

The carrier pigeon flew with a relentless intensity that every other medium of mail-delivery had somehow been stripped of. It carried a letter in its mouth and flapped its tattered wings forcefully, as if it weren't a letter it was carrying but the Declaration of Independence. Its path was straight though its gaze was anything but. The carrier pigeon carried on unfettered and determined, despite the grammatical errors in its description.

A gentle breeze was creasing the letter noticeably, but the letter, it seemed, had been through quite a skirmish already. If one was to examine it closely, one would have seen pieces missing, burn marks, and severe warping. If two or more were to examine the bird, it probably would have gotten scared and flown away.

Had the carrier pigeons assignment been as simple as a routine delivery, it wouldn't almost two centuries old. Most carrier pigeons receive a letter, fly to the destination x miles away (with x typically being less than a thousand), and unload the letter, possibly being paid some seeds out of gratitude. This pigeon, however, wasn't going to get away so easily. The story of From, this particular carrier pigeon, started a few paragraphs ago, but goes into more elaborate detail here.

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It was a clear yet chilly March day in the middle of the nineteenth century. The buds were reluctantly peeking out where the absence of buds had once prevailed. The harsh winter grudgingly retreated to the welcoming springtime, and the wheelbarrow rusted to the point of uselessness in the barn. The birds were singing their scales, clearly having been out of practice for the last few months. There was reluctance by the morning to dew to not be frost, though it was too was becoming accustomed to it. The horses were no longer holding their poker tournaments due to overwhelming suspicion.

And President-elect Zachary Taylor had an uncontrollable desire to send his great-great-grandson a telegram.

He wasn't all too sure why this desire suddenly arose, but he didn't question it. He was fairly sure that the reasons he might have had would have been credible and numerous. He only knew that he needed to get some stuff off his chest, and he wanted to direct this stuff at a distant relative not yet born.

Zachary sat down at a dusty desk and removed a quill pen from its sheath. Margaret Mackall Smith, Zachary's wife, passed by and shook her head in unnoticed disappointment. She thought this whole idea was pretty foolish, especially since Zachary didn't have a faint idea of what he wanted to tell his relative. She was an obedient wife, though, and kept her opinions to herself.

Silently, Zachary Taylor began writing.

Dear Great-Great-Great-Grandson,

Hello.

This is President-elect Zachary Taylor, your distant ancestor and proud link in our prestigious lineage. You may be wondering why I am writing you this letter. During my rugged campaign trail, I realized that I wanted my relatives to know exactly what I was doing.

He didn't know what he was doing, and therefore, telling someone else about it would become an increasingly difficult task. He took a flask from his desk drawer and decanted a little liquid into his mouth, sucking it down quickly. He looked at the letter, and proofread it. He was an amazing calligraphist.

His wife came in at that moment, wiping a dish clean with a dishtowel. "Zachary, do I have permission to be forward with thee?"

“Always, my dear.”

“Do not think I am greeting you with effrontery. I find your act, this epistle writing, to be a bit of nonsense. I would suggest that you desist at once and concentrate wholeheartedly on your campaign.”

Zachary looked up, sharply. “Margaret, I *need* to do this. It seems like predestination, as if this letter will change the fate of the entire country. Is that not why I am running for President in the first place? To make a difference?”

Margaret sighed. “Okay, Mr. Taylor. If that is what you wish to do, I will support you.”

Zachary looked over to his wife as she left brusquely. “Is she *never* happy?” he thought.

Diligently, he diverted his attention back to his letter.

If my rudimentary calculations prove correct, you should be approaching your thirtieth birthday, provided our family continues producing male offspring. If this is not the case... I would rather not think of that possible outcome – this must work.

As you may now know through historical analogs, I am [or, as you would reason, was] running for the position of President of the United States of America. This I am doing in an attempt to rectify the horrid tensions growing in our beloved country. At the age of sixty-four, I am certainly no young man.

I hope you more than any other can appreciate all that I have done.

Your Distant Ancestor,

Zachary Taylor

With a glowing hope in his eye like a supernova, he showed the letter to Margaret for an early opinion. She perused it and looked up at him after concluding it.

“Mr. Taylor, tell me, what is it you are trying to say, exactly?”

“Margaret, I am telling my future—no, the country’s future—who I really am and what it is I am doing.”

Again, Margaret sighed and begrudgingly complimented her husband’s work. “It is effective, sir.” She gave him a polite curtsy and retreated to the bedroom where she spent three hours analyzing and classifying her recent archaeological discoveries.

What she *had* wanted to do, however, was mention that Zachary’s particular letter was perhaps the most pointless series of sentences ever penned. All she could do was pray that her husband wouldn’t choose to show the letter to their daughters or their son.

Zachary Taylor never showed the letter to another soul. He quietly rolled it cylindrically, sealed it in wax, and bound it with a leather strap. Heartily, he walked across town to the house of a friend of his who owned a carrier-pigeon service. He entered the house and rang the bell at the front counter. Within seconds, a hefty man came out and laughed merrily.

“Mr. Taylor! You look well! What can I do for you today?” he began, extending his hand.

Meeting the man’s hand with his own, Zachary replied, “Hello, Nathaniel. I have come to send a letter.”

“Then you have come to the right place,” Nathaniel stated, followed by hale laughter from both gentlemen. People back then were pretty easily amused, or drunk. “I take it you want the most dependable bird for your task?”

Zachary reached in his pocket and extracted two gold coins, each with large numbers on it. “I want the best,” the hopeful President-elect smiled.

The business owner stared at the money, but pushed one of the coins back to Zachary. "Mr. Taylor, you know that even our fastest bird does not require payment such as this."

"Yet I insist," Zachary replied, pushing the coin back to the far side of the counter.

Confused, the shopkeeper asked, "Why is it that, in your time of expensive vote-gathering, you insist on twice full payment?"

"The path which this letter will take will be unlike any other before, and I merely offer payment that is befitting of such a job."

Nathaniel was still confused. "Surely you are aware that even international delivery costs not this much?"

"I know this."

"Then where," Nathaniel finally questioned, "are you planning to send my finest bird?"

Zachary looked Nathaniel straight in the eye and replied, "I do not know."

"Well, who will be the recipient of this message?"

"I do not know."

Nathaniel took a step back, both mentally and physically, and began to laugh. His faint chuckle soon evolved into raucous laughter. Tears streamed down his face, splitting into tear tributaries and eventually merged into a delta, where they became part of a facial ocean. Finally composing himself, Nathaniel asked, "Excuse me, Mr. Taylor, but how do you expect to send a letter to someone you do not know in a place you do not know?"

"I do not know."

Growing stern, Nathaniel asked, "Would you be so kind as to explain your intentions, Mr. Taylor?"

Zachary took a deep breath. "A week ago, I had a dream. No, it was more a premonition. It became my quest to write a letter to a relative of mine; a relative not yet born. This morning, I awoke with the objective to compose this very letter and give it to you to send. By using averages, I deduced that my great-great-great grandson would be alive in just over seven score years. It was, or rather will be, he to whom this letter will go."

Nathaniel was very nearly speechless, but not quite. "You want me to sacrifice my finest delivery bird on a quest that is impossible?"

"Who says it is impossible?"

"Mr. Taylor, think of me not as one to belittle your idealism, but no pigeon could ever live to be that old."

"Has anyone ever tried?"

"No, but—"

Nathaniel was interrupted by an action performed by Zachary Taylor. The President-elect reached into his pocket and extracted another coin of equal value to the first two. "This should cover the expenses of raising and teaching many new birds."

"If you were any other man..." Nathaniel began, but stopped. His mind began to wander. If, he thought, Zachary Taylor were any other man, chances are he would be Sir Hector of the Round Table. He abandoned that thought and replaced it with a sigh.

"So you will do it?" inquired Zachary.

"Do I have a choice?" Nathaniel smiled.

"Thank you, my friend."

Nathaniel took the bandaged letter out the back door and into the cage where the pigeons were housed. In the corner of the cage, separated from the flock of birds, stood a larger, prouder pigeon. His feathers were slightly ruffled in a royal manner. The branch on

which he stood felt guilty about sagging slightly. Everything about this bird was phenomenal, except for his silly looking feet.

“From?” Nathaniel spoke gently to the bird. “You are about to set out on a quest of monumental rank.”

The bird looked at him placidly. All the bird heard was, “From? Blah blah blahblah blah blah blah blah blah blahblahblahblah blah.”

Nathaniel continued, “Blah blah blah blah blahblahblah, From. Blah blah blah blah blahblah.”

Though Nathaniel was trying to stress that From was a fine carrier and he would be dearly missed, the bird absorbed little of his speech. From only wanted seed. Nathaniel fed the bird well and set him on his quest with this last hopeless statement: “I cannot help you find your destination; know that you have been my most dependable bird and your legacy will live on...forever.”

With the bundle tied sturdily under his legs, the pigeon set off to find someone who would not be born for another 135 years. The bird finished his seed, looked upwards, and began his flight. After inauspiciously ramming into the cage twice, From fled out through the open door, and was on its way.

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Sammy and Peeps were leaving the diner when the fatigued bird nearly crashed into them. Sammy caught the bird in his hand, noted how it was in *no* way worth two in the bush, and untied the letter from the pigeon’s legs.

“Where did you come from?” Sammy asked. The bird almost looked startled. After all, the bird recognized when Sammy said his name and knew that this *had* to be the recipient of the letter.

Sammy handed the bird to Peeps while he opened the message. His lips moved as he read.

Peeps was trying to read the letter over Sammy’s shoulder, but found it difficult with a cute bird on her hand. After Sammy had finished, though, she asked, “What was that?”

“Some letter from a dead President claiming to be an ancestor of mine.”

“What did it say?” Peeps asked.

“Nothing important.”

Sammy crinkled the paper up and threw it in the trash receptacle.

“Weird,” Peeps noted.

“It’s been a pretty weird day.”

Peeps threw From up to set him free but, tired and exhausted, the pigeon dropped down dead.