

In Between

John Charles Miller

“Doesn’t this give you an overwhelming sense of power?” I asked Tom.

“No, there’s no such feeling. There is an ever-present burden of responsibility, wonder, and a fear of doing something wrong,” he answered.

Tom Wallace had briefly explained who they were and why I was here.

I had been taking my usual long early morning walk when, suddenly, I was no longer strolling along the tree-lined parkway. In front of me was a pale, tall thin man dressed in a tightly fitting, two-piece green and blue suit, the sort worn by actors on corny television space shows. Behind him in the dim glow were ten or so people, similarly dressed, in front of large displays and instruments. A star-filled black sky could be seen through a large curving window to the side.

“Welcome, Robert. Sorry to have spooked you; we needed to check on you.”

“Check on me? What is going on? Where am I?”

“Let’s just say you are on a space ship. We are part of a team modifying the streams of time, such that undesirable events seriously impacting humanity don’t occur.”

“Are you some kind of nut? Why am I seeing all this; did you drug me?”

Walking to the window, I slapped it. What I saw looked real, as if I was really looking into space. “I can’t be seeing this.”

“You are, you are.”

“So, where is Earth? Show it to me.”

“There is no Earth where we are. Earth doesn’t exist in this universe. The impact of a large body with what would have been the Earth shattered it completely. What remains is an asteroid belt. The other planets exist, or are similar to those you know. Our ship, better said, our base, is located where Earth would be in your universe.”

“What? This is nonsense! I’m going to call the police. Where’s the phone?”

“There’s no phone. Let me explain. Look at the world today. Don’t you wish things could be better, that life would not have so much lack of harmony in it? What if wars and other conflicts would end?”

“That’s a wild dream. Impossible!”

“Please, let me continue. Dr. James Waltham Hiram, our founder, became tired of world strife and began to research basic causes of war and other human-caused suffering. He isolated these to individuals, and to their attitudinal makeup, that is, how they relate to others. The leaders of the world, in most cases, tend to rise from classes of people who have long dominated society. In many cases, these people rise up because of family wealth or physical size or long-term elevated position of a family within society, or even due to a sudden change in a political situation into which they quickly wedge themselves. They feel being a leader is their destiny. With this in mind, regular people have little choice concerning leaders. Leaders rise, and then they are. Dr. Hiram published none of his theories, so I expect neither you nor the scientific community knew of him.”

“The only Hiram I ever heard of was an old fat rich guy in Omaha, Nebraska,” I said. “Haven’t heard about him for years.”

“Yes, one and the same. However, he is no longer in Omaha nor, unfortunately, with us. He had phenomenal skill with the stock market, amassing a great fortune. Some here attribute that fortune to his having an experimental version of our present equipment.

However, his fortune was spent designing and developing this ship. In the early years, Dr. Hiram selected the people to crew it, whole families of like-minded individuals. The ship was small and we were few, but as we sat in between, or better said, among the universes, we were able to extract the resources needed from other nearby bodies and to further recruit from your time. The ship is now quite large, with a population of over 200,000.”

“None of this makes sense.”

“Robert, as a simplistic example, consider the following. When you were in high school, did you observe the personalities of those who were class officers? Why were they elected? Because of family social position or wealth or physical appearance or strength, they assumed that such leadership was their right. Dr. Hiram investigated this phenomenon quite thoroughly and found, statistically, that these individuals continued their rise in power, eventually becoming local, state and national leaders, not only politically, but also in most human activities. In this manner, they take the future out of your hands. They make the decisions; you just go along with the flow. Bluntly, they are the rivers; you are the sediment.

None of this is bad, except certain individuals know how to gain complete control. That's the problem. Some of them turned out to be quite warped, or others who really maintain control of a nation used them as puppets for their own goals. Your George W. Bush is a strong case-in-point of a marionette. Our role is to modify conditions such that certain people never rise to power."

"Yes, I can see the pattern. So where are you going with this?"

"Here are some brief examples of changes rendered that might be of interest to you, considering problems facing your period of time.

You are aware of the history of the Bush family? Former Senator Preston Bush, the patriarch, is reported to have accumulated wealth and political connections through questionable means. This allowed his son and grandson to rise to the Presidency of the United States. You experienced that, right? However, we have been gone from your universe for some time, such that George W. Bush was not a factor in our own history.

Let me show you what we have done. Come over to this display.

Margaret, bring up File 812-Ba. Thanks.

Here is Preston Bush, the Bush scion, at a point when he was rising to power. We call these 'Power Points'. He's about to make a critical investment to solidify his wealth. See the man standing next to him? That is our man, inserted into Bush's time. Listen. He is persuading Preston Bush to make a different investment, one that is much more lucrative and 'guaranteed'. However, it was a very bad investment and Bush lost almost all of his money due to his greed.

Now, let us move forward and look at his son George Herbert Bush in the autumn of 1976.

File 812-Bb, Margaret.

Here he is in his Waco, Texas insurance agency office. He's not a CIA director, and never will be President.

His son, George Walker Bush? Let's make some viewing adjustments. File 812-Bb-1. Ah, here he is in late 2003. Note the sign above the building."

George Bush Auto Repair Shop

We Fix 'Em All, Y'all

"You can do that? Wow!"

"Another example? Bill Clinton? A few more parties and a bit more beer and pot at strategic moments changed his life. Excellent results; he did inhale! He had considerably less than brilliant grades in three courses in his senior year, primarily due to missed classes and exams. He never went to Oxford. This cut him off before he could become something. He never knew that famous blowjob."

"So, why am I here?"

"Your role is simple. Periodically, we pull someone from your time-period and examine him or her for changes. Certain people play very minimal roles in the stream of history; these are controls. If changes are observed above a

certain critical level, we backtrack and make modifications to changes we have made.”

“Minimal role? That’s harsh, don’t you think? Uhhh, have I changed?”

“No, you appear acceptable. However, it is time for you to return. I will accompany you. Sometimes it’s a shock for the control individual.”

“Why are you pulling that shimmering thing over your head and body?”

“It’s a shield to avoid producing a time-shift wave. If I were to return to my original time without this, it could result in impacts to those nearby in your present. I have been gone too long, approximately 20 years. There’s a ‘snap-back’ effect when returning, like a vacuum being suddenly filled. So far, impacts have been insignificant from previous visits made without the shield, but we don’t want to take any chances.

Here we are back in your time. Not much time has passed since you left, perhaps 15 minutes, so don’t be concerned.”

“Let’s go over to that newspaper vending machine to see what happened yesterday and to get an idea of what will happen today,” I said.

I put a quarter into the machine and pulled out the paper.

Bush Says Iraq War Ending Soon

President Bush, in a campaign speech in Pennsylvania, stated that he sees an end to terrorist activities and insurgency fighting in Iraq over the next couple of months, addressing a selected crowd of

25,000 in Harrisburg. He also hinted that Osama bin Laden would soon be captured.

Stunned, I turned to Tom. "What happened, he's still President? Did something go wrong?"

"No, nothing went wrong. This is the way things are in your time-period. We can't change them, because we came from this period also. Changes made in this universe could, potentially, eliminate us. It's too dangerous."

"But, you said I was a control. You must have done something."

"Some attempts were made. We need to monitor the effects of these early efforts as well as of our departure."

"So what were you showing me on the spaceship? Was that an illusion?"

No, what you saw was real. We cannot change the time stream where we came from, but we can change things for alternate universes. We do have a small research program to change things in the time from which we came, but we are quite fearful of meddling. We have made very minor changes, just to see what happens. Again, that is why you are being monitored.

Presently we are working on five alternate universes, all we can handle with our staff. In those universes, neither the Bush family nor Bill Clinton came to power. However, beyond these individuals, others have screwed up things for the rest of the World.

Our crew and staff are from many countries. Where necessary, we have made changes in some of these as well. Many individuals were modified to

change what occurs in those time streams: Hitler, Stalin, Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, and Fulgencio Batista, to name just a few.”

“Fool who?”

“No, no, his name is Fulgencio Batista y Zaldivar. I should have realized that you would not know who he was, most Americans don't. He was one of the primary causes of the rise of Fidel Castro. He had the support of the United States, primarily during the Truman Administration. He rose from being a sergeant in the Cuban military in the 1930s and was a Cuban dictator from 1933-1940 and President of Cuba from 1940-1944 and 1954-1958. His corrupt authoritarian regime was overthrown on New Year's Day, 1959, by a revolutionary movement led by Fidel Castro. We have made a strong effort to eliminate Castro by ridding history of Batista, but when we do, a similar individual always seems to step into power.

Considering this, we moved back in time to Tampa, Florida in 1898. As you recall, this was the time of the Rough Riders. We added debilitating bacteria to the water supply of those soldiers encamped at the Plant Hotel and surrounding area. The sickness was so bad that the invading force of Americans, including the Rough Riders, never reached Cuba. Eventually there was an internal uprising of locals against the Spanish, resulting in a representative government. Batista never came to power. Fidel Castro? He was born and spent his life as a dedicated rural schoolteacher.

Another approach we used to eliminate Batista was to have a message arrive at Havana, Cuba in early January 1898, providing false information that the

crew of battleship *Maine* was infected with a contagious disease. The Spanish port authorities refused entry of the ship into Havana Harbor. The *Maine* was forced to wait offshore. What divers had found after the original explosion in the harbor was that the explosion was internal, not external due to a Spanish mine. Therefore, because of our actions, on January 25, 1898, the now-documented coal dust explosion in the engine room and adjacent ammunition magazine sank the ship off the north coast of Cuba, not in the harbor. Thus, the United States had no excuse for invading Cuba.

Unfortunately, Teddy Roosevelt, the leader of the Rough Riders, had good aspects that we wanted to preserve. He was warlike, in a gung-ho college boy sort of way. We didn't want that, but admired his awareness of a need to preserve public lands as national parks. Through our efforts, he still became Governor of New York, despite never having been the so-called hero of the war in Cuba. Later, he became President and established the National Park System.

In another case, we had Fidel Castro coming to power, no matter what we did. Nothing seemed to work. Then, we came across the fact that at age 21 he had been a left-handed pitcher. It seems that although he had good control and an acceptable slider, he could not throw hard enough. He was too slight and small. Therefore, we sent one of our Spanish-speaking team into his universe and ran him through a weight and exercise program and provided coaching guidance. The rest is history. He was never spectacular, but it kept him from finishing law school and out of trouble.”

“That story about Castro being a pitching prospect and trying out with the Washington Senators or the New York Yankees has proven to be an urban legend.”

“Right you are! However, he played baseball. We found the box score of an intramural game played between the Law and the Business Schools at the University of Havana where a certain F. Castro pitched and lost, 5-4, in late November 1946. We just improved his chances.”

“Unbelievable!”

“It’s a constant battle. As soon as one misdirected individual is modified, there seems to be another one. You may be quite surprised at who is President of the United States in Universe Four.”

My eyebrows lifted, querulously.

“No, not you!”

“Yeah, yeah. I know. I’m just a piece of sand in your river of history. Are you saying that we are forever doomed to be under the leadership of this type of person?”

“Yes and No. It depends upon the role you and others might play, rather than just being a control person as you now are. Sometimes the smallest changes bring great modifications.

So Robert, what will you be doing? Regular people have little choice concerning leaders. Leaders rise and then they are. You can’t stop this rise, unless you participate in the rise. Part of this participation can be the blocking of things that they want to do.

Think about it. What can you do? We'll be watching."