

THE GREATEST MANN
IN THE WORLD

A NOVEL

Matt Micros

Heroes are easily recognized. Just look for the ordinary person who steps forward into an extraordinary circumstance while everyone else stands still.

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Also by Matt Micros

~Five Days~

~The Knights of Redemption~

~The Chameleon~

~Nick Nelson Was Here~

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I	<i>Snowifornia</i>	11
II	<i>Under the Cover of Day</i>	19
III	<i>A Tale of Two People</i>	23
IV	<i>The Unified Party</i>	30
V	<i>The Electrician's Wife</i>	35
VI	<i>Doctor Heal Thyself</i>	40
VII	<i>Ripping Ben Franklin</i>	44
VIII	<i>Homeless at Last</i>	47
IX	<i>The Nominations Please</i>	52
X	<i>The Chameleon</i>	58
XI	<i>The 29 Degree Tilt</i>	69
XII	<i>The Beaten, the Broken & the Damned</i>	79
XIII	<i>The Matchmaker</i>	85
XIV	<i>Every Dog Has Its Day</i>	90
XV	<i>30 for 30</i>	95
XVI	<i>A Reunion of Sorts</i>	107
XVII	<i>The Echoes of Cheers</i>	113
XVIII	<i>The Confirmation</i>	126
XIX	<i>When it Rains, it Pours</i>	135
XX	<i>Help from an Unlikely Source</i>	145
XXI	<i>And Out of the Darkness</i>	153
XXII	<i>And the Winner is...</i>	158

**THE GREATEST MANN
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“Children aren’t the only ones who need heroes.”

Tamora Pierce

This book is a work of fiction.
No part of the contents relate to any real person or
persons living or dead. No events depicted actually
happened or are implied to have happened.

I

~SNOWIFORNIA~

What if you awoke one morning to find that everything you had known to be true and normal in your life, suddenly no longer was? What if with no advance notice whatsoever, the sun began to rise in the west and set in the east? What if on a random December day, it began snowing in Southern California and didn't stop for four months? What if at that same time, the temperature in Milford, Connecticut soared into the 80's? What if Seattle had four straight months of complete darkness followed by 20 hours a day of sunshine for three months? What if the United States was involved in an endless war that when combined with the environmental shift had caused the country to fall into a deep recession; with gas prices at an all-time high, the stock market at a 40 year low, with giant corporations going out of business on what seemed like a daily basis. What if? What if? What if?

The day began typically enough for mid-December in the nation's capital; cold, dark and grey with a heavy fog that had settled into the district so thick that you practically had to wipe it from your face. People weaved their way through the pedestrian

traffic as if everyone else had been put in front of them solely to impede them from where they were headed. The mood in the country was as gloomy as the weather.

Meanwhile, on the second floor conference room in a building on the corner of 11th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, key members of the Democratic National Committee were fast at work deciding what was in the best interest of the American people—without bothering to actually ask them what they wanted.

It was a room filled with castoffs and wannabes. Life for these people, with very few exceptions, had not turned out as they had hoped when they were younger, and they were making certain now that they had the opportunity, to inflict payback on anyone whose life *hadn't* been an unhappy and veritable mess in their youth.

Dick Stoops was the unabashed leader of the group, but certainly not for his looks or charm. He was mostly bald, sporting the half globe, with hair on the sides and back of his head. His voice was deep and imposing, with the ability to drown out nearly any sound in its path.

“Did anyone see *The Post* this morning?” he asked almost rhetorically.

A woman in her late 40's, pretty beneath her red pantsuit and white blouse, chimed in. “They’re saying that as long as we put forth a woman or a minority as Huber’s running mate, the election is ours to lose.”

“And they’re right,” Stoops answered. “Which is

why we *will* put forth one or the other. Our job over the next several days is to talk the also-rans out of the race.”

An African American man in his early 40’s, who didn’t seem at all bothered by their political pandering, threw in his two cents. “Do we have anything to offer them?”

“Such as?”

“Cabinet positions, future considerations...etc,” the man responded.

“Jesus Christ, Ron. This isn’t the NFL draft.”

“I understand that, but Rick Jeremiah has plenty of money, and isn’t afraid to spend it. He could drag the nomination all the way to the convention floor if he wanted to.”

Stoops mulled it over for about ten seconds, which was generally the amount of time he allotted to even the most important of decisions. He hated being strong-armed into doing anything, but was also smart enough to know when to retreat.

“Ok. Tell Jeremiah he’ll have a cabinet position if he withdraws and throws his support behind Huber. Tell the others to fuck off honorably or the next job they have in politics will be as a Lunch Monitor at a middle school in Poughkeepsie.”

There was a noticeable chuckle in the room. It was clear that most people there loved the fact that they wielded so much power.

“What we need to figure out is who would be a better compliment to Huber. O’Bannon? Or

Calvert? The African American? Or the woman? For that matter, are we sure that Huber is the person we want to put on top of the ticket? Which will play better? Thoughts?” Stoops said.

If Dan Holmes wasn't the youngest in the room, he was close to it. He looked to be in his early 30's, clean-cut, well-spoken and passionate. Everything the rest of them were not. He cleared his throat before speaking, knowing full well that what he was about to say wouldn't be well received. “Isn't that for the public to decide?” he managed to spit out.

Stoops seemed more amused than annoyed. “Son, I know you're new to this game, so here's how it's played. Ninety-eight percent of the population is made up of morons who couldn't pick their nose without instructions. So it's up to us to tell them how to think based on the information we decide to leak to the press.”

“Doesn't that kind of go against the very principles of a Democracy?”

There was a collective gasp in the room, followed by awkward silence, until—

“What the hell's going on out there?!” Ron exclaimed, pointing out the window for emphasis.

“The sun's out. It has happened before,” Stoops answered sarcastically.

In fact, it was, having suddenly burst through the clouds like a brick thrown through a wet paper bag.

“Not just that. Why is everyone taking their jackets off?”

“They’re warm?”

“When I left my house this morning, it was 12 degrees outside. They said the high was going to be 27 today.”

“So the weather forecaster was wrong. That would be so shocking.”

“Fifty degrees wrong?”

The people outside were wiping the sweat from their brows and looking to the heavens as if they suddenly found themselves standing beneath a giant hair dryer on the highest possible setting.

Someone slid open a window and stuck his arm out. “It’s really warm. Like *really* warm,” the man said.

Three hundred miles away in Milford, Connecticut, Bernice and Joe Kreps took an unexpected stroll along the beach. They had lived in the same house directly across from the Long Island Sound for the past 27 years—which was the same length of time as their marriage. They had raised two children in that house, and seen four grandchildren walk through its doors. The house itself was a three bedroom cottage, with hardwood floors throughout and a screened in front porch, from which they spent many a night watching people walk along the beach. *Quaint* and *comfortable* were perhaps the two most apt words used to describe the home, although their son came home one day from high school and announced that their house looked like the guesthouse to one of

the million dollar estates that sandwiched it on both sides. They laughed when he said it because they knew it was true, and because they also knew they would never be able to afford to live there on an electrician and teacher's salaries if they were just starting out today. That is also what made them appreciate it as much as they did. Bernice and Joe loved taking long walks along the water and into town. They loved the little corner delis and pizza shops. And they loved that on sunny days, the light woke them up by shining brightly through the many blind free windows.

Winters had grown increasingly difficult as they grew older, and on more than one occasion, they looked into buying a second home in Florida, but simply couldn't afford it. And when December 4 began with bright, blue skies and temperatures rising through the 70's, no one appreciated it more than the Kreps.

"I mean, we're retired, so it makes sense that we're out here today," Joe told his wife while they strolled along the walking path while dozens of college age people—some wearing Yale t-shirts-- played football, volleyball and Frisbee on the beach. "But what is everyone else doing out here? Don't they have school? Or jobs?"

"Not everyone thinks it's a sin to take a day off once in a while," his wife answered.

"Not taking a day off is what put two kids through college."

"You did have some help, you know."

"Yeah, but you were a teacher. Between summers and sick days, you had nearly three months off a year."

“Don’t even start with me,” she said.

“I’m just teasing,” Joe laughed. “But I still don’t understand what all these people are doing here. That’s the problem with today’s society. They have no work ethic.”

“You better be careful,” Bernice warned, “or instead of calling you Grampy Joe, our grandchildren are going to start calling you Grumpy Joe.”

Just then, three boys on bicycles whizzed past, along with two girls on roller blades, the last of which bumped Joe as she went by. “Damn teenagers,” he grumbled as his wife rolled her eyes.

Across town, Professor Cummings looked out at what was supposed to be a class of forty-eight students and saw only seven. “What’s the deal, ladies and gentlemen? Is it class cut day?” he asked to silence. The students that were in the room were there for a reason. They had no social skills whatsoever. It was the quietest class he ever remembered teaching.

“Tom, were you missing a lot of students today?” he asked another professor he passed on his way back to his office.

“Quite a few,” was the response.

“I was missing 11 in Physics and 48 in Microbiology,” Cummings lamented.

“Must be the weather. Although I’m not sure you can blame the weather for Microbiology,” Tom laughed.

“But we have exams in a week, and this is *Yale*,” Cummings said.

“I’m sure they’ll show up as soon as the weather turns lousy again,” Tom answered before adding, “When is it going to turn back by the way?”

“I just checked it and the weather pattern shows sunny and warm the rest of the week.”

“Strange pattern for December wouldn’t you say? Did you hear it’s snowing in Southern California?”

“It’s got to be the winds of El Nino,” Cummings said while shaking his head. He was easily perturbed by anything out of the norm. He was especially perturbed by anything he should understand but didn’t.