



The White House Shooter

THIS IS A STORY about a little man who tried to kill the Big Monster.

Although no one has ever seen it up close, everyone knows that the Big Monster exists. The Big Monster is so massive, it's impossible to see it all in one eyeful.

The Big Monster is a bloated blob of insatiable power. It fattens itself on the little man's sweat and blood. It sucks up almost half of everything the little man produces, and if the little man behaves himself, it might let him have the rest.

The Big Monster tells the little man what he can and cannot do. It claims to rule through the little man's consent, but that's a lie. If given the choice, most little men wouldn't consent to be ruled at all. The Big Monster rules through a silent, ever-present threat of terror. And yet it's cynical enough to label its opponents "terrorists."

Most little men whose intelligence is above that of a toilet plunger know that the Big Monster lies to them, yet they're afraid to say anything. They know that the Big Monster kills its critics, and they don't want to be next.

The Big Monster is hard to kill. It has millions of eyes and ears, but no face. Where do you aim?

Every so often, a little man gets brave...or foolish...enough to try and slay the Big Monster, but the result is always the same.

The Big Monster always wins.

Little men come and go, but the Big Monster never dies. Every attempt to kill it only makes it stronger. It merely needs to make an example of one or two little men, and the swarm of other little men fall in line and quietly obey. They accept its fearsome power with a submissive shrug. Better to not disturb it. Better to blend in with the other little men.

Our nation was founded by a group of little men who sought to dispose of Big Monsters once and for all. And somehow they gave birth to the biggest Big Monster the world has ever known.

Washington, D.C., is a city of huge white powerful buildings surrounded by little black powerless people.

Outside the Beltway, the former slaves live in roach-bitten squalor, drowning amid the guns and cocaine which the Big Monster will never admit that it supplies. Clouds of crack smoke rise above condemned tenements. Old men with fingerless gloves huddle around barrel fires. Scabby-legged, orange-Afroed hookers wade among broken Thunderbird bottles. Uzi-toting gangstas chuckle while pissing on their unconscious mugging victims.

The Beltway is the puffy white filling inside a rancid, toxic donut. Blinding power is housed within its bleached-white buildings. These buildings are as white as cocaine. As white as the clouds that God hides behind.

At 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue sits the White House, a giant ice-cream cake of stately colonnades, porticos, and Ionic columns. Within it lives the president, a temporal incarnation of the eternal Big Monster.

September 29, 1994, was a gorgeous autumn day at the tail end of the century which saw the rise of the Super State. Polyester-swaddled tourists milled outside the White House gates, marveling at the giant slab of power which ruled their world. Among the crowd of little people was a bearded Hispanic man wearing eyeglasses and a brown trench coat. One moment he seemed like any other tourist. The next, he whipped out an SKS assault rifle from beneath his coat and sprinted sideways along the White House gates, shooting twenty-nine bullets at our president's home. Rat-a-tat-tat. Peeling caps at Uncle Sam. Twenty-nine leaden sperm in orgasmic fury.

A tourist captured the attack on videotape. Panicked civilians are shown fanning out around the camera, running for cover. One hears screams and the popping firecracker sound of automatic gunfire. As the shooter pauses to reload, a pair of porky off-duty agents tackles him to the sidewalk.

The shooter probably felt powerful while he was pulling that trigger. He probably felt freer than most Little Men ever get to feel. For a few seconds, I'll bet he felt like the Big Monster.

His bullets harmed no one. At worst, the White House suffered a few minor nicks. This was a bungled act of domestic terrorism. But federal PR wizards cited his impotent onslaught as evidence for why their new gun-and-terrorism laws were needed.

The conspiratorially inclined said that the assault bore the appearance of having been staged. They noted that the shooter was a disgruntled ex-Army soldier who'd been held in a military prison where there were rumors of top-secret mind-control experiments upon inmates.

At the time, I didn't care. I didn't worry about the government. I figured that if I paid my taxes, they'd leave me alone.

Six months later. March, 1995.

A LOUD knock on my door.

When I answer it, a tall, well-dressed man with neatly cropped peppery hair hands me a subpoena to appear in a District of Columbia court in the case of *United States of America v. Francisco Martin Duran*.

What is this all about?

He says he doesn't know, hands me a business card with a number to call, and is gone.

Within hours, my tenuous link to Duran's shooting hits the AP wire. In a scribbled note found in his van parked near the White House, Duran had allegedly quoted a sentence fragment from *ANSWER Me! #2*:

Can you imagine a higher moral calling than to destroy someone's dreams with one bullet...?

I initially fear that I'm being summoned by prosecution lawyers trying to implicate me as a conspirator in Duran's attack. But a call to the little number on the business card reveals that it's Duran's defense lawyers who need me to testify that this was an actual magazine he was quoting rather than a figment of his imagination. They make flight arrangements for me to zoom into D.C. and attend the trial.

I'm soon being assailed by Portland TV and print-media news leeches for my comments about the Duran case, and I give them all the silent treatment. What do I tell them?

Geewiz, it was really uncool for him to shoot at the White House like that?

Too bad he didn't kill anybody?

I didn't have anything to do with the shooting—REALLY?

A local TV news report describes *ANSWER Me!* as a "vile" piece of "hate literature" which formed "the Oregon connection" to the White House shooting. It comes close to flat-out calling me an accomplice to the crime. A news jock explains that Duran's lawyers are pushing for an insanity defense, and "as proof" of his dementia, they will demonstrate that he was an *ANSWER Me!* reader.

My gut feeling—and I'll concede that it may be wrong—is that I'm being framed. Something seems artificial about this new spate of trouble. I feel like a stooge. A marionette. A Manchurian Candidate. I feel chosen for a role I don't want to play.

Paranoid?

There are reasons why my sudden "connection" to political terrorism smells fishy to me.

One is that I'd never had any contact with Duran. I scan my mailing list, which was compiled from every piece of mail I'd ever received through *ANSWER Me!*, and his name isn't on it.

Another reason is that *ANSWER Me!* had always been aggressively apolitical. My stance was purposely insular, solipsistic, and asocial. I had always written about violence as a personal act, not a political one. I derided antigovernment types as dull, humorless, and sexually sublimated. In the same issue from which Duran had quoted me, I wrote:

I'm not anti-authority; I'm anti-YOU. I don't want you to destroy the government; I want the government to crush YOU.

ANSWER Me! had disdain for *any* socially motivated action. It refused to align itself with mass movements or utopian pipe dreams. It purposely stayed away from the crowd and its silly politics.

But being subpoenaed by two different governmental entities for two different trials within two months of each other changes all that. Against its creator's will, *ANSWER Me!* becomes a political document. The Bellingham DA and the Federal Public Defender's office dragged it into the political arena. The Duran scandal comes so close on the heels of the Bellingham obscenity trial, my freckled loins chafe. My writing—no criminal activity, only my *writing*—has linked me to major criminal cases on both coasts.

Wowie zowie, what a mountain of shit I've magnetized this time, enough to clog every Port-a-Potty in America. This is the biggest trouble in which I've ever found myself, far more than most people will ever see.

One would suspect that presidential assassination attempts rank rather high on the FBI's list of red-flagged activities. Sure, they fret about drug smugglers and tax evaders and serial killers, but I'd imagine that political terrorists...and the thinkers who inspire them...are at the top of their Shit List. Maybe the thinkers more so than the shooters. When you're quoted by someone who shoots at the White House, the government takes an interest in you.

I feel contaminated by this. Cursed. Bad, bad luck. Bad things will happen. I'm wading into some deep, heavy, deadly shit.

The Big Monster knows I exist.

It no longer sees me as just another little man.

It sees me as a threat.

The Big Monster reaches down and daubs an invisible “X” on my forehead. The black hand of the federal Mafia touches my shoulder. A high-ranking spy sticks pins in a Jim Goad voodoo doll. I receive the Mark of the Beast. A federal *fatwa* is placed on my life.

When someone tells me that the person who videotaped Duran’s rampage was found dead of food poisoning in Brazil three weeks after filming the attack, I feel sucked into some sick spy thriller of which I want no part. Area 51. Men in Black. MK-ULTRA. Masonic witchcraft. Interrogation dungeons. Espionage. Intrigue. Deceit. Manipulation. Conspiracy. Humiliation. Torture.

Nanotechnological needle-injected biochips. Sonic mind control. Two drops of FBI chemicals in my shoe, and I’m dead of heart failure six months later. Or they’ll take the slow, sadistic route and crush my mind with a high-tech psy-ops program to where I’m drooling, cooing like a baby, and smearing my poo-poo on the walls of the tiny steel crib the nice people have prepared for me.

Men in astronaut suits spray my apartment with carcinogens when I’m not home. They plant tracking devices on my clothes. They tap my phone and place video cameras in my bedroom. They comb through my trash. Take pictures of me as I enter my car. Tail my car. Drive me off the road. I wind up as a smudge of protein on highway asphalt, and the newspapers say it was an accident.

Can’t relax for a second. Feverish. Nauseous. Rolling Saharan heat waves of paranoia. I feel like a grizzled old frankfurter impaled on a spinning convenience-store rotisserie, all the juices sweated out of me.

For days I’ve been running and sweating and freaking. When a TV news team knocks on my front door, I fall belly-down on the carpet and keep quiet as if they’re hired killers. If I so much as smile, I fear my eyeballs will pop out.

On the afternoon before I’m scheduled to fly to D.C., I drive with Debbie to Sauvie Island, a paradisiacal squib of wilderness just north of Portland. Blueberry bushes and pumpkin fields and snow-topped mountains which seem as formidable as the federal government. And out there, where my tension has swelled to where I think I might die, the placental sac bursts.

I begin laughing.

I tell Debbie,

If some stupid little magazine I’ve done is being implicated in a presidential assassination attempt, then life is absurd, nothing makes sense, and there’s no point in viewing this situation as anything but a big,

colorful cartoon.

And with that epiphany I’m cured, at least for the time being. I decide to make a big joke of it all. With a horror of this magnitude, comedy is the only way to process it emotionally. It’s like the temptation one gets to laugh at a funeral.

The government has more guns than me, but not as many jokes. I’m not nearly as powerful as them, but I AM funnier.

I plan on wearing a MEAN PEOPLE SUCK T-shirt on the stand. I’ll answer the lawyers’ questions in song. Or mime. Or with a game of charades. I’ll lift my derby, and a dove will fly off my head. I’ll turn it all into an updated version of the Three Stooges’ *Disorder in the Court*. If I bomb, it’ll be in the comedic sense, not the terroristic one.

How’re ya all doin’? I just flew in from Portland, and boy, are my arms tired! So anyway, two Jews, a nigger, and an armed terrorist walk into a bar....

But it’s not to be. At the last minute, Duran’s lawyers decide I ain’t needed as a witness, and I never fly to Washington.

Duran’s insanity defense didn’t work, even with the story of how he’d stalked the White House for several days, waiting for an “evil mist” to appear above it. In the wrestling match that pitted the United States of America versus Francisco Martin Duran, Big Monster v. little man, Duran received a life sentence and must serve at least forty-five years before he’s eligible for parole. He’ll likely spend the rest of his life squashed under the thumb of the government he hates. Nearly half a century getting buttfucked by Yankee Doodle.

Almost a year after he was sentenced, I receive a letter from Duran at his Super-Max federal prison in Colorado. The envelope is unsealed, almost as if the feds want me to know they’re reading it. In the letter, Duran—or whichever government agent is posing as him—apologizes for getting such “nice people” as Debbie and I into trouble. He requests Church of Satan founder Anton LaVey’s address. Beneath his signature he types:

Francisco Martin Duran
“The White House Shooter”

I never write him back, figuring that would be all the “evidence” the government needs to prove that I, too, am a terrorist.

Looks like Big Brother’s trying to turn my words into crimes.

Two forms of speech are forbidden in this land of spacious skies and amber waves of grain:

- Obscenity
- Advocating the U.S. government's immediate armed overthrow.

My writing is suddenly associated with both.

Apparently I'm becoming a bit more influential than just a lowly zinester poopstain. I'm fully legit on the danger tip. Not many writers can list obscenity trials and White House shootings on their resume.

Still, jealous zine gerbils continue to carp that I'm an ideological reactionary who in no way threatens the social order.

Gargle my creamy cum, scrawny loser fags.

I don't have body piercings, I have an FBI file.

I don't urge you to question authority, I inspire people to shoot bullets at it.

I foment *literal* rage against the machine, not shopping-mall commie T-shirt slogans.

The oh-so-conventional idea of cultural diversity fails to embrace the violent political terrorist. He is seen as outside the umbrella of acceptable alternative lifestyles.

But to me, Francisco Martin Duran is one swingin' cat, Daddy-O. It took *huevos grandes* to do what he did. And *cerebro estúpido*, too. Duran's crime had been unplanned, poorly executed, and ineffective. Twenty-nine bullets aimed at a four-story building.

What a dork.

Couldn't he have at least waited until Clinton came out in his robe and slippers to scoop up the morning paper?

Instead of joining the A-list of successful presidential assassins such as John Wilkes Booth or Lee Harvey Oswald, Duran entered the ignominious ranks of fuckups such as John Hinckley and Squeaky Fromme.

Still, I find something admirable in his quixotic idiocy. Judging by the quote he lifted from me, he felt a "moral calling" to shoot at the White House. Within the confines of his possibly tampered-with brain, he seemed to believe he was doing the right thing.

He was a hopeless romantic, emphasis on the "hopeless." He was a mosquito planting his proboscis into an elephant's hide. A Chihuahua yipping at Godzilla. A gnat flying into King Kong's mouth. A circus midget aiming his pea-shooter at the Cyclops.

And he taught me to hate a government which I'd previously ignored. The fact that they were fucking with me when I had never fucked with them caused me to hate the very idea of being governed.

And maybe that's what they wanted all along.

Don't tread on me, motherfuckers. I'm willing to die over this shit, but I don't think you are. Is anybody with me? Where are the Patrick Henrys who want liberty or death? Where are the intrepid souls who, like James Brown sang, would rather die on their feet than live on their knees?

Duran was one of them. He didn't care about being a doomed kamikaze. It was the principle of the thing. He fired a few pellets at a government which has bombed vast patches of this planet into charcoal. The White House is thought to be inviolable. Immune. Accountable to no one. Duran proposed the heretical idea that it isn't.

After JFK's brains were splattered all over that Dallas limo, Malcolm X said that maybe the chickens had come home to roost. Francisco Martin Duran was one jalapeño-flavored *pollo loco* squawking outside the White House gates.

But one chicken can't do much. The government can deal with one Duran, but not a hundred thousand.

The White House won't stand forever. It can't. One day it will fall, and probably not peacefully. The Big Monster will die, and all the little men will be free.

For a moment.

And then another Big Monster will take control.

