as always thinking ahead, may I advise to the rest of you that because we will no longer have to meet in Canterbury after the removal, you reside either in the West or Northwest of the country.” David recommended.

“Why west?” Daniel asked.

“That question is for another meeting scheduled next year in York, you’ll get a memo nearer the time, but I’m sure you’ll be too busy in China to worry about where to live in the UK.” David replied.

Daniel nodded and walked towards the window and took one last look at his beloved Canterbury, he would miss this view.