



THE THEMIS FILES
ARCHIVE

File No. 002

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INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT WOODHULL, ASSISTANT TO THE
PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

Location: White House, Washington, DC

- Don't you have anything better to do?
- **Not at the moment. Why?**
- You come to the White House every couple of weeks. Sometimes you share some information. More often than not you ask for information.
- **That is an adequate description of the nature of our relationship.**
- Well now, you're just rummaging through my files. Are you here because you're . . . bored?
- **I am not rummaging, I am keeping apprised of current affairs.**
- You don't even know what you're looking at.
- **I most certainly do. This is . . . outdated. Please hand over this one. The large one.**
- You do realize I am the assistant to the president of the United States and not your personal secretary?
- **Do not take my request as a sign of disrespect. I consider one's office a very personal space. I simply do not wish to invade your privacy. The blue one, please.**
- You *are* bored. That's the NSA budget report.
- **I am well aware of that.**
- It's itemized. Here. There's a summary.
- **The devil, as they say, is in the itemized version.**
- It's four hundred pages. No one reads the itemized version.

- **That is precisely my point.**
- I'm not following you.
- **Imagine, for a moment, that you are not the assistant to the president of the United States, but a low-level NSA employee asked to perform a morally reprehensible or illegal act as part of your duties. If you possessed sufficient intelligence, as I know you do, you would realize that, in the event something went wrong, your superiors would be quick to impute the initiative to you, leaving any blame resting squarely on your shoulders. As a precaution, you might want to detail your activities in every report you made so you could, should the need arise, demonstrate that your superiors were well aware of and condoned your actions.**

Your superior, also an intelligent person, would inevitably notice the stratagem. No longer immune to blame, he or she would utilize the very same strategy and include the information in *their* report. The information would thus make its way up the chain of command, that is until it reached the person who authorized the illegal or immoral actions in the first place. That person would now be faced with a dilemma. They could either falsify official documents—never an enticing prospect—or bury the information in a document so titanic and repetitive that no one in their right mind would peruse it from end to end.

- No one reads the itemized version.
- **Exactly. By creating a large enough haystack for the incriminating needle, one can make deniability that much less plausible, and significantly increase the odds of a chair being available should the music ever stop playing.**
- That's . . . horse shit. I'd never deliberately put something in a report if I specifically didn't want anyone to read it.
- **I agree. One needs to feel vulnerable to fear being caught. The impetus to hide things stems from accountability.**
- I have a feeling I should be insulted.
- **My remark was not specifically directed at you. People in high places usually get caught because they believe they cannot.**
- Cannot what?

- **Get caught. They feel no need to protect themselves against criticism or other repercussions because they believe no one can touch them.**
- Whatever. You wanna read budget reports? Knock yourself out. I have a hundred of them waiting for you when you're done with this one.
- . . .
- What are you doing?
- **Reading budget reports. You just said—**
- I know what I just said. I didn't mean now. I'm not going to sit here for hours while you— You're not even reading, really, you're just flipping through pages.
- **Can I leave with the documents?**
- What? No! I was told to help you whenever I could, but I can't let you take these. I'm not leaving you alone in my office, either.
- **Then it would seem you are going to sit here while I read.**
- Like hell I am. I have things to do.
- **What things?**
- All right. I've had enough of this. Get out. Get the hell out before I—
- **What do you think this means? Metallurgical Research on Native American Artefacts. Motive for defunding: No discernible application. PR unsound.**
- You're the one who likes big words. You know what it means. Indian . . . metal things.
- **What does PR stand for?**
- Oh, PR is . . . principal researcher, something researcher. It means he—
- **She. Unless his parents had a cruel sense of humor.**
- Well, *she* . . . is a nutbag. I still don't get that accountable thing.
- **Let us hope that you never have to. Do not defund her yet. I would like to meet her first.**
- What? Who? The nutso?

- **You may call her what you want. Just keep her funds coming.**
- What funds? We're not giving her anything. The NSA is. Was.
- **I am fully aware of where the funds originate. I am telling you to keep this project funded until you hear from me.**
- First, I don't take orders from you. Second . . . *Why?* It's just some old Indian stuff we dug up almost twenty years ago.
- **The report indicates there are seventeen items.**
- A *bunch* of old Indian things. What's your point?
- **It also says there is light coming out of those . . . items.**
- I'm sorry. Are you asking the Office of the President to twist the NSA's arm for money because the report says those things are shiny?
- **Shi-ning. And yes. I believe I am.**
- That's . . . very mature.
- **There is only one short paragraph to go on in this summary. Number of Items: seventeen. Size: 25–30 feet each. Composition: solid metal. Note: Light emanates from the artefacts.**
- Shiny. You just said that. If you want to know more about these things, just read her report. You know she had to turn something in before the NSA decided she'd gone bananas.
- **The word that caught my attention is “emanates.”**
- Me, too. No one uses that word.
- **Emanates, present tense. This entire document was written last week. I do have a penchant for gleamy objects when it comes to adorning a desk or titivating a bookcase, though I do not believe that says anything about my maturity level. I am, however, curious as to how seventeen solid pieces of metal could emit bright, bluish-green light for—how long has it been since they were unearthed?—for seventeen years.**
- Good question. How do you know what color these things shine?
- **I thought it said—**

- No, it doesn't. You've read her report, haven't you? You already knew about her research, and you just came here to get me to secure her funding.
- **You have a vivid imagination.**
- I wasted an hour of my time watching you skim through random files just so you could pretend to stumble upon this?
- **As always, my dear Robert, it was a pleasure.**
- Go to hell!
- **That is a distinct possibility.**