



THE SECRETARY OF WOKE

Naila gasped with delight when ze stepped into zir new office and saw the walls and ceiling painted with rainbows. Ze felt a stirring between zir legs and knew ze would have had a semi-erection if zir penis were still there. But it was gone, removed along with zir testicles during the smoothie operation. Still, the phantom limb twitched at the sight of the paint job that so boldly showed zir support for the LGBTQIA+ community.

Zir desk was boomerang-shaped and had a computer built into its broad glass top. Ze'd told zir new office assistant, a demiboy named Clavian, that ze wanted a screensaver of fanning peacock feathers. As ze approached the desk ze saw feathers stirring, but they weren't peacock. They looked like chicken feathers. Ze felt a flush of anger. Was that to be Clavian's game, to plague with snubs and snickers? Ze'd met him for the first time just the day before and he seemed . . . slippery. He was small and pink and shifty-eyed. He began filling zir in on the latest interdepartmental gossip as soon as they were alone, but after a couple of minutes ze cut him off and he pursed his lips in pique. So he might have struck back at zir with the feathers.

A wingback chair like a big burgundy flower waited in the crook of the desk. Naila sat, laid zir tie-dyed surgical mask aside, and tapped a calendar icon on the glass. Four folder icons appeared. Ze'd check them later; first ze wanted to watch zir arrival at work. Ze tapped a television icon and surfed until ze saw zirself on CNN.

The video was from ten minutes before and

showed zir standing halfway up the marble steps outside. Zir new office complex was still under construction, so ze and zir department were using one of the Senate annex buildings. Fifty or so reporters with cameras and microphones were crowded around zir on the steps.

The reporters looked drab in their gray clothes and black masks, but ze was resplendent in zir rainbow dashiki. The gold hoops of zir earrings matched the ring in the brow above zir left eye. Zir skin too seemed golden in the morning sun. Zir partner had shaved zir head the night before and then oiled it lightly before the limo came. The attention to dress and grooming had paid off. Ze was a hueful shout to the power-brokers who'd denied zir kind a voice in America's government for so long.

Some of the reporters asked questions but ze said ze was busy and they would have to be satisfied with a prepared statement. An aide passed zir a handheld device and ze read from its screen.

"The formation of the Department of Woke, a cabinet level position, was a long time coming. Centuries of white male rule in this country have led to the sorry-ass mess we have today. Politics isn't just about power, it's about power in the right hands. Now I need to go to work. Thank you."

Ze'd wanted to make a grand ascending exit after issuing zir sound bites, but the reporters blocked zir way. One of them, a white man, said that job numbers were improving and the outlook for the economy was hopeful. Ze put him in his place.

"I don't care about job numbers. All the jobs in the world aren't worth anything if we misgender even one child. Now let me pass."

The crowd parted and ze ascended.

Naila closed the video stream and considered what to say to zir employees. They would be expect-

ing zir to address them. Something simple would be best, simple but memorable.

When zir statement was set in zir mind ze tapped a bullhorn icon on the desk. A recorded voice, butch female, said, “Stand by for a message from the Secretary in ten seconds, nine, eight . . .” The countdown was being broadcast throughout the building. It would give the employees time to tune in on the nearest computer.

The count reached five and Naila tapped a camera icon. They’d told zir to look directly at it when speaking. Because of the angle ze would seem to be looking down from a great height.

“Greetings,” ze said when the recorded voice went silent. “I am Naila, the Secretary of Woke, and you are my peoples. I am a genderfluid caramel smoothie, and my preferred pronouns are ze and zir. You will respect my pronouns and those of your co-workers.” Ze paused to let people absorb, and then ze said, “The most important takeaway here is, if you’re caramel colored or darker, I welcome you to the organization with open arms. But if you’re lighter, you’re on probation. MLK said he looked forward to a day when people would be judged by the content of their character rather than the color of their skin, and I embrace that sentiment. I look forward to the day when white people won’t have to be judged by the color of their skin.”

Ze killed the stream and sat unmoving while zir message coursed through the building. Assessments were shifting, careers were rising and falling accordingly. It would be interesting to see who fought through the political currents to reach the top. In a year ze’d be surrounded by the best of the best, the most fierce of the fierce.

Meanwhile there were chores to attend to, so ze tapped the calendar icon again and returned to the four folders. They were devoted to the areas that required the Department of Woke’s immediate

attention.

Ze opened the folder marked “Manmade Climate Change” first and saw an internal daily briefing from the Environmental Protection Agency. Zir phantom scrotal sac crawled. The EPA was headed by a man. A black man, true, but still a man. And cisgender. He still used the pronouns assigned at birth.

Naila read the briefing and was surprised by its candor. It said that CO2 levels were up and the earth was greening. Plants loved the carbon dioxide. But the government’s position would continue to be that the gas was killing the planet. “And since humans are the main producers of CO2,” the report said, “we must expand our depopulation programs.” Those included sterilization, the withholding of lifesaving medical treatments, and the reduction of global food supplies.

A subfolder marked “Memes” looked interesting, so Naila tapped it and scrolled through captioned pictures that the proles had made and scattered across the internet. One showed two photos of Ellis Island. The black and white shot at the top was captioned “100 Years Ago,” and the color picture below said, “Today.” The water levels in both photos struck the exact same place on the side of the island. Rising sea levels were a foundational tenet of the climate change movement, and the meme cast doubt on that tenet.

Naila needed to make zir presence known on the climate issue, so ze decided to dictate a memo. “For internal use only,” ze said to zir desk. Clavian would type up and distribute the statement later. “I’ve just seen the meme about Ellis Island and the sea levels. It needs to be dealt with. I recommend removing it from the internet, shutting down the website where it first appeared, and re-educating its creator at a Hillary Fun Camp. We must be relentless in our fight against. . .” Ze started to

say “climate change deniers” but felt the phrase had grown stale from overuse. Ze needed something new, something fresh but familiar. “We must be relentless in our fight against. . . climatic terrorists.”

Ze knew that most of the meme-makers were just young people with too much time on their hands, and ze might get some pushback for calling them terrorists, but aggressive use of language was vital for effective governance. Control language and you can control thought. That’s why the Alinskyites chose the term “woke” in the beginning; they knew their social engineering would be unpopular and they needed a way to advance it. How better to do that than by implying their opponents blocked progress because they were asleep? Most people weren’t aware of the semantical deception, but some were and spoke their minds anyway. The divisive ones had to be silenced. Despite the cabinet heads’ many differences they were agreed on that, so Naila knew they would support zir recommendations on the Ellis Island meme.

Naila’s meme statement was in-house and classified. Ze still needed to make a public pronouncement on climate change, so ze dictated a note about the Department of Woke being one hundred percent green. Then ze wondered how green they actually were. “Sidenote to Clavian,” ze said. “Find out the real percentage. If we’re not at one hundred, say we soon will be. Say we’re getting rid of paper and switching from fossil fuels, but we need time, and funding, yada yada. And remind me to mention the Brits at the next cabinet meeting. They burn cadavers to heat hospitals, so I want the Department of Woke to implement a similar program. Maybe the Department of Justice can give us a line of credit for fuel. They may not realize yet how commodity-rich they’re about to become with the

Fun Camps, and I want to be first in line.”

Naila closed the climate folder and opened the one devoted to Covid. Ze skimmed through some charts and graphs but took zir time with the daily update from the Department of Health and Human Services. HHS would be zir interface on the pandemic. The department was run by another cisgender man, a Hispanic, and according to Clavian’s scuttlebutt he couldn’t be trusted. He had advanced his career by appropriating the ideas of others.

The Covid update talked about a new strain of the virus in the western states. Somebody had named it “the Spokane variant with bubonic spikes.” Recent polls showed that support for the government’s pandemic policies was waning, so Naila didn’t expect the new scare campaign to accomplish much. But that was fine. Covid had already served its main purpose by getting billions of people around the world to accept curfews and lockdowns. It even spooked the Land of the Free into self-isolating. Americans stayed home from work and binged on takeout food and TV while the country’s economy imploded. So the crisis had shown those in charge how to handle future immobilizations. And they’d be needed, the immobilizations. Too many people were still too independent, and independence was a threat to the collective.

“Covid righteous,” Naila thought. The phrase just popped into zir head, and ze liked the sound of it. “Amend the green statement,” ze dictated. “Have it say we are green and Covid righteous. And monitor social media for use of the righteous phrase. Let’s see how people like it.” Ze thought of the Secretary of Health and Human Services and his penchant for stealing ideas. “Additional note,” ze said. “Asterisk and footnote the ‘Covid righteous’ phrase where possible, to make sure

everyone knows it came from this office.”

Next up was the folder on race relations. Naila scrolled through it but already knew what ze would find. Zir interface on race was the Department of Justice and the Attorney General, an old white man. Ze wondered why they didn't just bar white people from government. The AG acted like he was onboard with the reparations bill making its way through congress, but he wasn't. The bill would seize all property belonging to whites and redistribute it to people of color. Committees were trying to work out the definition of color—three-fifths African, three-quarters Latino and so on—but the AG said the assignment of such numbers would make the bill unconstitutional. He said the Civil War had been fought to do away with the Constitution's “fractionality of personhood,” and it wouldn't be legal to go back.

The thought of the U.S. Constitution made Naila's phantom sac crawl again. The document's emphasis on individual rights was an impediment to global freedom. Humanity couldn't advance if individuals were allowed to stand in the way of progress. But all ze could do until the Constitution was gone was soldier on, and one of the ways ze could make a difference was by emphasizing skin color in zir department.

Ze pulled up a folder of color swatches on zir computer and compared some to the skin on the back of zir hand. Ze wanted a matching shade to use as background for the Department of Woke's web pages. People would be able to hold their hands next to their screens to do a comparison. Anything darker would be okay, but lighter would mean consequences. Ze might reach out to Treasury and float the idea of higher tax rates for the light-skinned.

Ze marked a honey gold swatch that looked promising, and then ze opened the last of the

briefing folders, the one on genderism. It was from the Department of Education. A woman headed the department. She was Hispanic and would pass Naila's swatch test, but she was also cisgender and straight. That didn't seem right. Someone of non-traditional sexuality should oversee the important issue of gender at the federal level.

Naila worked zir way through the folder but didn't see any mention of the new legislation that had been proposed in the Senate. A law that criminalized the spreading of Covid misinformation had just gone into effect, and a brave trigender senator wanted to deal with gender misinformation in the same way. He/she/it wanted to put legal teeth into what were currently just federal guidelines. Naila would get Clavian to contact the Secretary of Education's office to find out where she stood on the legislation.

The genderism folder was packed with information about classroom quotas and test scores. Naila was glad that the subject had been assigned to Education. Schools had been quite successful in teaching the rejection of capitalism, and now they were helping children reject the blindered view of gender. Teachers who believed that gender was determined by genetics were being rooted out of the public school system. Dealing with private schools, however, wasn't so easy. Not all of them could be controlled by threatening their tax-free status. Christian schools were the worst. Many accepted the tax hit so that they could continue to condemn sodomy, and now they were refusing to remove gender-biased words like "brother" and "sister" from their curricula.

The folder contained a video with the note, "Made by a teaching assistant. Clear violations of guidelines." Naila was curious so ze ran the video.

It began by showing a dozen or so children sitting on a carpeted floor. They were smiling

and looking up at something offscreen. After a moment the shot widened to show an intense-looking young white man standing over them. He held a Bible in one hand and a re-gendered government textbook in the other. It was a history book. He raised it above his head and said, "According to the government's teachings, Jesus Christ was a cult leader, and you should report your parents if they pray to him." He lowered the textbook and raised the Bible. "But according to the Bible, Jesus was the Son of God, and he said, 'Honor thy father and thy mother, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Now which book do you believe?"

"The Bible!" the kids shouted in unison.

"And the government says we're supposed to have a 'drag queen story hour' this morning, but instead I think we should study the Sermon on the Mount. Which one do you want?"

"The Sermon on the Mount!" the kids yelled.

Naila couldn't believe what ze'd just seen. Ze backed the video up and watched again, to the point where the man violated guidelines by using the words "father" and "mother" instead of gender-neutral alternatives. A tap on the desktop froze the video on the minister. Naila assumed he was a minister, because normal people didn't express his kind of extremism.

Ze pitied the children he was abusing. The poor things shouldn't be exposed to such retrograde genderism, but how could you fight a school that didn't care whether it lost its tax-free status?

Naila felt a rage begin to burn inside. All zir life ze'd watched helplessly as Christians blocked social progress with their preaching about love and charity. They fed the poor and nursed the sick, areas that were rightfully the government's concern, and the government couldn't do anything to stop them.

Or could it?

Naila saw an opportunity. With the right court case, the government could use some its new laws to set legal precedents in the fight against Christian backwardness. The incident in the video would be the perfect case. Not only had the minister committed gender infractions on camera, but he'd talked about loving people without regard to skin color. The Department of Woke could file charges against him.

Of course the children would have to be rescued first. SWAT teams, social workers and foster homes for that, with positive media spin selling the rescue to the public. But what should be done with the minister? The man's white face seemed to mock Naila from zir desk, and zir rage burned hotter. How could ze make an example of him? Enhanced psychiatrics would persuade him to recant, but he needed to do more. He needed to show remorse in some way that would embed itself in the public psyche.

He would castrate himself. The thought of blood hit Naila's rage and ze felt zirself swell, as if infused with perfumed smoke. The minister would be put on trial for crimes against humanity. It would be a sensational trial, presided over by a handpicked judge who would convict and then pass a sentence of self-emasculatation. Naila would personally record the act and present the video on prime time TV. The proles would be traumatized into abject fear, and even zir fellow cabinet members would be shaken. And while the world trembled ze would demand that zir place in the presidential line of succession be advanced. Ze'd change zir title, too, from Secretary of Woke. Secretary sounded too menial. So did Administrator and even General. Ze needed something. . .larger.

Ze was suddenly thankful for the minister's defiance. Ze would shut down his little Christian school and then move on to others. The power ze

bled from them would fuel zir rage. Soon the smoke within would pour forth and swaddle zir in incensed glory. All would witness and all would be amazed.

Chicken feathers or whatever they were swept across Naila's desk and disrupted zir thinking.

"Clavian!"

"Yes, Secretary?" he answered over the inter-com.

"I want my screensaver changed. I want peacock feathers, like I told you before."

"Yes, Secretary."

He didn't sound contrite. In fact, Naila was sure ze heard contempt in his voice.

"You can fix it on your lunch hour," ze said. The thought of petulant little Clavian working through lunch amused zir, but ze supposed he would strike back by turning the incident into grist for his gossip mill. Gossip. An idea occurred to zir.

"And there's another thing, Clavian. Don't get too used to calling me Secretary." Ze cleared the feathers from zir desk and looked at the minister still frozen in the paused video. "From what I've heard, my title's going to be changed to 'Minister.' But keep that to yourself."

"Yes, Secretary," Clavian said, and then in a lower, conspiratorial voice, "I mean, Minister."

Naila leaned back in zir chair and smiled. Zir more ambitious sycophants should be calling zir Minister by the end of the week. Before long the media would pick up on the change and begin referring to zir as the Minister of Woke. No telling what ze would become after that. Ze'd talk to the architects about making some changes to zir new office complex. Columns rising to vaulted ceilings? Zir desk atop an altar? Crush a people's gods and they will raise new ones.