

5th and Washington

by Chad Smith

"Hey! Hey!" I let out a squeaky roar.

I ran down the stairs, through traffic and across the street swinging my baseball bat.

"Come on you guys!"

The fighting came from the street below our apartment. There had been a recent surge of muggings and burglaries in the area. I wasn't sure why I was playing the hero, but I grabbed the bat and went to the rescue.

Two men were kicking and punching a third man on the ground. One of the attackers was a skinny man with brown curly hair and the other was a heavier guy wearing black clothes.

I swung the bat over my head again as I got closer and smashed it down on the newspaper box next to the streetlight.

The heavy man galloped away. The skinny guy kicked the man on the ground one more time in the face and then scurried off.

I chased after them five more paces.

The man on the ground groaned when I got back to him.

"Are you okay?" I kneeled down.

The man's fancy suit and tie were disheveled.

Sarah hurried down from the apartment.

"This horrible street. I hate this neighborhood," she cursed.

The man sat up. His nose was bleeding.

"Do you want us to call the police?" Sarah asked.

"No. I'm okay."

"Did they steal your wallet?"

"I didn't have it on me. I only had a couple of bucks and they got that."

I grabbed the man's arm and helped him up. We walked back to our building. Under the streetlight Sarah got a better look at him.

"Oh my God! Sir, what were you doing out here tonight?" Sarah asked.

I hadn't heard Sarah call anyone sir before and looked at her questioningly.

"Jeff," she said, "It's the President."

"The President?" I still didn't get it.

"Of the United States of America!"

I looked closer at his face. It was him.

He waved his hand dismissively and mumbled something.

When we got upstairs, the President sat down on our couch and Sarah got him an icepack from the freezer.

He put the icepack on his swollen lip.

"Mr. President, where's your bodyguards?"

"I... uh."

He got up from the couch, and walked down our hall to the bathroom.

"What's going on?" I whispered to Sarah after he had shut the door. "Something is not right."

"He doesn't look like he does on TV. He seems dazed," said Sarah.

"Well he was just mugged and beat up," I said.

"He has that same confused look my grandfather had," Sarah whispered.

Sarah's grandfather had died of Alzheimer's disease.

"Do you think he's sick?" I asked.

"Who knows?" Sarah chuckled, "I do know that I didn't vote for him though."

"I didn't vote for him either!"

We stopped talking when we heard the bathroom door open. He came back to the front room.

Suddenly the front door opened and five men entered the room. They fit every imagined cliché of secret service agent.

"Back against the wall please," one of them said. Four of the agents stood in front of us while the fifth talked to the President.

"Are you ready to go sir?"

The President quickly exited the apartment with the agent.

"Here's how it's going to go down," one of the agents said.
"Tonight never happened. Forget it. Don't tell anyone that you met the President."

"Is it a matter of national security?" I asked.

A strange smirk came across the agent's face as he said, "Uh... Sure. You could say that. A matter of national security."

