

“The Diplomatic Cheese Thief”
An Allegory

Craig Anderson of San Francisco, California believed himself to be a very important man. He saw himself as one for whom the Red Sea would readily part and for whom typhoons would surely swerve away from their course, and as a result of this fervent confidence in his own charisma, he was quick to throw all caution to the wind and say boastful things that a wiser man may instead choose to keep under the lock and key of his own mind. Craig’s self-assurance, indeed, was what found him on a delightfully warm Tuesday evening chatting in the tavern of an airship whose lineage one could trace to the hydrogen-filled German Zeppelins of some hundred years before Craig’s time. That morning, he had decided that it was in his best interest to make the acquaintance of the folks that he would be stuck with for quite some time as the slow-moving airship made its way to the nation’s capital, and so he allowed himself to enjoy a few drinks with his fellow passengers to loosen everyone’s lips before engaging in proper conversation.

“Flights from here all the way out to D.C. are rare enough that I’m sure each of you have got a story to tell us. What brings you folks here?”

Most of the folks at the table responded that they simply wanted to visit their families in what was quickly becoming one of the largest metropolises in the world, which wasn’t of any note to Craig. One response in particular, though, piqued Craig’s interest: that of a strange individual who (rather unfortunately) was named Duquarius Figgelbottom IV, a stout Slavic man with a presumably rich familial history and an overall appearance that immediately reminded Craig of the type of creature that may be found by a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

“I am ambassador for home country. I go to see President Cunningham about crucial trade agreement between nations. We both want to help us work past minor disagreement and prosper. I will ask you too, since you look to me like unusually well-dressed man: who do you work for? Why are you here?”

“Why, I’m very glad you asked! I’m actually on my way to see the President as well; I’m the chief marketing officer for San Francisco-based Alentejo Solutions, and we’re hoping to strike a deal to sell our American cheese in bulk to the federal government. As a matter of fact, I’ve got here a prop that you’d enjoy seeing for the pitch: a premium block of our highly-prized world-famous cheese!”

As promised, Craig subsequently set upon the table a rather appetizing-looking orange block of American cheese to the crowd. You and I would find it nothing less than bizarre to see a suited man such as Craig so enthusiastically present us a block of cheese, but the crowd, including Duquarius, was fascinated by it, perhaps due to some well-balanced mixture of attitude and charismatic appearance on Craig’s part. Despite the incessant requests that

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followed, Craig refused to allow anyone to cook with the cheese, eventually seizing the opportunity to “use the restroom” and return to his quarters for the night.

The following morning, Duquarius arose at six-o’-clock sharp local time to put into effect a dastardly plan that he had been concocting since the night before: driven by some sort of strange cheese-induced insanity or maybe just by an as-of-yet subdued taste for crime (even given his lofty diplomatic ideals), he resolved to obtain a slice of that very same block of cheese in order to cook a burger before Craig could use the cheese himself.

While Craig was still asleep that morning, Duquarius stole into Craig’s chambers and began to rummage through Craig’s luggage in a desperate search for the cheese. Duquarius did eventually find it in the third suitcase that he opened, but rather unluckily for Duquarius, the noise of the search stirred Craig awake at the exact same time that Duquarius began to make his escape, cheese in hand.

Craig, as the quintessential American businessman, never went anywhere unarmed. Of course, it would be foolish for any airliner to allow any sort of weapon on their airships, but Craig was willing to go through great pains to smuggle his trusty M1911 aboard to use at the hint of any threat. Even recognizing the cheese burglar as a new acquaintance of particular interest, he was steadfast in his willingness to use violent force rather than negotiate, so he sprinted after Duquarius after taking a moment to find, load, and chamber the pistol.

Craig spotted Duquarius at the end of the corridor just outside his bedroom, preparing to turn to the right. Craig, hoping to recover his cheese, fired three bullets in very quick succession that day. The first shot he fired flew too far down, striking the floor and lodging itself into the floor relatively harmlessly. The second shot he fired flew too far up, passing through the ceiling just right to miraculously strike one of the hydrogen gas cells, causing hydrogen gas to begin leaking into the corridor. The heat of the third shot firing in very close proximity to the quickly-expanding cloud of the transparent gas was enough to ignite it, instantly setting the airship ablaze.

Craig Anderson spent his final moments in about as deep of thought as one could expect from a man stuck on an aircraft in flames nose-diving at several hundred miles per hour. He ruminated on the outlandish events that had led him to this moment, but perhaps due to denial or simply a kind of unprecedented thickheadedness, he never managed to reach a sensible conclusion about upon whom the blame ultimately fell for his demise. To our outside observer, however, one thing is clear: this disaster was orchestrated by none other than the men who it hurt the most.