

Observations of Agent Williams

I was walking my normal patrol on the White House grounds that Monday evening. All hell'd just broken loose at the Newseum, but I wouldn't know that for another minute or so.

Just as I was passing between two pillars, I received my orders through my earpiece to get over to the east entrance and then stand by for further orders. I arrived there forty- five seconds later at a dead run. When I came to a skidding halt at the back of a group of other agents, Agent Jonathan Fillmore was already briefing us. ". . . shots fired at the Newseum. POTUS and Bookbag are on the way here. The instant the cars are through those gates," he pointed toward the gates in question without looking, "this place will be in total lockdown."

"Casualties?" asked one of the other uniformed agents.

"One bystander in the crowd plus some minor. No other major injuries reported so -" Fillmore suddenly broke off, and his hand went to his earpiece. As one of the more senior agents, there were more frequencies he had access to than the rest of us.

Everyone waited tensely for his next words.

He frowned. "Everybody into the cars. Go to George Washington Hospital NOW!" He sprinted off toward the garage and the waiting Chevy Suburbans. The ten of us or so were right on his heels.

Hours later I found myself standing post outside the President's room. Agent Butterfield was in there with POTUS, FLOTUS, and Bookbag, briefing them on what had been learned from the "suspect" that had been apprehended in Virginia. The picture was a lot clearer for us now, having filtered through our ear radios as pieces of information were learned.

Over the brief seconds I'd seen it, Ron's face in particular had been interesting to see. Rage, humiliation, pain, and quiet pride were all there, but layered over it all was his professional mask. All things being equal it was a very good mask, but he had a habit of letting it slip just a touch when out of sight of any of the First Family. Only various members of the Service had ever seen beyond it. Even then it wasn't often.

The anger was easier to see in Agent Johnson's face in the moments that our eyes met as we shared the post. I'm sure my own face reflected the same thing. Neither of us had been there, but that didn't help much.

Charlie Young, Bagman, walked up. "The President asked to see me," he said to me. Out of professional habit I checked him over. He was carrying nothing, and his bearing was tense and tired, but that was expected under the circumstances.

I nodded and pulled open the door, closing it quietly when I heard POTUS acknowledge him.

The door opened again about a minute and a half later, revealing Bagman. He walked off down the hall, leaving the door open behind himself. He looked a lot more tense than when he'd entered the room minutes earlier. Hardly surprising considering that he was the target of the shooters in the first place.

Through the open door, I heard Bookbag say, "Dad, I'm going to -"

POTUS interrupted her. "Go," he bid her gently.

She shot out the door. I immediately fell into step behind her since Agent Toscano was back at the Newseum.

I raised my wrist microphone to my mouth and quietly said, "Williams has Bookbag."

"Acknowledged," I heard over my earpiece as Bookbag called, "Charlie?" I also heard the door behind me close and threw a glance over my shoulder to see Butterfield settling into my previous spot. He caught my eye and gave me a subtle nod.

I turned forward just in time to see Bookbag catch up with Bagman, who'd stopped walking at her call though he didn't turn around.

"Charlie," she said again, resting one hand on his shoulder.

He still didn't turn as I settled against the wall, looking up and down the short hallway. I was still in sight of Agents Johnson and Butterfield at the President's room, but that didn't make me feel much better. The other end of the hall opened off in both directions ten yards down. Someone could step around that corner and start shooting long before anybody could react.

Paranoid? Perhaps, but that's what I'm paid for.

"He was shot because of ME," Bagman quietly said.

"He was shot because of US," Bookbag returned. "Charlie, look at me." She gently tried to turn him around, but he wasn't moving.

Two patient's rooms, a women's bathroom, and a janitor's closet lined the walls. All the doors were closed. Everything would have been checked by now, so I doubted anything would be coming out of those rooms. I quietly stepped away from the couple toward the end of the short hallway.

"I got your father SHOT, Zoey."

"No you didn't. He was shot by two deranged guys who are so bigoted that they would willingly give their lives to TRY to kill a interracial couple. And they didn't even accomplish so much as a scratch on either of us."

I looked both ways down the hallway that opened off either end of the T. More patient rooms and a small waiting room. I glanced into the waiting room. Except for the window in the door, no views into the room and no other way into the room except that door. Good news. I stepped back to Bookbag and Bagman.

Bagman snorted in ironic humor. "So they're bad shots in addition to being bigots? Like that helps?"

"Folks," I quietly interrupted. When they both looked to me, Bagman resigned and Bookbag annoyed, I continued, "There's a small waiting room around the corner. Perhaps you'd like to take this conversation somewhere more private?" That wasn't the reason I wanted them to move, but I figured they'd react better to my spoken reasoning rather than the truth.

Bagman raised an eyebrow at Bookbag. She nodded. I took her arm lightly and steered her and Bagman toward the waiting room, closing the door and positioning myself directly in front of it.

Around the corner to my immediate right was POTUS's room (with two Agents posted there) and both directions down the hallway where I was standing I could see other agents posted. All in all, I felt a lot better than when they'd been standing in the hall. "Williams to base," I said into my microphone.

"Base. Go ahead."

"Bookbag and Bagman in Waiting Room E five one seven. I'm posted there."

"Acknowledged."

For the next ten minutes I kept swiveling my head, keeping an eye on everything. It was painfully dull, but nobody asked me to be comfortable when doing my job.

A janitor came past, pushing a mop in one of those yellow rolling buckets. Poor guy looked frightened to death of all the extra security. He'd probably already submitted to a dozen checks just to do his job on this floor. Since I knew he was coming from the warning I had received over the radio, I didn't bother stopping him, but I DID keep a close eye on him the whole thirty seconds he was in sight.

Once the janitor was out of sight, I turned enough to see into the waiting room I was guarding. I didn't see it as an invasion of Bookbag's privacy; I was simply doing my job. She was sitting on one of the couches, leaned forward and talking intently to Bagman. He was sitting on another couch, leaned forward with his elbows on his knees and head in hands. No security threats in there. I resumed my silent scan.

Five minutes later a pair of nurses came walking past, talking animatedly with each other. Five eight, average weight, brown, brown, ID looks good, carrying nothing. Six one, thin, brown, blue, good ID, carrying a clipboard. Unless they did something wrong, they probably belonged here.

"Did you SEE that Mister Seaborn? I could just eat that man up!"

The taller nurse laughed. "Down, girl. You're already married."

The first one sighed. "Just because I can't touch doesn't mean I can't look."

The second one gave me a mildly aggravated look as they walked past, turning the corner and heading toward POTUS's room.

The door behind me opened and I stepped to the side immediately. Bagman came out of the room, head down and making good time. He turned and headed down the hall toward the exit.

Bookbag stepped quietly out of the waiting room and watched her upset boyfriend disappear around the corner.

She sighed and shook her head, apparently lost in thought. I kept looking up and down the hallway, but nothing was happening at the moment.

"How's Josh?" Bookbag suddenly asked me.

"Still in surgery," I answered. "We've been told what they're doing, but frankly most of it was beyond me. I barely passed biology, so there's no way I followed all that medical description." That wasn't quite true, but I figured she needed a little cheering up.

She smiled slightly at me. At least one mission accomplished tonight, I thought, smiling back. "Where're my parents?" she asked.

"Your father is in his room. Your mother is in the main waiting room with the senior staff."

She nodded and waved an arm in an "after you" gesture. With one arm gesturing in the right direction, I gently led her toward the waiting room.

I was making my rounds outside the White House on Election Night, twelve weeks later. It'd been raining and thundering on and off all evening, but it looked like it was finally breaking up.

With the party going on inside (who were they, again? Radio talk show hosts or something), security was a nightmare. So many new people in the building this evening, even if they'd all been checked six ways from Sunday. Fortunately POTUS showed no signs of going anywhere, Bookbag was on the grounds, and FLOTUS was off on some trip or another. Other than the party and one technical wizard working on the computers, it was quiet enough.

I idly paid attention as Agent Butterfield reported POTUS's movements inside: going to the party and then leaving. I frowned slightly, listening to Ron's report of them moving. Was that actually amusement I heard in his voice? I'd have to ask him about it later.

Shaking off the wayward thoughts, I turned a corner and looked along the sheltered overhang. Bookbag was sitting on one of the benches, reading some book or another. I wondered where Gina was.

"Excuse me, aren't you Zoey Bartlet?" Bagman had appeared seemingly out of nowhere. Since I was on a roving patrol, I decided to spend a little time right here. Neither had noticed me, so it wasn't like I was in the way.

Besides, everyone in the Service was starting to worry about these two.

Uncurling from her seat, Bookbag kept a finger in the book as a bookmark and stood, smiling slightly at the question. She gave Bagman a kiss and hug. "It's too much to happen to someone your age. Your father and your mother and then this." She trailed off before continuing, "I don't know, Charlie. I mean... what do you do?"

Lacing his hands behind her back, he smiled down at her. "I was going to go vote."

"I could come," Bookbag offered.

Bagman smiled. "Yeah," he agreed.

Mister McGarry, Lion, stepped out of the doors near the couple who are still hugging. "Hi," he greeted, frowning in thought.

"Hi, Leo," Bookbag answered.

"Charlie, I'm looking for the President," Lion said.

"Is there anything wrong?" Bagman asked, looking slightly concerned.

"No, no. I . . ." He paused in thought or concern before continuing with, "I think he may have done a couple of numbers at the Talk Radio reception."

Bagman looks relaxed again. "Okay. Zoey and I are going out. I'll be on my pager."

"You're going out?" Lion asked, looking mildly concerned.

"Yeah," Bagman responded.

"Charlie, you're taking extra protection, right?" Lion asked.

Bagman looked shocked by the implication. Bookbag looked embarrassed. I blinked in surprise. WHAT was he asking?

Bagman found his voice, "Hey, Leo . . ."

"Secret Service protection, Charlie," he chuckled. "But thanks for loading me up with that image," Lion added with a twinkle in his eye.

Bookbag smiled, and so did I. Bagman chuckled slightly. "Yeah, we'll have extra protection," he assured the Chief of Staff.

"Okay." He frowned and continued, "Something about a dead pig's skin. I need to find him," Lion said, apparently talking about POTUS.

Lion turned toward where I standing inconspicuously and walked away from the couple who were frowning in confusion at each other. Lion spotted me and asked, "Where's the President?"

"The Residence, sir," I answered him.

He nodded and headed inside.

Looking back over toward where the little drama had just played out, I spotted Bagman and Bookbag going inside. His arm was over her shoulder and her arm was around his waist.

Smiling at the little scene, I raised my microphone to my lips. "Toscano."

"Go ahead," I heard a moment later.

"Bookbag is on her way out."

"Acknowledged."

Grinning slightly, I continued, "Johnson."

"Here," I heard the male agent acknowledge.

"Bagman's with her. You owe Gina that twenty bucks."

"Damn," I heard him mutter. "Acknowledged," he grumbled.

I grinned wider. That was crummy radio discipline, but some messages were just worth it.