

Preface

Four men were sitting in the boardroom of Dearborn Scientific, one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the United States. The Chairman of the Board of Dearborn Scientific sat at the head of the table. Ross Dearborn, in addition to being Chairman of the Board, was one of the most powerful men in the United States Senate. Two of the other men in the room were also Senators, the third man was the minority leader in the House of Representatives.

Ross began, "Thank you for coming. I asked you here because we are facing a serious problem. We lost the last two presidential elections, and as things stand now, we are very likely to lose again next November. We have used our media connections to bash the current resident of the White House at every opportunity, but he seems to be immune to our attacks. So, I believe it's time to take some serious action to discredit him so badly he'll probably be forced to withdraw from the next election."

Ross hesitated for a moment and Tim Nelson, the minority leader in the House, asked, "Should I assume you have a plan to accomplish that?"

Ross smiled, "Yes, I do. The plan is diabolical, in the extreme, but I believe extreme action is what's needed to save our party from extinction. As you probably know, Dearborn Scientific has very close ties with the Chinese government. I had a meeting with a representative from the Chinese government a few days ago. He told me they have developed a biological weapon we could use that will cause the collapse of the current administration, and allow us to retake control of the United States government. Are you interested in hearing the details?"

All three men smiled and nodded.

Ross continued, "The weapon they created will cause about 65% of the people exposed to it to become violently ill. They will experience intense headaches, high fever, and extreme joint pain. The symptoms will last four or five days and then, over the next ten days, about 95% will recover completely. The remaining 5% will die. The virus which causes the illness is transmitted through the air or by casual personal contact. After the victim is infected, there will be no symptoms for up to seven days, but twelve hours after exposure they will begin spreading the infection. A small amount of the virus, dispersed into the air in a crowded environment, will probably infect the majority of the population in our largest cities in a matter of days.

"However, there's both a vaccine and cure that will be available to us. So, we can choose who will be immune. The cure is something Dearborn Scientific will make available after the first ten thousand deaths, making us heroes in the eyes of the United States population."

Ron Gleeson, one of the Senators, said, "How many total deaths do you expect?"

"About thirty-five thousand."

Ron thought for a few moments before saying, "I think that's acceptable." Looking at the two men sitting across the table he asked, "What about you two?"

Tim Nelson replied, "I think this is a great idea. If we do this right, we'll be the saviors of America."

Up to this time Greg Franklin had sat quietly, listening to Ross and the others. Gently rubbing his chin and obviously thinking about what Ross had said, he said nothing for several seconds. Then he said, "I agree the losses are acceptable. But we must plan this very carefully. If anything regarding this plan leaks out, not only will our party be finished, but we will all likely be executed."

Ross stood up, "Let's meet again in two weeks. I'll put a plan together and we can discuss it then."

After the other men left, Ross thought, "That went very well. Unless we screw this up, I'll be the next president."

The Plan Unfolds

Two weeks later the four men were once again in the Dearborn Scientific boardroom. However, there was a fifth person in the room. A man of obvious oriental descent was seated next to Ross.

Ross stood up, smiled, and said, "I would like to introduce Dr. Wen Chang. He's the man I referred to at our last meeting. If you have any questions concerning the pandemic we are about to create, please feel free to ask him. Also, before we adjourn today's meeting, he will be leaving syringes with the vaccine so I can inject each of you before we disperse the virus."

Tim asked, "Is anybody outside of this room aware of our plans?"

Dr. Chang replied, "I am in charge of the laboratory that developed the virus. Nobody there knows about our meeting, or our plan."

Ross added, "You should also be aware that this room is shielded, so we know our conversations will be private. Additionally, although you can't hear it, noise is being generated in the room so any recorders or transmitters will pick up nothing but static."

"Thank you, that makes me feel better. This virus will obviously spread all over the world, including China. Are you concerned that some of your own countrymen will die?" Ron asked.

"No more than you are concerned with the death of some citizens of the United States."

Tim asked, "Dr. Chang, I'm positive you aren't doing this for our benefit. So, I have to ask; what's in this for you?"

"Despite all our efforts to curtail the population growth in China, the population continues to increase. We are rapidly reaching a point where we will be unable to adequately feed and educate them. Unless we do something soon, our economy will collapse, and we will become a third world country like India. I can't allow that to happen. I expect we will lose 20% of our population."

"Are you going to distribute the cure in China?"

"Yes, but not until the population is reduced to a level we feel is sustainable."

Ross said, "Each of you will be given a vial of the toxin. Congress will begin a two-week recess in a few days. I want each of you to fly home, and when you get there drop the vial somewhere in the airport."

"What about our families? Will they be inoculated too?" Ron asked.

Dr. Chang replied, "No, but each of you will be given two hundred fifty tablets of the cure. That is enough to treat twenty-five people. To cure the disease, you take one tablet every four hours for forty hours."

He put a briefcase on the table, opened it, and removed four syringes, and four bottles of pills. Then he said, "Please be sure you are injected with the vaccine at least forty-eight hours before you release the virus." He closed his briefcase, turned towards Ross, and said, "I am leaving now. Please notify me after the virus has been distributed." Dr. Chang handed Ross a package from his brief case, closed it, and left the room.

Ross looked at the package. He knew that he, and the other men in the room, were about to murder an untold number of people. He felt no remorse for what they were about to do. He was positive the end result would justify their actions.

Ross opened the package Dr. Chang had given him. Inside were four small boxes. He opened one of the boxes and looked inside. The box contained a small glass vial filled with a clear liquid and a note. He read the note, looked at the other men in the room, and said, "Take the vial to a place where you can't be seen. Then drop it on the floor and break it by stepping on it. It will disperse almost instantly. If you can't drop it without being seen, take it to a restroom and do it there. It won't matter. Call me immediately after you have finished. We'll meet again in a few weeks."

“I don’t trust Dr. Chang. In our last meeting you said that the virus will sicken 65% of the people who are exposed to it and 5% will die. If those figures are accurate, it would be impossible for it to kill 20% of the Chinese population since it only kills 5%. So, he’s either lying about the potential death rate or he’s lying about his plan for the Chinese population. Either way, he’s obviously a liar. Before we do anything, I think you should have both the vaccine and the pills analyzed. I’m positive you have the ability to do that here,” Tim said with a note of anger in his voice.

“I didn’t think about that Tim, but you’re correct. I’ll get that done immediately. I’m also wondering why he wants us to release the virus. I’m sure he has Chinese agents in the United States who could do the job for him. If he was trying to blame the United States for the virus, that would accomplish the same thing. I’ll get back to you guys after the analysis is completed.”

After the men left, Ross sat down again and made the decision that in addition to analyzing the vaccine and the cure, he was going to have the contents of one of the virus vials analyzed as well.

CIA Headquarters

Bill Jackson was in his office going over reports from his east coast agents. He picked up a report that said Dr. Wen Chang, the man the CIA believed to be in charge of China's biological warfare development, arrived at JFK the previous day. He was met by a limo driver and taken to the Dearborn Scientific headquarters building. An hour after his arrival, Senator Ron Gleeson, Senator Greg Franklin, and Representative Tim Nelson arrived at Dearborn Scientific. Although Senator Ross Dearborn was not seen going into the building, Bill was sure there was a meeting with all five men. He had no idea what they were discussing, but that wasn't his concern. He filled out some paperwork and sent all the information to the Special Operations Manager, Frank Carver.

Dearborn Scientific

Dearborn Scientific was started by Ross' grandfather. At the beginning, the company made solvents and adhesives that were used in factories all over the country. Later they began to make plastic resins that were needed by the automotive industry for various parts. The company grew, and when the Korean War started, they obtained government contracts to make components used in military aircraft.

The company continued to expand, and eventually purchased a small pharmaceutical company. In 1953, the polio vaccine was invented and Dearborn Scientific was one of the first companies to manufacture it in large quantities. The profits from the polio vaccine were used to create a division dedicated to the development of new drugs.

In 1971 Ross's father, Marshall, graduated from college with a degree in chemical engineering and began his career at the company. His first job was in the Industrial Development Laboratory where he created new adhesives designed to cure quickly when exposed to ultraviolet light. The product was a huge success, and the profits poured in.

In 1974, Marshall took control of the company when his father died suddenly from a heart attack as a result of untreated high blood pressure. One of his first acts as president of the company was to order the pharmaceutical division to develop new drugs to treat hypertension. Marshall soon realized there was far more profit to be made from pharmaceuticals than from industrial products and decided to expand that part of the company. He needed money to do that, so he converted Dearborn Scientific into a public company and used the cash to expand the pharmaceutical division. He created a medical device division as well. By 1980, Dearborn Scientific was one of the largest companies in the United States, with more than a hundred thousand employees.

Ross had always been an excellent student and graduated high school at the top of his class just before his seventeenth birthday. Marshall was sure Ross would be an excellent doctor, and also felt that as a doctor, Ross would be a real asset to the company. So, he convinced Ross to pursue a career in medicine. Ross obtained his medical degree when he was twenty-five and began a two-year internship at Mount Sinai hospital. However, he soon realized he wasn't comfortable dealing with patients, so a few months after he completed his internship, he made the decision to go into medical research. He worked in the pharmaceutical division of the company until his father's retirement, then Ross took over Marshall's position as Chairman of the Board.

Ross began making large contributions to political candidates, and was pressured to run for an open seat in the House of Representatives. The area he would represent had been held by the same political party for almost fifty years, and Ross won the election with more than 70% of the vote. After serving two terms as a Congressman, he was asked to run for a seat in the Senate. He won easily, and was now in his third term.

Ross decided, since he had both the knowledge and the ability to do the analysis on the items he received from Dr. Chang, he would do it himself. That allowed him to keep the project secret. He waited until the weekend when the lab would be mostly empty, to begin the analysis.

He started by analyzing the vaccine. Most vaccines are made with dead viruses because they are less likely to make the person receiving the vaccine sick. The trick is to get the dosage sufficient to trigger the persons immune system to create the antibodies required to kill the virus. However, it soon became apparent the vaccine he received from Dr. Chang had live viruses, in quantities Ross felt were dangerously high. He knew quite often a mild case of the disease is what is needed to create the antibodies needed to prevent a more serious infection, but was confident the dose of live virus in the vaccine would give the person receiving the inoculation something far more severe than a mild case.

He decided the next thing he would do was analyze the tablets that were supposed to be the cure. What he discovered shocked him. The only active ingredient in the tablets was an antihistamine that was primarily used as a sleep aid.

The last thing he needed to check was the contents of the glass vials. It didn't take him long to realize the vials were empty.

It was now obvious that Dr. Chang's plan was to infect the four of them and make them carriers of the disease. They would quickly infect most of the United States Congress with the virus, and when they went home for the congressional recess, other parts of the country as well.

He thought for a few moments and decided to call Tim Nelson. When Tim answered Ross said, "Tim we have a serious problem. You were absolutely correct when you said Dr. Chang could not be trusted. I just finished analyzing the materials he gave us. The vials that were supposed to contain the virus were empty. The only thing in the tablets that were supposed to be the cure was an antihistamine that would make you sleepy. Most serious of all was the vaccine. It contained enough live virus to give someone a full-blown case of the disease."

Tim was silent for a few seconds, then he said angrily, "I knew we couldn't trust that asshole. I'm sure he is waiting for us to notify him that the virus has been dispersed, and when it doesn't happen, we're all going to be targets for assassination because he will know we never gave ourselves the vaccine."

"I thought of that. I was thinking I could tell him we delivered the virus as promised, and a week later I could contact him again and ask him why nobody became ill."

Tim almost laughed when he said, "I think that's an excellent idea. I'm sure he wanted to make sure the virus originated in the United States. He'll probably begin to kill his own people before he realizes his plan failed. Then China will have to take the heat for a worldwide pandemic. The problem for us is that it will be tough to blame the president for it."

"We should be thankful we are still alive and healthy. If you consider what Dr. Chang said regarding the expected death rate in China from this infection, and I believe that part might actually have been true, we should also be glad we didn't implement the plan. It could have killed hundreds of thousands of people in the United States, including us."

"I'm sure you realize the people in the United States will still be infected."

"Of course, but we have an advantage; we have samples of the virus. My medical research team can start working on a cure immediately. That way, when it gets here, we'll be ready for it."

"You better make sure the Chinese don't find out you're working on a cure. If they realized we double crossed them, they'll kill us."

"Yeah, your right, of course. I'll make sure the team keeps the research secret. Medical research is usually secret anyway. You don't want your competitors to know what you're working on. So, it won't be anything unusual."

"You'll still be a hero if you find the cure before a substantial portion of the population dies from the disease. Perhaps you should work on a real vaccine too."

"The cure will probably be easier. There may even be an existing antiviral agent that will be effective. Please contact Ron and Greg and let them know what happened, and all of you should prepare to disappear if this whole thing blows up in our faces."

"Okay, I'll contact them. When are you going to contact Dr. Chang?"

"In five days."