

## The Intelligencia

Bill Lawrence

I guess you could say the Thirty Minutes to Save the World Scenario came into play today.

What a mess.

We ended up having to torture a guy.

We didn't want to. We're basically a good and decent people, and we don't ever want to have to be seen as torturers. But this was a thirty minute deal and—whatever. People's lives were hanging in the balance.

So we tortured this guy who I'll call Abdul, but which is not really his name. Unless I'm wrong and that just happens to be what his name really is. What I'm saying is that I'm not really sure *what* his name is, but it's probably not Abdul.

But it might be.

Doused him. Had to.

One of those situations where there's nothing else *to* do. Thirty minutes till a bunch of people are going to be blown up and you pretty much know this guy might very well have some info that could possibly end up saving a bunch of lives. What are *you* gonna do?

*Not* waterboard him?

Some people say it's torture and some say it isn't really. I don't know. I don't make those kind of judgments. I do know that it's not a lot of fun. For the guy that's getting doused anyway. And it usually ends up getting them to at least say something. So when it's all over, even if the people you were trying to save get all blown up and shit anyway, you can at least say you gave it a shot and you didn't just stand around with your thumb up your ass.

How it all started out is—last week, as soon as we found out there might be a plot to blow up this coffee house in

Hamburg, which is a city in Europe, well—we took Abdul down to interrogation, which is this little sealed off room at the end of the cell block with no windows and bare walls and chairs and a table and a sink. Then we started asking him if he knew anything about the Hamburg coffee shop thing. We asked him if he'd like to be a sport and help us out a little bit on this one. You know—treating him like a fellow human being and all except that he was tied up and had a hood over his head. We told him we might be able to help him out when he finally goes to trial. He didn't seem any more interested in making a deal than he has been about anything else over the last couple of years, so we decided to put his skinny little ass back in his cell and let it slide until we heard something more.

Well, we didn't hear anything more till about forty minutes before the stupid bombing was supposed to take place. All of a sudden, we get this call, and it's like, "CIA really thinks that Abdul knows more than he's telling."

And Captain Deaver, our Company Commander, calls a couple of us in his office and he's all like, "Fellas, we gotta get that intel from Abdul pronto, or there's gonna be some serious Hamburger blood on our hands." Yes, he actually said that. "Hamburger blood."

Corporal Lynch and I are all, "Well, gosh Captain Deaver, what do we do?"

Deaver goes, "Shit, I don't know. It's all supposed to come down in like, about thirty-five minutes! Get Abdul into the interrogation room!"

So Lynch and I roust Abdul out of his rack and shuffle his ass down the hall, and Deaver's just going ballistic.

"I want you guys to help the CIA guy to get the location of that coffee shop by *whatever means necessary*," trying to sound all Malcolm X-ish and all. Deaver's half black and he really likes to highlight his black side.

This CIA guy, who's about twenty-three years old but looks like he's fifteen, meets us in the interrogation room.

We've seen him around but he only talks to officers. He's wearing these Italian suit pants and a white tee shirt and trying to act all above the fray and all. Adjusting his glasses and sighing like he's really put out to have to deal with this petty shit, you know? Smoking a cigarette and it looks like he just learned how to smoke last week. Guy's like one year out of college, and he's walking around like he's auditioning for a role in "24," or something. I'd tell you his name, but we're not supposed to do that, and I don't want to get put on some list. Suffice it to say that this guy's about as bogus as they get.

So right off, it's not going well. Abdul's going all limp and everything like he always does and acting like he can't wake up. On top of that, somebody forgot to bring in the plastic wrap to seal off his nose for waterboarding purposes. So anyway, we're all, "Abdul, you'd best tell us everything you know about whatever the fuck is going to happen in that coffee shop in Hamburg. If you don't, we're going to bring your daughter in and shoot her right in front of your eyes!"

Then I realize we still got a hood on him and I'm all, "Oh, yeah—and we're gonna take your hood off before we do that." And Corporal Lynch is all, "Yeah! So you'll be seeing all that bad stuff we were just talking about!"

Dumb. I don't think you should ever talk about what they're *going* to see until you take the hood off, but that's just me.

Whatever.

Abdul usually keeps his eyes closed most of the time anyway.

Thirty minutes. Abdul's all mumbly and like, "I don't have daughter."

And CIA frat boy is trying to act all stoic. Filing his fingernails and sighing really loudly.

He goes, "Hhhheeeehhh. Daughter. Son. Wife. It really doesn't matter much to us, Detainee. We *will* bring a family member in, and we *will* shoot them in front of your very eyes if you do not cooperate."

*Detainee?*

Shit. What a wad. Great time to get all formal and all.

“Umm, Jack Bauer called, Sir. I think he wants to do lunch. That is, when you get done with the *Detainee*.”

Bogus asshole.

Deaver sticks his head in the door. Motions me over. Whispers.

“Is it working?”

“Is what working?”

“The threatening and all.”

“No.”

“Did you do the thing where you say a big black guy is going to come in and rape him?”

“Sir, they say that only works if you’ve actually *got* a big black guy.”

Deaver’s all, “In case you haven’t noticed, Lance Corporal—I happen to *be* black!”

Captain Deaver gets highly pissed when people don’t take note of his blackness.

“What? You mean we’re supposed to threaten him with *you*, Sir?”

I’m sorry, but Captain Deaver weighs about a buck ten, and he is one of the most non-threatening looking people I’ve ever met.

“Fuck’s wrong with that?”

“With all due respect, Sir ...”

“What?”

CIA comes over and whispers to Deaver. “Mark, you’re only half black and you are *well* under six feet tall. You hardly qualify as a big black guy.”

“Oh, so I’m incapable of being threatening? Is that what you’re saying?”

Captain Deaver’s all offended and everything now. He’s not really even supposed to be in here, but you can tell he *so* wants to be part of the thing.

“Abdul,” he yells in this really deep voice, “I am a large black man, and I’m gonna come over there and give you a

good ass rapin' if you do not tell us whay dat coffee shop is."

He sounds a little like Gary Coleman when he used to scrunch up his face and say, "Whatchoo talkin' bout, Willis?" I can see Lynch smiling a little, and you can tell he's trying to keep from laughing.

CIA guy is all, "Mark, there's no time for ass raping right now. The best thing you could do in this situation is run down to the mess hall and see if you can find us some plastic wrap!"

"Let's let the Captain run with the ass raping threat and see where it gets us, why don't we?" says Corporal Lynch.

I forgot to mention Lynch is a big time ass kisser.

"Shut the fuck up, Lynch!" says CIA guy.

"What? I'm not allowed to say anything?" says Lynch.

"No! You're not!"

"Oh, of course not," says Deaver. "When it's something I want to try, nobody's allowed to be supportive, are they?"

"It's not that, Mark," says CIA guy. "It's just that Lynch used the words, "ass raping *threat*." So now the Detainee knows that you wouldn't really ass rape him."

"The hell I wouldn't!"

"Let it go, Mark."

"All right, but let me just add one thing ..."

Deaver gets really dramatic and gets all up in Abdul's face.

"I am going down to the mess hall, Abdul. And there, I'm gonna get us some plastic wrap so we can waterboard the shit out of you. And you know what? I just might ass rape you *while* we're waterboarding you!"

Abdul's moving his head around like he can't tell where the voice is coming from.

Then Lynch goes, "Actually, Sir—that probably wouldn't be possible because he'll be on his back and ..."

"Spare me the logistics, Lynch!" Deaver screams. "I think I know a little bit more about ass rape than you do!"

"But, Sir ..."

"Lynch! Shut the fuck up," says the CIA guy. "Mark! Just

go and get us the plastic wrap!”

“Okay,” Deaver says, backing away and jabbing his finger at Abdul and trying to look all threatening, which is pretty stupid considering Abdul still has the hood on.

CIA guy goes, “And hurry, man! Time is of the essence!”

“Time is of the essence.” Spare me.

Captain Deaver slams the door shut, and all of a sudden it’s quiet as can be.

“Lay him down and place his feet slightly higher than his head,” says CIA guy.

“Lay him down on what?”

“The table.”

“Oh.”

Deaver sticks his head in the door.

“Hey, if they don’t have plastic wrap, should I just get some baggies, or what?”

CIA guys all huffy and shit and like, “Right, Mark. Like a mess hall isn’t going to have any plastic wrap.”

Then Deaver really gets pissed and he’s like, “You know what? Why don’t we put a lid on the condescending tone! I’m in the military and you’re not! I think I might know a little bit more about what a mess hall might and might not have than you do!”

“Secure it, Mark. I don’t want to argue.”

“Well then—why don’t you just stop scoffing at my suggestions? I’m just trying to help.”

CIA guy sighs again. Lowers his head like he’s trying to be patient.

“I know that. I apologize. Yes, just bring baggies if they’re out of plastic wrap.”

“Okay.”

Captain Deaver leaves.

“And bring some bottled water!” CIA guy yells.

“Oh my gosh, *bottled* water?” says Lynch.

“Fuck yes, bottled water. What’s wrong with that?”

“That shit costs a dollar per!”

“Not the Poland Springs.”

“Yes, it does. Disbursing told me that a case of Poland Springs is twenty-three bucks! That’s almost a dollar per!”

“Yes—it is,” says CIA guy. “For *you*. If *you* want to buy some for *yourself*. To *drink*. For interrogation purposes, we charge it to Uncle Sam and get it for about twenty-three cents per.”

“Okay, now you’re fucking with me.”

“I’m serious as a heart attack.”

“That’s a good price.”

“I know.”

“Especially for Poland Springs.”

“You know what’s funny? It all tastes exactly the same to me.”

I finally pipe up.

“Hey guys, we only got like twelve minutes left.”

Then Lynch turns on me because he’s all buddy-buddy with CIA guy all of a sudden.

“Lance Coporal Brewster, will you kindly do us a big favor and shut the fuck up? We can’t do a damn thing until Captain Deaver comes back with the plastic wrap and the bottled water! We might as well shoot the shit until he gets here.”

“Maybe we could soften him up?”

They just both start laughing at me.

CIA guys takes his glasses off, and he’s like wiping tears from his eyes.

“Brewster—we don’t ‘soften up.’ Because softening up would imply torture, and we don’t torture people.”

“Well, we do torture them in cases like this,” says Lynch.

“Oh yeah! Absolutely! When you’re in like a thirty-minute scenario,” says CIA guy.

“So—let’s soften him up,” I say.

“Well, okay—I guess we could do a little of that,” says CIA guy. “This isn’t exactly fate of the world hanging in the balance stuff, but I guess it kind of qualifies. What should we do?”

“I’ve only softened up using waterboarding,” says Lynch.

“Oh! I know!” says CIA guy. “We could do this one thing

we used to do during rush week for Alpha Kappa, where you make the guy carry an ice cube between his butt cheeks, and if he drops it, you spank the shit out of him with this big effin' paddle!"

I say, "I don't know if we'd have time for that."

CIA guy's not even listening.

"This fucking paddle's got *holes* bored through it so it cuts down on wind resistance and it's like—whooooosh, thwack! Stings like a motherfucker! I know. I went through the initiation. It's like, on the first night they get you together in this room all buck naked and shit..."

I say, "We've only got, like—what? Ten minutes left?"

CIA guy's like, "Yeah, I guess you're right. Still. If we had some ice cubes here right now, I'd do it in a heartbeat."

Lynch goes, "I could run after Captain Deaver and tell him to bring some."

"No. It's no good without the paddle anyway. Let's get the Detainee into pre-operations position."

*Pre-operations position?*

Spare the living fuck out of me! He probably calls it "Pre-op-po," when he's telling his girlfriend about it.

Pathetic, really.

So we get Abdul all positioned, which is a bitch because he doesn't feel like getting waterboarded today, and Deaver finally shows up with three bottles of water and a roll of Reynolds Wrap.

CIA guy's just about fed up.

*"Reynolds Wrap?"*

"Secure the fucking attitude, please! They didn't have any plastic wrap, as you so adamantly insisted they would, Mr. Knows Everything."

"Okay," says CIA guy, "but it's your ass if any water seeps up into his nose."

"That's a risk I'm willing to take at this point."

"I don't think the citizens of Hamburg will begrudge us a little water up the nose," says Lynch, chuckling.

"Lynch, shut the fuck up and hold his legs still," says

Captain Deaver.

“Detainee? At which coffee house in Hamburg is the bomb set to explode?” asks CIA guy.

No response.

“Hand me that Poland Springs bottle,” says CIA guy.

“They didn’t have any Poland Springs, so I swung by the Officers Quarters and ripped off some Aqua Fina,” says Deaver.

“That Aqua Fina’s some good shit,” says Lynch. Lynch sees himself as kind of a bottled water expert.

“I swear to God, except for the labels, I can’t tell the difference,” says CIA guy. “Hand me one.”

“Aye aye, sir. Just let me get the lid off here,” says Deaver.

“I know what you mean,” says Lynch. “Those plastic caps are a bitch.”

“They are!” says CIA guy. “And, you know, what are they trying to protect us from? Deadly Mountain Spring Water?” We all laugh but it’s a nervous sort of laugh.

“Detainee, we are about to douse you. If you feel like telling us what you know about Hamburg we *will* stop dousing. Do you understand?”

Abdul starts shaking his head.

“No.”

“Spare us the bogus comments, Abdul!” screams Deaver. “I’m getting ready to unzip my trousers for some ass rape!”

“No, Mark,” says CIA guy. “One technique at a time.”

Deaver slides up to the CIA guy and whispers,

“Sorry. I just thought that if he heard the sound of my zipper being undone, he’d crack.”

“He’s not going to all of a sudden hear your zipper and start giving us locations, Mark.”

Deaver sighs loudly and zips up his trousers.

“Well that might be true and it might not be true, but we’ll never know now will we? Because as I was just now unzipping, you covered up the zipper sound by shutting me down with your, ‘one technique at a time,’ comment.”

CIA guy looks at the ground and pauses for a sec.

“Mark, we’re getting down to business here. Now, if you want to hang, fine. But I’ll need you to simply hold off on the interjection of comments and let me be in charge during the interrogation.”

“Okay, smart guy. Knock yourself out.”

Captain Deaver is playing along but you can tell he’s pissed. He stares straight ahead.

“Douse him,” says the CIA guy, which is kind of funny, because he then proceeds to douse Abdul himself. He pours the water into the washcloth and squeezes the foil around the base of Abdul’s nose to create a kind of seal. Abdul kicks like a motherfucker and tries to shake his head, but we hold him tight.

No response.

“Ooops,” says Lynch. “Looks like some water got in his nose.”

“Tough shit,” says CIA guy. “I’ll say I’m sorry later.”

“I’ll say I’m sorry too,” says Deaver, “*While I’m ass raping him at the gates of hell!*”

We all look up at Captain Deaver.

Long pause.

“Douse him again,” says the CIA guy.

After about the fifth dousing, Abdul heaves like his heart is coming out of his chest, and you can tell he’s screaming underneath the washcloth. His back arches like he’s a wrestler trying to keep from getting pinned by his opponent, and then he makes these really guttural whimpering sounds. Then, finally, he says he’ll talk. So we remove the foil from around his face, and he says that the bomb isn’t set to go off at a coffee shop in Hamburg, but at the McDonalds, next to the coffee shop in Hamburg.

“Douse him again,” screams Deaver. “There’s no friggin’ McDonalds in Hamburg!”

“The hell there isn’t!” says Lynch. “They got those things everywhere!”

“You’re right, Lynch! They went international in the early seventies!” yells the CIA guy.

“And think about it,” says Lynch, “Hamburg—hamburg-er.”  
“That’s just the kind of logic that would appeal to these animals,” says CIA guy. “Douse him again!”  
“Why?” I ask. “We’ve got the location!”  
“Oh, right,” says CIA guy. “I see your point.”  
“Right next to the *Hamburger* place in *Hamburg*,” says Lynch.

“That’s viable intel! Good work, Lynch!”

Deaver raises his hand.

“And also, what about this? Ham—burg—ler,”

We pause and look at him.

“Mark, you said you’d secure it.”

“I said I’d secure it *during* the interrogation.”

CIA guy is shouting orders to everyone now. Go phone this in. Check this out with Langley and shit. He doesn’t even wait for them to say, Aye aye, Sir. And by the way, what’s with the Italian pants and tee shirt look? Is this some new thing? Bogus.

Deaver’s all, “It’s only going to take us about *seven minutes* to check your story out, Abdul. And you’d best not be lying, or in the name of Allah, I will march every single one of your family members into this room and oh my goodness, the Poland Springs shall flow like the Nile and the ass rapings will be plentiful.”

And Lynch goes, “Aqua Fina, Sir.”

“What?”

“We, umm, used the Aqua Fina instead. Remember?”

Deaver looks at the floor and shakes his head.

“Lynch, could you *just for once* let me say something without having to top it off with some bogus comment that makes what I just said seem less threatening? Is that even a *remote possibility*?”

“Sorry, Captain.”

“Fuck you are! You do it intentionally!”

“I’ll secure it.”

“Do so. Immediately.”

The Der Raskeller Coffee Haus in Hamburg did not

explode six minutes later. Fourteen innocent Germans had some coffee and then went home. Turns out there wasn't a McDonalds within two miles. Also, once we got a reliable interpreter, we found out Abdul said the same thing about McDonalds on another occasion and it turned out that he had been trying to say that he'd give us some intel if he could have a cheeseburger. So while we did get some answers out of Abdul, they were sort of tainted with a wrongness that just couldn't be verified in five minutes. And since the US is now saying it doesn't torture for punishment, Captain Deaver couldn't really follow through on his rape threats, and Abdul just got to go back to his cell.

Still, the *detainee* ate no cheeseburgers on that day.

Detainee.

Spare me.