

QUANDARY IN QUANDO

(The Oval Office. The PRESIDENT is leaning back in his chair, feet up on his desk. He is napping, or maybe playing with a child's toy. There is a knock at the door. The President sits up and pretends to be doing some paper work.)

PRESIDENT

Yes?

(The door opens and Karl, an AIDE, enters the room, carrying an official looking folder.)

AIDE

Mr. President, there's a developing situation that needs your attention.

PRESIDENT

Damn it. Why does this always happen on a Friday?! I want to go to the ranch this weekend. Is it too much to ask that these things happen on a Monday once in a while? All right, fine. Where's the problem?

AIDE

Quando, sir.

PRESIDENT

Quando, huh?
(slight pause)
Where the hell is that?

(The aide extracts a page from the folder he carries and holds it out to the President.)

AIDE

Well, sir, the island of Quando lies between –

PRESIDENT

Oh, it doesn't matter. What's happening?

AIDE

There's been a revolution.

PRESIDENT

That's terrible! Or were we hoping for one there?

AIDE

No, it's quite a surprise, sir.

PRESIDENT

Who was it? Communists?

AIDE

No –

PRESIDENT

Right Wing extremists?

AIDE

No –

PRESIDENT

An oppressed black majority?

AIDE

No –

PRESIDENT

Some disaffected ethnic group?

AIDE

No, sir, it –

PRESIDENT

Well, spit it out! This isn't twenty questions!

AIDE

Women.

PRESIDENT

What?

AIDE

The entire female population of Quando.

PRESIDENT

Women? Are you sure?

AIDE

The report is quite specific.

PRESIDENT

But . . . well, that just can't be. I mean, women don't do things like that. They complain, sure, . . . but they're not aggressive. Except for those lesbians.

AIDE

These women overran the Quandan Royal Army and defeated the Palace Guards.

PRESIDENT

Unbelievable. Why'd they do it?

AIDE

The report indicates they felt they were being oppressed.

PRESIDENT

Oh, please. Like they don't already have equal rights.

AIDE

Exactly.

PRESIDENT

What?

AIDE

They don't have equal rights.

PRESIDENT

You mean there's the usual bias and sexism.

AIDE

No, sir. The women of Quando can't vote or own property. They're barely acknowledged as citizens.

PRESIDENT

There are still countries like that?

AIDE

Quite a few, sir. Some of our allies even.

PRESIDENT

Really? Who knew?

(slight pause)

Still, . . . that doesn't excuse their actions. I mean, I can't condone violence. There's always a way to talk things out. A lot of people can't vote or own property, but you don't see them revolting.

AIDE

Actually, sir, there have been a few cases of revolutions under those circumstances. And we've even supported some of them. Covertly, of course.

PRESIDENT

Well, yes. Democracy and individual rights are nice, but I'm sure there were other factors at work in those cases. And what's the big deal about the right to vote anyway? Hell, most Americans don't even bother voting. And owning property, . . . Christ! That's one of the biggest headaches around. Paying property taxes, mortgages, needing special permission to drain all the water out of the "wetland area" that's supposed to be your back yard. These women don't know how good they have it. They can walk the streets without a care.

AIDE

Yes, except one of the things they were protesting was the fact that they can't walk the streets without wearing scarves over their faces.

PRESIDENT

Windy country, is it?

AIDE

No, sir, fundamentalist. Women aren't allowed to show their faces or hair in public.

PRESIDENT

Why not?

AIDE

It's so the men of Quando aren't tempted too much, or caused to have impure thoughts.

PRESIDENT

From looking at their hair?

AIDE

I believe so.

PRESIDENT

What about the rest of their bodies?

AIDE

Completely covered, sir.

PRESIDENT

Good Lord, that's not natural. Thank God women in America have the freedom to walk around wearing next to nothing, and that so many of them take advantage of that freedom. You don't see American men having impure thoughts or losing control.

AIDE

Ah, no, I suppose not. Certain crime statistics notwithstanding. But there are women's groups that –

PRESIDENT

Yeah, yeah, yeah. But what's to stop these women from walking down the street without their veil? What're they going to do? Take away their right to vote?

AIDE

Actually, bands of fundamentalists generally grab them off the streets and stone them to death.

PRESIDENT

Oh.

(slight pause)

Well, far be it from us to judge other cultures or religions.

PRESIDENT (CONT.)

From their point of view, our ways may seem just as strange to them as theirs do to us.

AIDE

Very broad-minded of you, sir.

PRESIDENT

Well, a President has to pander to . . . I mean, learn to respect a wide range of opinions.

(slight pause)

Okay, give me the numbers. How many dead?

AIDE

None, Mr. President. It was a bloodless revolution.

PRESIDENT

Are you kidding me?! What kind of a revolution doesn't leave dead lying in the streets?! Women!

(slight pause)

How about injuries?

AIDE

None mentioned in the report.

PRESIDENT

Ah, ha! So there could be vast numbers of very badly injured, burned and beaten men, hanging onto life by the barest of threads.

AIDE

Ah, . . . well, I suppose that's an outside possibility, sir. But I think if that were the case there'd be something about it in the report. There doesn't seem to have been any violence.

PRESIDENT

So these women, . . . they just walked up to the Palace and took it over?

AIDE

So it would seem, sir.

PRESIDENT

Well then, they had it coming. What kind of Palace guards don't shoot approaching revolutionaries?!

AIDE

It seems the guards were reluctant to shoot a crowd of unarmed women.

PRESIDENT

Oh, well sure, I can see that.

(slight pause)

Hey, you don't suppose The Secret Service . . . I mean, they'd open fire, right?

AIDE

That would be a judgment call, sir.

(There is a silence.)

PRESIDENT

This is scary shit, Karl.

AIDE

Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT

We have to do something about this. I mean, we can't allow this sort of chaos to take place.

AIDE

No, sir.

PRESIDENT

We'll have to come to the aid of our long time ally, Quando, and restore the rightful government.

AIDE

Quando is actually not an ally of the U.S.

PRESIDENT

Well, yes, I know that. I mean, Quando our traditional friend, if not formal ally, who –

AIDE

No, they're not even on speaking terms with us. We have no diplomatic ties with Quando. They've never recognized us as a sovereign nation. To them we're still part of the British Empire.

PRESIDENT

What?! Oh, fuck them. Let 'em hang.

AIDE

The Joint Chiefs are very worried about the potentially destabilizing effect this could have. They're worried about a domino effect, sir.

PRESIDENT

(pause)

On the other hand, this is an excellent chance to establish ties with this unique nation. I'm sure we would win the hearts of the people of Quando by restoring their rightfully elected government.

AIDE

Yes, of course. Except the country has been ruled by an age old monarchy. The only one of it's kind in the world, in fact. To insure the purity of the blood line, members of the royal family are only allowed to marry other members of the royal family.

PRESIDENT

You mean, like distant cousins and such?

AIDE

Ideally, yes. But over time the genealogy has become a little blurred. It's whatever's available really.

PRESIDENT

And this has been going on for . . . ?

AIDE

Centuries.

PRESIDENT

So the members of this royal family . . .

AIDE

Can't even tie their own shoes.

PRESIDENT

Hmm. But I feel sure the people of Quando love the royal family for their simple ways, and have a great affection for them. Just like the English go nuts over the Queen. And I'm sure the good people of Quando want the royal family returned to the palace and have these dictators thrown out on their asses.

AIDE

The revolutionaries aren't dictators. They're extending full citizenship and equal rights to all. They've promised to hold free elections to institute a congress and presidency, modeled after our own.

PRESIDENT

Oh, they are in trouble now.

(slight pause)

But these people always promise that sort of thing. "We don't want to stay in power forever. We'll have elections and constitution soon." But then they keep pushing the deadline back.

AIDE

The report says the elections are scheduled for next month and campaigning is under way.

PRESIDENT

Oh. Well, what're our allies saying?

AIDE

What allies, sir?

PRESIDENT

You know, what's-his-face in England.

AIDE

Oh, the Prime Minister said that "The world community looks to America for leadership.

PRESIDENT

You mean they're all too chicken to stick their necks out.

AIDE

Pretty much.

PRESIDENT

Buncha wimps. All right, this is a dire situation which calls for immediate action. If we sit back and allow this sort of thing to happen then where would it end?

AIDE

There's no telling.

PRESIDENT

So we have to nip this in the bud.

AIDE

Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT

The only question remaining is for us to determine the best to impress upon the American people why it is so vitally important that we restore the Quando monarchy.

AIDE

You mean trump up a reason for invading?

PRESIDENT

That would help. I'll tell you one thing, these women were cunning. Pick some country we don't get along with, retard rulers, no one dead. They're kind of limiting our options.

AIDE

Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT

All right, we could say that neighboring countries are worried this revolt will spill over their borders.

AIDE

No, sir. If you'll recall, Quando is an island.

PRESIDENT

Oh-kay. The, ah, . . . the United Nations has asked us to intervene for humanitarian reasons.

AIDE

The U.N. isn't in session.

PRESIDENT

Quando may be developing nuclear weapons and has refused to allow international inspectors into –

AIDE

The only thing they split in Quando is firewood.

PRESIDENT

That never stopped us before.

(Karl just looks at the President.)

PRESIDENT

All right, all right. How 'bout "Because of the vast untapped oil reserves under –

(Karl shakes his head.)

PRESIDENT

Quando is a nation of immense strategic value –

(Karl shakes his head again, and the President stares malevolently at him. There is a silence.

Then the President leans forward suddenly.)

PRESIDENT

Was that the phone?

AIDE

No, sir. I didn't hear it ring.

PRESIDENT

(sternly)

It was the phone.

(He picks up the receiver.)

Hello? Well, hello, Mr. King of Quando. How is everything on your lovely island nation? What? There's been an armed uprising? You've been thrown out of power, just as you were about to establish diplomatic ties with the United States and to bring democracy and prosperity to your people? Why, that's terrible. What can we do to help? Launch a full scale military attack? Hey, you got it.

(He hangs up.)

Karl, I've just had a call from the King of Quando. They have a situation there. Call the Joint Chiefs. Tell them to free Quando.

AIDE

Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT

Great, crisis averted. Anything else?

AIDE

Just a reminder that you have a dinner reception with the League of Women Voters tonight. Or would you like me to cancel that in light of the situation in Quando?

PRESIDENT

What?! Karl, this is an election year! The women voters in this country were the key block that got me elected last time.

(slight pause)

You've got a lot to learn about politics.

(Blackout.)