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Gauss Writing Competition

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The Poles:

Indifference can be More Dangerous than Hatred

I awoke from the screaming from the neighbor's house – a searing cry that tore the serenity of the night to shreds. It was the tenth night of these cries – the tenth night of the Occupation. That rhythmic dragging and kicking mixed in with loud, vulgar laughter that always followed was a somber reminder of what our lives had become. The dragging was replaced by a frenzied cry at the Poles – only stoking the savagery of the Occupiers. They fed on fear and blood – our fear, our blood – and it was today's feeding time.

How much longer can I take of this?

An era of chaos was borne from the ashes of the former United States. Sooner or later, every community in this area was taken over endless waves of “liberators” who were bound to be “liberated” by another group of freedom fighters. Every “liberation” followed the same playbook, a cleansing of the population with their blood. Our community had not been touched by this “deep-cleaning” thanks to living in the “uncivilized” desert, yet sooner or later, it was bound to happen. Ten days ago, our “saviors” arrived – aiming to civilize us with their Occupation.

Surely, this group seemed like a wounded cat to us at first. Arriving in our town with clothes in tatters, bodies bruised like an apple left at the bottom of a crate of them and a spirit like a kid left with fifty pages of homework, they surely could not have occupied anyone else but us. After inviting us from our homes with their rifles to their camp, we were introduced to our leaders – shadows of people both in looks and morals who had an announcement to make. Our measly population (which outnumbered their size tenfold, mind you), had been too uncivilized in this desert, their leaders proclaimed. We needed their saving – and the playbook had begun.

Now, I can say that at least some grains of sand might have seeped into my brain and clogged a few tunnels there, yet I was not stupid. In fact, no one was. Everyone knew how things would play out – and how a sea of blood would flow through our town. The town shopkeeper (he owned our only television) immediately jumped up at “blasphemed” our great saviors – about how he would not accept such rule in our town. These words reverberated through the townsfolk – our new leaders were soon drowned out by the waves of murmuring from the crowd. Thus, we had our first cleansing of the Occupation.

That night, the first screams began. The following day, our shopkeeper was hanging from a pole in the town square like a placid doll.

From that day on, the screaming never stopped. First it was our local newspaper, then our educated folks, then whoever happened to be unlucky. Our town of five hundred strong was being picked off like rats in a barrel by fifty. Yet no one resisted. How could they? Resistance meant certain death – just like those that swayed with the wind off the poles for all to see and all to fear. People could care – yet no one did, and no one dared.

The marching of the steel-toed boots soon awakened me from an uneasy sleep. Was it my turn to die? Suddenly, my door cracked open like the gates of hell with an outpour of force. I was

seized, bound and gagged by our saviors – dragged like a desperate animal to that all too familiar path. People peeked out of their doors to look yet soon drew away – they could not risk death too. They could not risk caring as I was to join those on the pole – for all to see, for all to fear.