



Odin Retired

The old man sat in the dilapidated lawn chair he had recovered from a dumpster. His grizzled beard, deeply wrinkled face, and sealed eyelid hinted at his identity.

The surroundings he had chosen did not.

Directly behind him was the tent he called home. He had the luxury of a portable toilet at the corner of the grounds. The Lafayette Park Lodge offered a place to wash as long as he didn't abuse the privilege. Magically, the park police never seemed to notice him.

His view onto the centerpiece of world power did not impress him. He did enjoy the opportunity to people-watch as sightseers exited the White House North Gate onto Pennsylvania Avenue after their tour. Occasionally, he would see the drapes pull back from the second-floor private residence, or sometimes even the main-floor State Dining Room, and he would spot some notable figure peeking in his direction. Shortly thereafter, once the necessary security detail was arranged for the person, he would entertain the dignitary in counsel.

They had to bring their own chair.

He had an elite list of regulars—George, Bill, Hillary, the younger George, Barack—Joe didn't feel it was worth his while—even Donald. The last one reminded him a lot of his own son—arrogant, all-knowing, always concerned with his trademark hairstyle. Both intently listened to his advice, but then did as they pleased.

His followers offered him wealth for his guidance. But he saw no value in wealth. His remaining time on Earth garnered worth by helping others. It was not the first of his sacrifices.

He had lost his eye—it seemed like an eternity ago—as a result of his own doing. He had traded it to gain wisdom. It seemed only fitting that now he give back by offering his knowledge to those who asked. He had no idea if his counsel was put to good use. He wasn't on Facebook or TikTok, so never knew the results. It didn't matter. The wisdom was there for the taking or not.

That's how he chose to retire. There was no golden parachute. Only a rainbow bridge to his choice of where to live. The eyepatch had been discarded. It was off-putting. He'd given up the family business to his son—chose to live a humble life among the mortals. Ironical, since he had once sentenced his son to do the same in order to teach him humility. It had worked—to a degree.

Junior had become a fine leader, but had his flaws—as does everyone. If only he would seek his father's advice. There was nothing more satisfying than being able to provide assistance to his son. But no, he had to do it his own way. Faced with conflict, a devious adopted brother continually plotting his demise, and the seeming inability to settle down with a woman that might provide him the influence he so sorely needed, somehow he always came out on top.

But that would not forever be the case. There were signs. Double total solar and lunar eclipses had occurred last year. Experts said it was impossible. They were wrong. The third summer of unseasonably cool weather had passed. And there was the Himalayan earthquake setting a new record at 9.7 just last month.

The end-days were near. There was no avoiding it. It was foretold, so must eventually be. If only Owen—he had adopted the similar but less presumptuous name upon retirement—could experience the ultimate satisfaction of aiding his son before it was too late. Lawlessness and the collapse of family had not yet completely overwhelmed the mortals. Dare he hope that the two of them together could achieve the impossible and avert the final end?

The sun was setting as twilight engulfed the stately building across the street. A figure stood in front of the gate, looking toward Owen. Curious that

he had appeared without the wise man seeing him coming. As he approached, his image became clearer to the remaining good eye.

Tall and muscular, his build could not be hidden by the long ox-hide overcoat he wore. The dark jute trousers below a vest laced with leather were tucked into sealskin boots adorned with reindeer-hide strappings. But the most notable distinction of the man was his flowing blond hair. The color of shimmering gold, it was tousled as if customarily subjected to rain, wind, and storm.

Stopping before the venerable patriarch, the behemoth of a man knelt on one knee, rested a sinewy forearm across the companion bent leg, and bowed until his forehead touched the back of his hand. An ancient mace—no, a mighty hammer—hanging from his belt settled into the meadow's grass.

Then, slowly lifting his head to face the wizened man, he spoke.

“Father, times are dire. I seek your advice.”

The millennia-old wrinkles in his face, evidence of life's experiences and things learned, made room for one more line—his smile.