

Chapter 5 - Horc

Horc is a massive man. He is also a brilliant man.

To call him a genius would be to understate his mental abilities, which amazingly exceed his physical prowess - standing almost 50% taller and weighing almost twice as much as the average man, almost all of it solid muscle.

He is also, a complete and total psychopath.

Horc looked down at his chains, and then up to his surroundings - a specially built dual hull cage transport carriage, guarded by 18 specially assigned Mediators. This had been his “home” on a long journey of nearly 3.2 years. As a feared “violent, mentally disturbed” criminal, this was his plight.

But it hadn't always that way.

As a baby, he was a dream, smiling and giggling; almost never crying. As he grew, he learned to talk at an almost unbelievable young age, yet was polite and kind from the very beginning. People would constantly comment to his parents on what a polite and friendly child he was. Horc seemed to learn early that he could endear people by being friendly and complementing them.

Even as a young child Horc became a master of the warm smile and conquered enchanting small talk. He quickly learned he could control his environment by gaining the acceptance and fondness of the adults around him, and that a few properly placed words, with the right inflection and right facial expression, could almost always get him what he wanted.

He excelled at all the academics – Mathematics, reading, writing, history, social studies – all were trivial exercises for him. He couldn't understand how anyone wouldn't grasp them almost instantaneously. He would read and comprehend an entire book almost as soon as it was given to him. It didn't matter if it was math, geometry, algebra, philosophy, logic, or any of the other studies – as soon as he was exposed he would comprehend, understand, and absorb the material. Likewise, sports were almost nothing more than light exercise for Horc. He could run faster, hit the ball harder, or throw the ball with almost pinpoint precision. His teachers and coaches were never able to challenge him.

However, Horc became fascinated with interaction with others. In that endeavor, there was no books or formulas to direct his actions; yet there were voluminous rules regarding it – they were all just unwritten. So Horc spent most of his time learning how to interact with others to get what he wanted.

The right smile, the properly timed sadness, the right inflection of eagerness, the correct hint of caring and compassion – all could be played to get others to react in certain ways. This was challenging, this took effort, this was fun.

By Horc's tenth year, he had become beloved by the entire community. His teachers loved him, the coaches loved him, the local mediator loved him, the local shop keepers loved him. Wherever he went he would smile and greet the towns people, ask how they and their family were doing, always remembering all their names, birthdays, significant dates, etc. Horc could always cause a smile on the face of those that he met; and they, often without even knowing it, would grant him whatever he was trying to achieve.

The community Horc grew up in, Farmpoint 52032, wasn't a large community - a small township of only about 5,000 people about 10 ML southeast of NorthWest City. But as the local farming collection point, it was the largest town for almost 100 KL in any direction. Because it was so small, everyone knew the wonderful boy Horc.

Throughout his formal education, Horc excelled, achieving almost perfect scores in all his studies. But in his sixth year of education, Horc encountered a teacher the likes of which he had never encountered before, Nent Teacher. This teacher seemed to see through his manipulative behavior. Horc was fascinated by this, a person that he not only couldn't manipulate, but who appeared to see right through his attempts to flatter, support, encourage, uplift, or ingratiate. He was excited to have the opportunity to learn how this person was able to see through him, and how he could hon his skills to learn how to manipulate him too.

Horc had decided to attempt an inflection point at the third writing of the sixth year. In Necedah, the sixth year was considered a pivotal year; where childhood gave way to adolescence. As part of this every student of every sixth year class was asked to write three papers. The first was *Why is it important to be Nice to Others?* The second was *What are the central responsibilities in being Nice?* And the third was *What are the challenges to be Nice to Other?* All harkened to a core belief in Necedahian culture. But while the first two had formulaic answers, the third was undefined, allowing for insightfulness and introspection. It was the separation between childhood and adolescence. For Horc, it was his chance to engage his teacher.

Horc had to endure the intellectual pain of just giving the almost childish rote answer to the first question, which was essentially a reciting of the 3rd Necedah Top Chief Servant, Zeht PeopleServant, known as the greatest of all Chief Servants, that:

“Being nice to others allows us all to have better lives. By being nice to your family, colleagues, associates and strangers, we can all be both more effective for the common good, as well as be happier. That is, by considering others first, we all live better and happier. So by taking care of others, you also take care of yourself.”

A few months later, Horc similarly, and painfully, regurgitated the expected response to the second paper, which was what came out of the first Nice conclave:

What are the central responsibilities in being Nice?

1. *Always be nice to others above yourself;*
2. *By being nice to others first, you are actually being nice to yourself.*
3. *If anyone isn't being nice, you need to let them know.*
4. *If someone continues to not be nice, regardless of age or position, you need to tell a Constable or Servant so they can let the person know.*

He then added a paragraph about that by doing this we all prosper. Of course, he received an almost guaranteed perfect score.

But Horc tired of the simplicity, and wanted to understand his teacher's pivot points on this final paper. So, he went well beyond the normal writings, to gauge and try to manipulate his teacher's response.

Horc grimaced and knew he had not optimized the situation when he got his paper back – a Level 2 low. Horc had never received anything other than a Level 1 and Level 1 high before in his life. He had thought at most he would give a Level 1 low and have to talk it up. But he could not allow his record to be blighted by this one low mark. So Horc decided to try and control the situation as he had so confidently and expertly done on untold occasions in the past.

“Instructor Nent, can I please talk to you about my grade?”, Horc asked his teacher. It was common within a profession to call people by their first name, as most, if not all, had the same last name.

“Yes Horc, of course. What do you want to know?”, a confident Nent Teacher replied, having expected this conversation.

Horc beamed a warm, friendly smile. “I’m not sure I’m showing the correct score. It says Level 2 Low. Yet I felt I meant and exceeded all the requirements.”

“Horc,” Teacher Nent responded, “you missed the objective on a few points. First it was a somewhat simple question, ‘*What are the challenges to be Nice to Other?*’, which required a proportional – that is simple – response. Second, it was only supposed to be about 1 page. You went into much more depth, which was not in the spirit of the question, as well as went off topic, and took 5 pages to do it. That’s why I gave you a Level 2 Low.”

“Thank you Instructor Teacher for the reasonable explanation,” Horc instantly responded, using additional formality to indicate respect. “However, the paper was also meant to illicit deeper insight for the individual, and I thought I excelled at that. Moreover, the instructions were ‘No less than 1 page’. It gave no upper limit. Thus, I think I meant all the requirements and then some.” Horc renewed his smile, injecting a little sadness into his eyes suggesting he would be hurt to not get a revised grade.

Teacher Nert responded without hesitation, “While I respect your viewpoint, it is not correct here. Instead of staying on point, you drifted into somewhat fringe thoughts on the hostility within us. You used this as a platform to voice your internal struggle, not the point of the paper.”

“Wow”, Horc thought to himself, is this guy psychoanalyzing me? But without showing any reaction, he continued, “Thank you for your honesty. However, I don’t think that is germane here. You did ask the question ‘*What are the challenges to be Nice to Other?*’. So I cited some very relevant foundational tenants.

“First, I cited Chief Servant Zeht”...

“Top Chief Servant Zeht”, Teacher Nent corrected.

Horc paused momentarily, while his teacher spoke. For the first time in his life, he felt something that he would later realize was irritation. Nonetheless, he picked up where he left off, still smiling, “Top Chief Servant Zeht, in his famous Nice speech in 531, over 1400 years ago, spoke about the hostility we would have to overcome to reach a more prosperous society by being nice. It may not be often discussed, but it is still there.”

He could see Teacher Nent start to move to respond, but Horc started again before Teacher Nert could start a syllable, “Then I cited where the first Nice Conclave not 3 years later in 534, documented

rampant and sometimes egregious hostility and violence around them that needed to be curtailed for Necedah to prosper through mutual Niceness. I documented the referenced in my paper.”

Horc continued, “Third, I cited the current theories of Professor Fowt Teacher.” Horc could see Teacher Nent’s face tensing up both in defensiveness and being affronted in his views by this child. Nonetheless, he continued to try and make his point, “He has suggested a ‘Replacement Complex’, where deep down every son has a primal urge to kill his father and marry his mother.”

“Enough! I won’t have such sick and dysfunctionally antisocial ideas voiced in my classroom,” Teacher Nent bust out. “I read what you put in there. It’s on the border between socially inept and socially insane. That is why I gave you a Level 2 low.”

Horc smiled inside. He thought he was losing control of the situation by his need to make his points. But the emotional outburst put him back in the situational control.

“I’m sorry Teacher Nent if I upset you. I really wanted to impress upon you how much effort I put into understanding the subject matter and putting historical context to it. That’s why I added that. But I think I did a really good job and think I deserve a Level 1 grade.” Horc has intentionally slipped back into simplistic language in that last sentence so that he would appear the more sympathetic 12-year-old boy that matched his body.

Horc took on a sad, softly pouting look, confident that Teacher Nent would soften and relent.

“My job is to grade these papers in contrast to the lesson requirement and writing expectations. You missed those. My grading stands.”

Horc was both annoyed and enticed by the challenge Teacher Nent was presenting. Time for a different tack. Horc got closer to the desk and put his hand on top of Teacher Nent’s hand, knowing that creating a person-to-person connection could soften his resolution to what was clearly an emotional reaction.

“Professor Nent, I’m really sorry if upset you. I worked really hard on this. I tried really, really hard to do the best that I could. Can you please reconsider and give me a Level 1?” Horc knew he was recessing into the vocabulary of a 10-year-old. It was what was needed here.

“Horc, time for you to go. You’ll see the grades posted later this week.”

Clearly, things were still not going as Horc needed them to. Time to exercise some of his new abilities. Horc changed from having his hand on top of Teacher Nent’s hand, to grasping it. He tightened.

“Teacher Nert. You’re a fair man. I think you know I deserve a Level 1. What do I need to do to get you to agree to that before I leave?”

Teacher Nert looked at Horc, then at his hand, then at Horc again. “What are you doing? Let go of my hand!” He tried to pull away. But Horc had a firm grip by this time. He tighten more.

“Teacher Nert, you need to be reasonable here. We both know I clearly deserve a Level 1 plus. I asked for Level 1 to meet you midway. You know you are being unreasonable here and just trying to make a point that you don’t have to give me top scores like all the other teachers. OK, you’ve made your point. But now it is time for you to give me the grade I deserve.” Horc tightened his grip more.

“I did give you the grade you deserved.” Teacher Nert flatly asserted. But inside, he was thinking I can’t believe how strong this 12-year-old is. Can he break my hand if he continues?

“That’s not the right answer. The right answer is ‘I changed my mind and I promise I’m going to give you the Level 1 you deserve’. Just say that and I can be on my way.”

“Please Horc, stop! You’re hurting me. Why are you doing this? I gave you a fair assessment.”

“Sorry Teacher Nert, still not the right answer.” Horc not only tightened his grip but also twisted his hand in a way it wasn’t supposed to go to increase the physical stress.

“OK, OK, I’ll give you want you want, just let go.”

“Sure Teacher Nert. Just say ‘I changed my mind and I promise I’m going to give you the Level 1 you deserve’, and then we can be done here. You know it’s the right thing to do.” Horc tightened and twisted more.

“Yes, yes. Horc, I changed my mind and I promise I’m going to give you the Level 1 you deserve. I’m sorry I didn’t give it to you in the first place.”

“Thank you Teacher Nert.” Horc said as he released the teacher’s hand. “I really liked how we could have this talk and come to a reasonable, mutual outcome. I’ll expect to see that Level 1 grade reflected in the scoresheets at the end of the week, otherwise I’ll come back and we can discuss this further.” Horc took on a friendly, cooperative smile.

Teacher Nert quickly drew back his hand, caressing it with the other to get the blood flowing and to sooth the pain. “Yes Horc. Yes. Can you please go now?”

“Of course Teacher Nert. Thanks for the talk. See you tomorrow!” And with that, Horc trotted off to his next session.

The next day when Horc returned to school, he was pulled out of his midday session and asked to go to the School Primary Servant office. His parents were there too.

“Horc, we were given some very unsettling news yesterday.”

“Really Primary Servant Tubt? What is it? What can I do to help?” Horc took on an appearance of friendliness, concern and inquiry.

“Horc, Teacher Nert said you hurt him in trying to get a better grade from him? What do you say to that?”

“That’s not the case at all. I did talk to him to see what I did wrong on the paper and how I could do better the next time. In discussing my paper, he did eventually say he changed his mind and promised he was going to give me the Level 1 because he said I convinced him I deserved it. There may have been a misunderstanding.”

“He said you were crushing his hand and you wouldn’t stop until he gave you a better grade.”

Horc produced a nervous half-chuckle. “I don’t see how I could have hurt him. I did go to shake his hand as a thank you after he agreed to record my grade as a Level 1. The handshake did go longer than normal as he kept saying what a great student I was. I don’t want to speak bad of Teacher Nert – he’s a great teacher – but maybe I just shook hands a little too hard - he is kind of a fragile teacher - and it hurt him after I left?” Horc gave a concerned smile.

School Primary Servant Tubt, nodded. “Horc, we all love you here, and we all think you’re a great student and athlete. And yes, Teacher Nert is a bit fragile. But he typically doesn’t exaggerate. He’s also scared. So I am taking you out of his class and putting you in Teacher Jenni’s class. She is looking forward to having you in her class. Teacher Nert has asked that you stay away from him, and if I could reiterate that; he doesn’t affect your grades anymore, and you will just cause problems if you try to see him.”

“Of course, Primary Servant Tubt. I don’t want to cause any problems. I’m terribly sorry for the misunderstanding. I’ll try to be a better student in Teacher Jenni’s class. I know she’s a great teacher too, just like you’re a great Primary Servant.”

To his word or because of fear, Teacher Nert did give Horc a Level 1 on his grade. But Horc never talked to Teacher Nert again. However, Horc couldn't risk others starting to think badly of him. So, over the next few dYs, with a few strategically placed rumors and innuendos, soon even the other teachers were having concerns about Teacher Nert. Within another couple dYs, Teacher Nert was gone; "moved away" was the line he heard repeated. Shortly, teachers were telling Horc he was a wonderful student, and they were sorry that Nert has spoken poorly of him. All Horc could think was "These people are incredibly gullible", all the time smiling and thanking them for having confidence in him.

By that time, Horc's reputation was fully restored. Over the next few years he continued to grow in strength and stature. By the time he was 16 years old, even though he was two years behind his most senior fellow students, he had become the star athlete as well as the most handsome and popular man on campus. Everyone wanted to be his friend.

Especially the girls. He had noticed over the last year or so that the girls had started to treat him differently. They had started to sit closer to him, hugging him more, grabbing and holding his arm as they walked besides him. And he had felt new sensations inside himself, especially when they held him close.

Having read medical texts on his – and their – anatomy he intellectually understood the changes, and the new experiences coming his way. He had spent some time studying the techniques he would be expected to know and mastering them as best as he could without actual experience.

When he finally engaged, he was perplexed by what happened after. The girl he shared his first experience with had always been trying to spend more time with him and be a friend. Yet after the event, when he treated her just as before, she soon became distant.

Horc couldn't understand it. Clearly, he had given her pleasure – probably more than she would know for the rest of her life, yet she seemed negatively affected by the entire episode. When he asked her about it, she said she thought after what they shared she would be special to him; to which he responded of course she was special, just like all the other wonderful friends he had.

Although she seemed to be hurt for a while, she eventually started socializing again and fell back into a friendly pattern. But soon, she was asking if, even if they were not going to be a couple, if he would be with her again; which he happily obliged, thus providing evidence that he was as good as he thought (of course).

This pattern repeated with the next two girls Horc was with; after their clear pursuit and interest, he would pleasure them, after which they would drift away for a while when he would not commit to being a bonded couple, only to then have them come back ask for a more physical friendship. While the interaction had a definite pleasurable aspect, he was tiring of the effort the relationship took. He wondered if it was worth it.

Of course, he didn't really feel close to any of his friends; not really. They were instruments in his tool chest to reach his goals. He would make them feel good about themselves and convince them that he was always going to be there for them, and they would do almost anything he asked.

However, there was one girl that he felt an unusual draw to – Bekky GrassFarmer. While she wasn't the most attractive girl in the school, he felt for sure that this was just because she came didn't spend the time or effort to make herself look pretty. She came to school in drab clothes, with no particular attention to herself. Horc thought if she put half the time the other girls did on her appearance, she would easily be the most beautiful girl there.

Of course, out of all the girls that wanted to be Horc's friend, Bekky seemed to not have any interest. He would say "Hi" in passing, and she would just nod acknowledgement and keep going. He would sometimes sit near her and try to strike up a conversation, only to have her wave him off while she read her book. But Horc was most attracted to her because of how smart she seemed to be – not anywhere as close to as intelligent as himself, but far more than any of the other girls. During a break period, he once caught her reading a book on basic calculus on her own time. While he had conquered calculus years earlier, this was the closest he had come to finding someone who might actually be able to, somewhat, keep up with him intellectually.

Horc pursued her. Asking her to come along for his athletic competitions, go out to group eating events with other of his friends, or even to come over and study (this actually excited Horc the most). She graciously declined all his invitations. Until he asked her to the traveling faire. While she didn't say yes, she did say she was going with her brother, and if they ran into each other, maybe they could keep company with each other for a while.

At the Faire Horc was in his element. Saying hi to all the towns people. Complementing all the men he met with how well their business was doing or achievement they had marked or how fine their prize Yatz appeared. For all the woman he made a point to say how fine their dress complemented them, or how wonderful the hat brought out their face, or how stunning they looked this afternoon.

But he put on the full charm when he strategically ran into Bekky near the game booths.

“Good day Bekky and Srac”, as he introduced himself to Bekky and her younger brother. “I was hoping I would have the pleasure of running into you today.” Then looking at Srac, he added “I heard the Yatz you entered into the pulling competition took first place. You must have really trained him well to get him to win over all the others.” Srac took on a wide and proud smile. To have his accomplishment acknowledged by someone like Horc make him feel even prouder.

“I bet you developed some pretty strong limbs in training him,” Horc teased. “How about the three of us throw some orbs at the block game?”, Horc asked. Srac grinned – he was making friends with Horc. “Sure!” Srac quickly replied. Horc noticed a smile on Bekky’s too, as she saw her brother start to glow.

Horc knew that the block game, like all the other games, were rigged. Hence, he had been sure to talk to the game tender earlier in the day. He had met him just about every time the faire had come to town; he always used it as an opportunity to learn what was going on in the rest of the region, and Horc knew it was always good to make friends that could help him impress others. And today was a day to leverage that investment. So, he had arranged to have the friends he brought over to win big that day.

“Go ahead Srac, grab a ball and try to knock the block off the table to win the prize,” Horc urged. Srac eagerly grabbed the orb and quickly threw it with all his might, and entirely missed the block.

“Good try Srac, but next time, focus your attention on the block. Then throw the orb with control. Focus on accuracy more than power,” Horc coached.

This time Srac took his time, with all his focus on the block. His windup was measured and gradual. When he let go, the orb hit the block square in the center, easily knocking it off the table.

“Wow, that was great Srac. See how much easier it is when you use your mind and body together,” as the gamekeeper gave Srac his prize.

Srac again beamed with pride. “Thanks Horc. Yeah, that really helped.” Horc noticed Bekky smiling too about how happy her brother seemed.

“OK, Bekky, your turn,” Horc continued. “How about trying for the giant stuffed Yatz?”.

“I don’t know Horc, that’s a pretty big block. I don’t think I could knock it off even if I hit it,” Bekky objected.

“How about you just give it a try Bekky? If you focus Like Srac did, I bet you can do it.” Horc confidently put his hand on her shoulder and looked into her eyes as to both encourage and give her confidence. But it was also to make her feel comfortable with him touching her.

“Yeah Bekky, if you just focus like Horc said, it’s supper easy!” Srac added.

“OK, I’ll try, but I told you it seems like an awfully big block for such a petite girl.”

Then Bekky grabbed the orb, and just like Horc had advised, focused on the Block and with clear intent and purpose wound up and let the orb fly. Much to her surprise, she hit it – not in the middle, but enough to make it a solid hit. But even more to her surprise, instead of just moving a few cLs, it slid entirely off the table with a noticeable “thump” as it hit the ground.

“A WINNER!”, cried the gamekeeper, as he grabbed the giant stuffed Yatz and gave it to Bekky. Bekky grabbed it and gave a big smile to Horc, but there was also a smirk that softly said, “I know what you did, but thank you.”

“Hey what do you say we all ride the Big Wheel? I hear at the top, you can see all the way to NorthWest City.” Of course, Horc knew that wasn’t the case, but it added excitement to the invite.

“Yeah, that sounds fun,” Srac exclaimed. Bekky was a little more subdued but cautiously accepted, “OK, I guess that will be OK.”

As they walked over to the Big Wheel, Horc and Bekky and Srac exchanged questions and answers about their families, what they liked or didn’t like in school, any fun things they had done lately. This was the first time Horc really got an appreciation for why people though Bekky was so sweet and caring - besides being a straight level 1 student, she volunteered at the local doctors office as well as volunteers to help tutor young children that were struggling in school. Of course, Horc inwardly thought such volunteering was just a complete waste of time, but outwardly he was smiling and telling Bekky how wonderful and selfless she was.

When they got to the Big Wheel, Horc went to the front of the line and checked in with the gamekeeper, then went back and told Bekky and Srac, “Come on, I told the gamekeeper what Bekky has been doing for our community, and he’s going to let us on the next chairs”. Of course, that was a complete lie, Horc had slipped the gamekeeper a little something extra, but it suited his goals to make Bekky think he admired her.

“Sarc, there can only be two of us per chair, so is it OK if you go in one, and Bekky and I will go in the other?” Bekky looked down with a shy little smile. At the same time, Srac looked back and forth at both Horc and Bekky, then expressed a “OK, I get what is going on” little smirk.

Horc and Bekky let Srac get on the first chair, then got on the second as it spun around. As they got towards the top of the wheel Horc looked over at Bekky and told her “You looks so beautiful in this light.” Bekky blushed with an embarrassed smile. Horc then brushed her face as he put his arm around her. Bekky didn’t protest; in fact she snuggled into him a little closer. For the rest of the ride of four more rotations around the wheel they both pointed out far buildings and landmarks, while both basked in the moment. For Bekky it was being with someone who seemed to like her and she felt herself liking back; for Horc it was the rush of feeling impending victory.

As Horc and Bekky got off the Big Wheel, Srac greeted them. “That was fun. Thanks Horc. But I’m going to meet up with Zelk and Brol. I think you want to be alone anyway.”, as Srac broke into a playful grin.

“Alright Srac,” Bekky responded, “let them know I’ll catch up with all of you later.” With that Srac, ran off, leaving just Horc and Bekky. “You want to go for a little walk? ,” Horc asked. Bekky replied with a shy “OK”.

As they walked, Horc asked more personal questions of Bekky. What did she want to do after graduating? Did she have any idea what she wanted to do with her life? And with those questions, Bekky started to open up to Horc, who took her hand at first, then put his arm around her as they walked. At one point, they found themselves walking near a somewhat large, dark, unoccupied tent. It looked to be a storage and equipment tent. “Hey, want to take a look inside here and see what’s in there?” Horc asked.

“I don’t think we’re supposed to go in there,” Bekky flatly stated. “It’s OK, I know the owner of this faire, Wilb Gamemaster. We go back a long way. I’m even worked for him at some of the past faires. It would be fine with him,” Horc confidently responded. Horc hadn’t ever met the owner, much less worked for him, but knew if he spoke confidently enough Bekky would believe him.

“Well, OK, if you’re sure it’s OK with him...,” as he led her inside. Once inside, by the light of the faire and the night, they could make out various contraptions and devices scattered around the fairly large tent. Horc lead her with intent towards the far side of the tent, inspecting items along the way, and making commentary about some of them that made Bekky laugh.

As they got to the far side of the tent, Horc saw a row of crates stacked high and several deep. Once they were near the crates, Horc stopped, turned around and faced Bekky, looked into her eyes, and leaned in for a kiss. Much to his delight, Bekky returned his kiss with seeming equally enthusiasm. He then leaned into it more, moving her so that her back was to the crates, without ever stopping the heart pounding kiss going on between them.

As they shared the passionate kiss, Horc heard her breathing deepen, as he had heard in the other girls when they were ready for more. So Horc began to explore her body.

She voiced no objection at first, but as soon as he started probing more intimate areas, Bekky suddenly said "I should get back to my brother." But instead of stopping he continued, moving to even more intimate regions.

"Horc, maybe you misunderstood me. Please stop. I want to leave the tent." In all of Necedah, where everyone was respectful and nice, and never hurt each other, this would have elicited an immediate stop with profuse apologies for the misunderstanding. But Horc was not all of Necedah. And instead of letting her go, he further pinned her against the crates, continuing his kiss and exploring.

"Bekky, I need to show you what you have been missing," Horc said as he continued his assault. Bekky, never knowing someone to not respect her personal space wishes before, was completely at a loss at what to do next. There was no cultural protocol or modeled behavior of what she should do. So instincts kicked in. She pushed back against Horc, trying to get away. But Horc was much, much stronger than her. She tried harder, but it was useless. She was now a pawn for Horc to play with. She started to cry.

"I will show you pleasures you never knew, and will never experience again. I am giving you a gift," Horc said as he threw Bekky to the ground. Now becoming submissive, she sobbed as she fell. Free of Horc's embrace, she had the hope of freedom, and tried to get up. But before she could even sit up, Horc was upon her.

"Don't resist. You will like it, I promise you." Horc's assault was relentless. Now on top of her, he started to disrobe her. Now, not really comprehending what was happening, Bekky was sobbing uncontrollably.

Just as Horc was exposing complete access to her, he heard something at the tent entrance. "What's going on in here?" shouted out the voice at the entrance.

Horc knew that voice. It was Mediator Grob Fairmaker. Horc did not like Fairmaker. He was always getting in other people's business. "Where are you going?", "Where are you coming from?", "What are you doing?" was standard questions that Grob Fairmaker would ask. Of course, Horc always answered his questions with a smile, and joked with him afterwards and asked about Fairmaker and his family, and Mediator Fairmaker would likewise be friendly and cordial with Horc. Most citizens would say Fairmaker was just doing his job as a mediator to be sure that he was ensuring everyone was being good and abiding by the Nice Laws; that was his job. Still, Horc didn't think he needed some nosey civil servant asking about his business. Moreover, despite their friendly interaction, Mediator Grob Fairmaker had seemed to be much more focused on Horc's doings ever since the Teacher Nert incident.

"Hi Mediator Fairmaker. I'm so glad you're here. Bekky fell and hurt herself." With that, Horc grabbed an iron tent stake that he saw was laying near him and Bekky as he got up. He then moved towards Mediator Fairmaker who stood about 3 ½ L away.

As Horc moved towards him, Horc though this might be an opportunity for him. He could terminate Mediator Fairmaker and tell everyone that Mediator Fairmaker and Bekky ran off together. That Bekky had admitted to it during their time together. While unusual, it wouldn't be unheard of in Necedah. Of course, that meant that he would have to terminate Bekky too; after he finished showing her the pleasure she was missing, of course. That would be unfortunate, but the situation called for it. He could come back later that night and dispose of both their bodies in the forest, and no one would ever be the wiser. Violence was almost unheard of in Nedecah, and he could use that to his advantage.

"Mediator Fairmaker, can you please help me get Bekky up? I think she hurt her leg," Horc asked as he approached. In the background, Bekky continued to sob uncontrollably. Horc started to tense up and ready the iron rod in his hand to deliver a fatal blow as soon as he was in range.

Just as he was within striking distance, the tent entrance flew open. "What is going on here? We saw you bolt in here then heard the commotion." It was town Chief Servant GeneralMerchant and 5 other towns people behind him. With his tone, Chief Servant GeneralMerchant was asserting his authority to take control of the situation by asking Mediator Fairmaker for a report.

"I heard Bekky crying and I came in here to find Horc and Bekky," Mediator Fairmaker reported. "I was assessing the situation when you came in," Mediator Fairmaker added.

With that, one of the towns people that came in raised his lantern to illuminate the tent. As soon as Mediator Fairmaker made out the form of the partially undressed Bekky, he raced to her to cover her

with his coat. While Mediator Fairmaker was making his way to her, Chief Servant GeneralMerchant noticed the tent stake that Horc was holding behind him. "What are you doing with that tent stake Horc?", he asked. Horc, trying to be quick on his feet offered, "Bekky tripped on this as we were leaving. I was picking it up when Mediator Fairmaker entered."

"Then why are you holding it behind you?" GeneralMerchant asked. "I'm sorry, I just didn't want anyone hitting it as they entered," Horc quickly retorted.

Just then Mediator Fairmakler asked "Bekkly, what happened?". Horc started to move in the direction of Fairmaker and Bekky, but GeneralMerchantant gently grabbed his arm with a look of "stay here". Horc complied.

"Horc, he,he....he.....he hurt me," Bekky uttered before starting to sob uncontrollably again. Horc felt himself sink. Up until now he could have got out of this by convincing everyone that Bekky had just tripped. He didn't doubt that he could have gotten Bekky to believe it too and go along with it. But now it was out there; it was said, it was a Level 1 violation of the Nice Laws. And that triggered a formal process to start.

With those words, this became Mediator Fairmaker's responsibility, so he took back control. "Chief Servant GeneralMerchant and Citizen YatzKeeper," Fairmaker directed, taking control, "Please take Horc to his home. And Horc," as Fairmaker looked directly at Horc, "Don't leave your home until we call for you and escorts are sent. That is by order of the citizenry," which made it an official home confinement order.

On the way home, as Chief Servant GeneralMerchant and Citizen YatzKeeper questioned him, Horc continued to profess his innocence. "Bekky Tripped on the iron tent stake." "I was picking it up with Mediator Fairmaker came in." "I was helping Bekky." "Her clothes must have caught on something as she fell." Horc knew that if you repeated a lie enough, people would start to believe it. He hoped if he could convince Chief Servant GeneralMerchant and Citizen YatzKeeper, it might help when the Regional Mediator came to town to hear his case.

A dY later, when the Regional Mediator came to hear the case, Horc was further discouraged. The former Regional Mediator, whom Horc had built up a good rapport, had retired. He never met the new Regional Mediator, so he didn't know what ways he could induce him in his favor.

When Mediation day came, Horc reiterated his story with conviction and authority. He also was able to enlist an entourage of character speakers saying how they couldn't believe Horc would ever do anything this heinous.

Then Mediator Fairmaker said what he saw, followed by Chief Servant GeneralMerchant and the others who came in. In accordance with the Nice Laws, they tried to give their recount without editorializing or injection of emotion, much to Horc's dismay.

Then Bekky came in to share her story. She never looked at Horc. When she addressed the Regional Mediator, she told her story as best she could. That her and Horc had shared a fun evening. That she had willingly gone into the tent. That she had willingly let him kiss her. But when she said stop, he didn't. In fact, he had started to force himself on her. And when she resisted, Horc had said how he was going to "Give her more pleasure than she could imagine, and she should just submit". And then he threw her to the ground and was starting to remove her clothes when Mediator Fairmaker came in and stopped it. As she made her way through her recount, she started crying more and more; by the end she was trembling and crying uncontrollably, as if she was back in the original moment. Her family then lead her out of the room.

That was followed by an entourage of Bekky's character speakers who spoke of her volunteer work, how she cared for people she didn't even know, and how she had never spoken a mistruth as long as they had known her.

At the end of the speakers, the Regional Mediator addressed the attendees. "Horc, you have been a valued member of the community for almost your entire life. The community seems to like and respect and believe in you. And it seems that many established members of the community, your community, believe you didn't – couldn't have – done this." With that, Horc felt some relief come over him. In the end, they were going to blame Bekky just like they blamed teacher Nert, and they would run her into seclusion due to being a false accuser, just like teacher Nert. Horc felt the controlled excitement of victory coming over him again.

"But all the voices in the world can't refute the clear evidence here," the Regional Mediator continued. "Everyone agrees that when Mediator Fairmaker entered the tent, Bekky was on the floor crying, partially disrobed. You claim," – the Mediator was clearly talking to Horc now – "it was due to her falling. Yet no one can substantiate any factual settings that would have caused that to happen with her clothes also being removed. Moreover, we find no reason that Bekky would claim this when it didn't

happen; there was no motivation on her count. Furthermore, there was the iron tent spike which Chief Servant GeneralMerchant saw in your hand, and you supposedly trying to hide it behind your back according to his testimony. You claimed Bekky tripped over it. Yet there were no marks on the ground or her person that would support that claim.

“So this Mediator finds you did commit these acts, and in claiming otherwise, you also lied to this assemblage and your community, both clear Level 1 violations of the Nice Laws, which this Mediator has not seen in many, many years.”

Horc could feel himself start to waiver. This was not going as he intended.

“Since you are young, and your community seems to hold you in such high regard, the citizenry will mitigate what you must do to redeem yourself,” the Regional Mediator continued.

“First, you will be under home confinement for 3Y. You are not to leave your home, unless called by and accompanied by an official of the community. This means you are stripped of attending school with your peers and your parents will be responsible for finishing your education.” At that Horc laughed inside. He was already beyond a university graduate in his academic accomplishments, and well beyond his parent’s intellect.

The Regional Mediator continued, “Following that, for a period of 1Y more, you can only leave your home when conducting family or personal business. You cannot languish or participate in social functions.

“At the end of that, if you have committed no further offenses against the community, we will be allowed to again be an equal member of this community.”

Outwardly, Horc shamefully hung his head, and while admitting to nothing, agreed to all the demands. But inwardly, Horc was furious that all these simple, weak minded others around him would dare cast judgement on him. Him! Someday he would get his vengeance.

But unfortunately for Horc, the next few years were not kind to him. While the rest of his peers that he once called friends were becoming normal adults, Horc continued to grow. Already large and strong, he continued to grow larger, and in a way that slowly transformed him from the handsome star athlete, to an increasingly deformed, almost freakish, giant.

When Horc obtained permission to venture off his family farm more than 3 years later, he was disgusted with everyone's reaction to him. In those 3 years, stories of wonderful, friendly, attractive Horc, had been replaced by stories of the disfigured, rapist, giant, freak. When he walked down the street people hardly recognized him, but whether they did or not, they almost always moved to the other side of the street as he approach; the women with additional intensity. No one said hi to him, "How are you doing Horc?", "We missed you Horc", or even "What have you been doing with yourself?" Everyone appeared to fear him and kept their distance.

So for that remaining 1Y, Horc just did his minimal duties and returned home. But that year was even worse than the last 3, for Horc also lost his parents in a carriage accident. So Horc now found himself the owner of his family's farm, with the additional responsibilities and burdens that brought with it. At 20, the once loved and adored Horc, was now alone and despised. At that point, he wished it would all just end.

To dilute the pain, he poured himself into trying to improve the business, searching for new ways to make it more profitable. His first major focus was improving lighting so he could more easily read year-round. While it was light out almost for the entire day during the summer, the winters had almost no natural light. While most people used candlelight, he found the flickering would fatigue him after a dD of reading. Horc knew from his one experiments that if he put enough electricity through a wire it would glow before it melted. So Horc scoured the academic papers on heat tolerant metallurgy and was able to find a combination that would glow brightly enough to give off light and still hold its form.

This had two problems. First, it would eventually get a burnt coating when interacting with the air. He solved that by encapsulating the fiber in a glass container. He found that by doing that, it would last for almost a dY before deteriorating and giving out. As long as he made several in a batch, he could replace them and get by for long periods of time.

The second was supplying the electricity. At first, he created a pedal machine that would generate the light, but that required constant activity. So he rigged up a crude, small steam engine – similar to what they used on the new steam ships – to create a constantly moving pedal system to constantly generate electricity. With a little more research, Horc refined this into a system of rotating magnets and metal coils to create much more efficient electricity output, effectively creating the first automatic electronic generator in all of Necedah.

With that, Horc could study 10 dD per day – whenever he wanted.

He used that to focus on how to make his dairy production more efficient. The main problem was that Yatz milk would go bad in about 1 to 2D, which made distribution and production very time sensitive. But Horc found that by using a process to pre-heat the milk and then cool it, it would last for up to 5D, and with much more consistency.

This gave Horc a tremendous advantage over his competition. Soon, he was ramping up production and selling his “healthy” milk not only to the surrounding community, but to communities up to 100KL away.

Horc’s healthy milk was a great success, increasing his riches greatly, while making it very difficult for other dairy farmers to compete.

With the additional resources, Horc began promoting and selling both his night lights and electricity generators to regional merchants for them to sell. These too were very successful, even increasing Horc’s wealth more.

But this also caused some concerns amongst the area businesspeople that were concerned about the prospect of competing with Horc’s products or questioning the source of his success.

This fomented with all the local businesspeople decided to speak at the next town meeting. They asked where was the proof that Horc’s healthy milk was really healthy” Maybe it was less healthy and Horc was just claiming it was. After all, despite the Nice Laws and social pressure about being truthful, this was the man who tried to force intimacy on a young girl and lied about it. And if he was lying about the milk, maybe the night lights and electric makers were risky too. Maybe they could cause fires or electrocute someone. They called for these new products to be taken off the market until they could be properly tested.

The next day, Horc received a letter by courier from the chief town servant:

“Horc, by order of the town council, you are to cease selling all unapproved products until further testing is done to verify their contribution to our and the surrounding communities. If you wish to dispute this order, please come to the next town council meeting in one dY and present your case.”

Of course, Horc was furious. With the stroke of a pen, his business went from a thriving success, to shutdown until some undefined future date. He had grown weary of these inferior intellects around him rejecting him, interfering with him, trying to control him – when it was they who should be deferring to him. They would all be far better off if he was in control and could enrich those less capable people with

his solutions and allow him to bestow the gift of his superior intellect on all of them. Now Horc had time to formulate a plan. And he did.

Almost all of Necedah was a wonderful place to live. There was plenty of food, land, housing and resources to abundantly go around. Likewise, almost everyone was friendly and helpful and honest with each other. Although much of this was mandated by the Nice Laws, even more fundamentally it was just how everyone lived their lives- “Work to make everyone else’s life better, and your own life will be enriched.” But some people excelled at this more than others. And a few, very few, just seemed a little out of place.

Horc had realized this long ago. At one time he thought how horrible it must be to be an outcast, and now he found himself to be one. As such, he had oddly found himself gravitating to a couple other outcasts in town. One was Lrak Cleaner, a cleaner who tended to work at night when businesses were closed. The other was a Bvad Stablehand, who tended to maintaining the stalls at the local community stable. Both tended to keep to themselves and avoid others. Over the last year or so, Horc had built up a comfortable friendship with them. To them, with Horc’s mental manipulation, Horc was the once popular citizen, who had been wrongly accused and put under restraints that caused him to become deformed. He had talked to them about how the other people in the town kept them all down and kept them from prospering. That they too should share in the wealth the community had; that they deserved to have their fair allocation, rather than have it kept from them just because they were different.

In the dY preceding the next town meeting, Horc ratcheted up the fever amongst them. He convinced them that they were being taken advantage of. That everyone was not only not being nice to them, but in fact being cruel to them by keeping them down just because they were different. Wouldn’t it be great if they could turn the tide and make the others serve them, instead of them serving the rest of the town people?

Horc convinced them that if they just work together, against those that oppressed them (never defining who “them” were), they could make things right – that all of them could get what was rightfully coming to them. That they would be calling the shots. All they needed to do was follow him. And they cheerfully agreed.

So, on the day of the next town meeting, Horc put in play, part 1 of phase 1 of his plan. Horc, Lrak and Bvad went into town about 2 cD before the town meeting. But instead of going to the Town Hall, they

went to visit Mediator Fairmaker. There were many things that Horc was looking forward to today, but this payback was one of his most anticipated.

The 3 entered the town mediator's place. Mediator Fairmaker looked up with concerned curiosity as the three came in.

"Hello Horc. And welcome Lrak and Bvad. This is an unexpected and unusual surprise. What can I do for you today?"

"Hi Mediator Fairmaker, " Horc offered. "We are here today with the hope that you can help us right a wrong."

"Well of course. That's why I'm here, although I like to act before there is a wrong. Can you please tell me what the situation is?", Mediator Fairmaker returned, while also noticing that Lrak and Bvad were casually, but effectively fanning out on the sides while Horc stayed in front of him.

"We have found evidence of some citizens in this town being subjugated and unfairly made to serve others," Horc offered.

"Well that is a very serious charge, and if true, we will attempt to undo that with expedition," Mediator Fairmaker responded, feeling like Horc was stalling, while noticing that Lrak and Bvad were now slightly behind him on either side. Mediator Fairmaker, for the first times in his life, felt unsafe and threatened.

Taking a more forceful tact, Mediator Fairmaker continued, "Horc, if there is something you want, please say it directly. I am responsible for making everyone be heard, respected, and being justly treated. I need facts rather than speeches to make that happen."

Horc thought that was very rude of Mediator Fairmaker when he had only uttered two sentences. But he also knew Mediator Fairmaker was on to what they were doing.

Horc accusatively said, "Mediator Fairmaker a little over 4 years ago I was falsely accused. Now it is time for someone to pay for that. You."

With that, Lrak and Bvad came at Mediator Fairmaker from the sides, while Horc came at him directly. Mediator Fairmaker reached for his small animal control rod, but Lrak and Bvad were too fast for him and grabbed him before he could get any grip on it. Horc then ripped it from his hand and then just as quickly struck him with it over his head. As he did it, Horc wanted to bring it down with much more force, like he wanted to back in the tent so long ago, but he needed Mediator Fairmaker alive.

Horc landed enough of a blow that Mediator Fairmaker fell with pain and astonishment that someone would hit him. As he did, Horc pulled out the rope.

“Lrak, tie him up like we practiced. Bvad, go get the animal kill sticks from the back.” With that, Mediator Fairmaker grew scared.

“Horc, what do you want with those? They are only meant for killing diseased and dangerous animals. We have only 5 for this entire area, and they are locked up for a reason.”

“I know,” was all the Horc said. In the back, they all heard Bvad using the animal rod to open the cabinet the Animal kill sticks were in.

“Lrak, you have him tied up good?” Horc asked.

“Yup, just like you showed me. He’s not going anywhere,” Lrak said proudly.

“Good job Lrak,” Horc said, feeling himself go back into his manipulative mode. The job Lrak did wasn’t really that good, but it would suffice.

Bvad came back with 3 of animal kill sticks. Horc then took them and put a round in each one.

“Lrak, take this. Keep it aimed right at Mediator Fairmaker. If he so much as says a word or moves a mL, shoot him in the head.” Horc then looked right at Mediator Fairmaker and slowly nodded with a grin that communicated that was exactly what was going to happen if he did either of those.

“We’ll be back after we have conducted our other business.” With that, Horc and Bvad headed out. Lrak was left sitting near Mediator Fairmaker, holding the animal kill stick right at him. Inside, Lrak was hoping Mediator Fairmaker would do something so he could take revenge on the way Horc had convinced him he had been treated all these years. But Horc told him he needed Mediator Fairmaker alive. But Mediator Fairmaker didn’t know that. They stared at each other.

Horc and Bvad made their way to the Town Hall. By this time everyone was inside and already talking, probably waiting with anticipation of seeing Horc to come in and defend his position. They would not be disappointed, but in a way they never imagined.

Horc and Bvad quickly and forcefully entered the Town Hall, visibly brandishing their animal kill sticks. As they practiced, Bvad took a spot in the back of the Hall, leveling the weapon at the crowd. Horc proceeded forward down the walkway between the seats towards where the Town Servants sat.

Besides the animal kill stick, Horc had in his other hand a long iron pipe that he had specifically brought with him for this situation.

Seeing Horc coming up front, Chief Servant GeneralMerchant got up and briskly walked toward Horc. "You cannot bring those animal kill sticks in here Horc. Take them out immediately and then we will deal with you."

As Town Chief Servant GeneralMerchant got close as they were walking towards each other, Horc swiftly and powerfully brought the iron pipe down on the head of Town Chief Servant GeneralMerchant, instantly splitting it open and causing him to fall to the floor with a loud thump, blood splattering in all directions around them.

"Don't worry everyone, Town Chief Servant GeneralMerchant will be fine once we have the doctor look at him. Just a minor push to get him out of the way," Horc confidently said to the attendees. Horc felt his old charm coming back, even if he didn't have the dashing looks to go along with it.

Those members of the audience that were near the center and could see Town Chief Servant GeneralMerchant laying on the floor, blood pouring out of his head, clearly dead, started to cry or scream. But those further out who couldn't see, seem to be soothed by Horc's assurance that he would be OK. "I still have it," Horc thought to himself.

Now at the front, on the raised dais, towering above the seated town servants, Horc began his proclamation.

"From henceforth, you will all live a much better life," Horc started. "No longer will you be held back by the sluggish progress of the Union." Everyone looked at each other, not really understanding what Horc was saying. "From this moment forward, all the residents of this township, and the 8 adjoining townships, will fall under my control. There will be no need for bureaucratic review or submission of plans to the Regional Chief Servant. Instead, everything will be quickly approved or denied by me. It will be much faster and efficient, and tuned for what is best to this New Union of our 9 townships, all run by myself for the betterment of all the citizens of these townships." In actuality, Horc didn't care if things went better for these pathetic minions, just that he wasn't subject to the rule of idiots anymore.

As Horc surveyed the audience, he still sensed a lot of confusion and misunderstanding. That was not unexpected. The current union of townships had existed for centuries. That structure was both unchallenged, and to most something different was nearly incomprehensible. "Listen," Horc continued.

“for the betterment and safety of everyone, I’m in charge now. You must do what I say. The rules of the Union no longer apply to you. If you don’t do as I proclaim, you will be imprisoned, beaten, or put to death, as I judge fit.”

Horc looked out and saw continued confusion. These concepts were so foreign to these people who had led such a simple and peaceful existence, that this was going to be harder than he thought.

“OK, let me try to make this simpler. To make this new system work better for everyone, If you don’t do as I have instructed you may be imprisoned – that means kept in the Mediator’s Office holding cell for as long as I see fit. Or I may have you hit with a stick or club or other object until you are injured or have bones broken. Or, I may cause you to die because of injuries I have ordered inflicted on you – all because you failed or follow my orders.” That seemed to get through to them, as many started crying or talking amongst themselves.

“Alright everyone, I think you understand now,” Horc spoke out, almost joyfully. “Go home and tell all your neighbors. Spread the word. There is a bright new wonderful tomorrow – and it is here now.”

With that Bvad lowered his weapon and allowed the people to start leaving, which they did in a rush. Many people looked down that the lifeless body of Town Chief Servant GeneralMerchant, although no one stopped to check on him. So quickly, the people had been moved to regressing to thinking of just themselves, which played exactly into Horc’s plan.

As the last person left the Town Hall, he and Bvad followed them out. Horc smiled as he noticed that all the townspeople started to run once they were out of the Hall. They, probably for the first time in their life, felt fear; exactly as he wanted.

Horc then turned to Bvad, and told him “As I said, we’d have 3 main things to do today. Now off to the third. Off to the GrassFarmer Residence.” Horc was about to get retribution and gratification at the same time.

As Horc and Bvad road to the GrassFarmer residence, he was both excited at the revenge he would take, as well as angry at how his life had been ruined in his prime by that selfish bitch Bekky GrassFarmer. He had just wanted to take care of her and give her the best pleasure of her entire life, and she had turned on him. He was going to enjoy getting his turn now that he was in charge.

Upon arriving at the GrassFarmer's house, Horc and Bvad went right in as if they owned the place. They didn't knock and announce themselves, as would have been normal etiquette, but the front door didn't have a lock, just like all other homes in Necedah; they just weren't needed – until now.

Mr. and Mrs. GrassFarmer shot up from their chairs as Horc and Bvad quickly entered their house, but both also paused in place as Bvad leveled the animal kill stick at both of them. Neither seemed in fear, but you didn't want any misunderstanding when a kill stick was aimed right at you. Horc knew the fear would come soon enough.

"Hello Mr. and Mrs. GrassFarmer. I am Horc. You may remember me from a few years ago, when your daughter falsely accused me of horrible crimes. Please sit back down. My friend Bvad here, with an animal kill stick, is instructed to shot one or both of you if you don't do exactly what we tell you to do." With that, Horc saw the alarm start to fill their souls, and that made Horc feel both powerful, and the satisfaction from his in-action revenge.

Horc gestured for Bvad to come over to him, which he did, and at which time Horc took the kill stick from him. "Bvad, go upstairs to the second door on the right and bring down Bekky."

Mr. GrassFarmer started to get up with that, but Horc leveled the kill stick at his head and made it clear, "Mr. GrassFarmer, if you don't sit down right now, I will put a bullet right through your head, forcing you to sit back down. Your choice." With that, Mr. Grassfarmer slowly set back down.

At the same time, you could hear Bvad quickly open Bekky's door, and Bekky scream in response. There was then a little scuffle that ensued with both yelling and crying. Then in a few minutes, Bekky came down the stairs; reluctantly at first, then in a rush as she saw her parents under gunpoint. Horc thought she looked even more beautiful than before. A young adult before, she was a full woman now.

Bekky started to run towards them; but Horc grabbed her at the same time he handed the kill stick back to Bvad. "Don't you remember me, Bekky. I'm so happy to see you, but would be so hurt if you didn't remember the deep friendship we had."

Bekky looked at him. It took her a second to make out that the grotesquely large and misshapen man in front of her was the once hansom and popular Horc. The boy who had so viciously attacked her. As she made the connection, her expression turned to fear – for the second time in her life.

"Aw, Bekky, I see you do remember. I am so touched. Now I just have some *questions* to ask you."

Horc then turned to Bvad and reminded him, more for everyone to hear rather than Bvad: "Bvad, I'm

going to take Bekky into Mr. and Mrs. Grassfarmer's bedroom and ask her some *questions*. Keep the kill stick ready. If either Mr. or Mrs. Grassfarmer get up, shot them in the head. Of course, I hope that will not be necessary. I have a strong feeling Bekky will need the support of Mr. and Mrs. Grassfarmer once I am done asking her questions." Horc then let out a big smile and looked at Mr. and Mrs. Grassfarmer, who blankly stared back with unimaginable terror for their daughter. But Horc knew that by placing the notion of Bekky needing them *after* what was about to happen, that there was very little chance they would try anything knowing they would likely be killed and not around to help Bekky after whatever was about to happen.

Horc then took Bekky into the Grassfarmer's bedroom, shut the door behind him, and had his way with her. Horc made a point of not doing anything to minimize the sounds and noises coming from the room. He knew that every time Mr. and Mrs. Grassfarmer heard something, they would want to help; but would be restrained by knowing that they had to stay alive to help Bekky after.

Horc also took all his anger and resentment out on Bekky, as well as satisfied himself as he had wanted to before. But this time he had no interest in giving her pleasure – although Horc thought that probably couldn't be avoided – but was just interested in satisfying himself.

When he was done, dressed again, he walked out of them room, leaving the door open. As he looked back, he noticed that the screaming and resisting Bekky had been replaced by a limp, naked body just laying there looking at the ceiling. He felt satisfaction that he had won.

"OK Mr. and Mrs. Grassfarmer, I'm done questioning Bekky. Should she tell you that she wants to be questioned more, please let me know," Horc smiled, satisfied that he had gotten his revenge.

Horc and Bvad then left the Grassfarmer house, hearing screams and crying as they walked to their Yatz. Once they were riding back into town, although Horc had said they only needed to do 3 things today – and all of those now accomplished – there was one more thing to do.

Once they got back to the Mediator's office, Horc went over to Mediator Fairmaker.

"Alright Mediator Fairmaker, at first I thought it best to kill you, but I have instead decided to let you go. But you must leave the new Horc townships and never come back. These are now controlled by me, and you will be shot if we ever see you back here; understood?"

Mediator Fairmaker, from the corner of the holding cell nodded that he understood. "Very Well. Please release him," as Horc motioned to Lrak. Lrak looked at Horc disappointedly as he took the keys out of

his pocket and moved towards the holding cell door. “I really wanted to kill him”, Lrak whispered to Horc as he passed by.

Once Mediator Fairmaker was out of the holding cell, Horc told him, “There are a number of Yatz out front. Take whichever one you want, but know this: If you ever come back, you will be killed. If you come back with others, they will be killed too. This township and the 8 surrounding it are mine too. Any attempt to interfere with my control of these townships will lead to all those interfering to be killed. Do you understand?”, Horc asked.

Mediator Fairmaker, exhausted, thirsty, tired and in pain, nodded to Horc. He then hurried out of that office, quickly found the most powerful looking Yatz, and headed off towards NorthWest City. Horc knew he was coming back; in fact, he was counting on it as part of the core of his plan.

Horc knew the ride to NorthWest City was about .7dY. Hence, he knew the earliest response would be about 1.5 dY. Horc used that time to prepare. He had Lrak and Bvad visit all the families in the townships and made sure they all understood that Horc was who they answered to, and that all taxes normally paid to the Union would now be paid to him. They were also to notify the authorities – that is Horc, Lrak or Bvad – if any tax men showed up asking for taxes. The three of them then road through the adjoining townships during their townhall meetings. If the local Mediator was there, they would bring him into the crowded Town Hall, make a spectacle of putting a kill stick on him to their head, then beat them so it left visible bruising and marks, making sure everyone saw it, and then send him scurrying off. Horc wanted them to go away telling stories and being visible examples of the horrors being committed by him and his cohorts. After everyone saw the Mediator run off, Lrak or Bvad would then make the same proclamation that Horc did and assure them of penalties if any of them disobeyed.

Back in Farmpoint 52032, four other outcasts came forward and wanted to join Horc’s crew. Horc quickly started training them and putting them in charge of various duties – giving them a sense of power and control that they had never felt before. Along with Lrak and Bvad, Horc taught them all how to shoot, and how to work together as a team. Practicing at least 2 dD every day.

He also trained them in what he told them would be a mock exercise. However, he had read all the Mediator documentation, and had a good idea of how this would all go down.

By the time 1.5 dY had passed, Horc had everything in place. There would always be 3 of them manning the Mediator’s office, and at least 2 of the others in the back. And they waited.

By the time 2.5 dY had passed, Horc started to be concerned that maybe he had scared Fairmaker too much, and he had disappeared into the fabric of NorthWest City. But Horc, discounted that. He had known Fairmaker all his life, and he knew he was dedicated to his profession. So he kept vigilant.

And then one afternoon, they came. Horc thought they would probably come in the afternoon, so he had always manned the Mediator's desk during that shift. They came in just as he expected, just as the manuals instructed. There were 3 of them, just as the manuals suggested for a "forceful response".

Horc had seen them coming from the distance, made a quick pre-arranged signal to the others so they could take their positions. Horc himself immediately took up a relaxed position, leaning back in his chair feet on desk. He laid his kill stick on the far side of the desk, almost ½ L away from him, so there was no way he could quickly grab it and be a risk to anyone. As they briskly walked in, Horc casually looked their way, with a look of minor inquiry.

As the hometown Mediator, Fairmaker lead them, followed closely by the other two, each brandishing an animal kill stick. Each of them held their kill sticks forward but leaning towards the ground.

Menacing, but not immediately threatening. They also fanned out, again just like the manuals said; one in the center, and one to each side a little forward of the center man, so that they formed a loose, wide arc around Horc.

Fairmaker was the first to speak. "Horc, by order of the Regional Chief Servant, you are ordered to accompany us to NorthWest City to stand trial for what you have done here."

"Is that so?" was all that Horc replied.

"Yes, and you must immediately surrender your animal kill sticks," Fairmaker continued.

"You don't say," Horc retorted. Fairmaker quickly shot his eyes over to the resting kill stick on Horc's desk, but then quickly brought them back to observe Horc.

"Yes, you will be placed in these bindings during our trip back to NorthWest City to assure everyone's safety," Fairmaker said, his voice wavering, holding up some typical hand restraints.

"Is that so?", Horc replied again.

"You will be treated fairly and compassionately, both on the journey and after your trial," Fairmaker continued, his voice now breaking and his eyes darting back and forth across the room. He clearly had

expected Horc to have resisted and tried something. But Horc's relaxed attitude was making Fairmaker even more anxious.

"Why thank you Fairmaker. How kind of you." Horc could tell Fairmaker was really getting unnerved.

After a few moments of silence, Fairmaker asked, as if he was scared of the answer, "So Horc, are you ready to go?"

Horc just stared at Fairmaker for a bit, enjoying seeing the sweat pour off him. "Can you just tell me this Mediator Fairmaker? You were gone 2.5 dY. What took you so long? You could have been back a dY earlier," Horc asked.

Fairmaker, responded – glad to have some conversation to defuse the tension - but his tone with decreasing authority, in fact it was almost embarrassed. Fairmaker slouched slightly, while his eyes darted up and down keeping an eye on Horc, "They didn't believe me at first. They made me talk to a psychiatrist as they didn't believe anyone could act with as much violence and disregard for others as I described to them. They had never heard of such atrocities before. It took the other Mediators you had brutalized getting to NorthWest City and sharing their stories to convince them."

Now, having gotten that out, and with the recall of how evil Horc's actions were, Fairmaker seemed again empowered and resolute in his mission to bring Horc in. He stood up straighter and again looked Horc in the eye. "Time to go Horc," he now said confidently.

"Just one problem with that," Horc offered, followed by a moment of silence. "If I was you, I wouldn't make any sudden moves, but those friends of yours should *slowly* look up in the corners behind them and off to their sides." As Horc said that you could see them tense up and start to slowly look up and to the side, only to see men on a platform built high in the room – so high that they didn't notice them when they came in – pointing kill sticks directly at them and close enough that even with the inaccuracy of them, they would still probably make their mark.

"But I wouldn't want you Mediator Fairmaker to be left out. If you look straight ahead in the middle of that bookshelf there, you'll see a kill stick pointed right at you."

Horc gave it a few seconds for the reality of the situation to settle in on them. "Now, fellow citizens, if you would be so kind as to *slowly* lower your kill sticks and put them on the ground, we would much appreciate it," Horc suggested with a smile.

The three Mediators quickly looked at one another, then slowly lowered their weapons to the ground and then just as slowly stood back up.

Horc looked at all three of them, smiling approvingly. “Thank you for your cooperation.” Horc smugly offered. “We just have one problem to deal with. When I last saw you Mediator Fairmaker, I told you if you came back you would be killed. Moreover, I’m pretty sure I told you that anyone who came back with you would be killed too.”

The 3 Mediators stayed still, but their eyes were moving all around. Horc knew they were considering if they should try and go for their kill sticks. Time to wrap this up.

“Now I need to be known as a man of my word.” Horc paused. “But I also want to be reasonable leader. So how about we compromise. I’ll let you live, Mediator Fairmaker, but for the other two, it’s *kill time.*” And with that pre-arrange phrase, the two platforms erupted in fire, with each hitting its mark. The two outside Mediators fell, large holes in the side of their heads.

Mediator Fairmaker was tensed up, as if waiting for the shot for him to ring out. But after a few seconds, he opened his eyes and looked at his two compatriots lying to his sides. He then looked back at Horc, who now was standing next to him.

“But, of course, I can’t let this transgression go unpunished.” And with that, Horc slashed Fairmakers face with a sharp knife. Nothing that would be fatal, but that would cause a lot of blood for effect and leave a scar.

Fairmaker staggered back, then fell to the ground. He brough his hands up to his face, blood gushing through them.

“Yeah, looks pretty bad doesn’t it.” Horc said to Fairmaker, as Fairmaker looked back in horror. “But not to worry, I knew we’d have to take care of you, so I have Doctor Medicinehealer right outside.” With that Horc gestured and Doctor Medicinehealer scurried in, fear in his eyes too, as he started to look at Fairmaker’s wound. Then Doctor Medicinehealer looked up at Horc and informed him, “I’ll have to use stiches to mend this.”

“Do what you have to Doctor, but make it quick,” Horc ordered.

Fairmaker took in his surroundings at what just happened, and he felt like a fool. Horc had had this all planned out. He knew exactly what was going to happen and how it would play out. “We never had a chance,” Fairmaker thought to himself, wincing in pain as the doctor put in the stitches.

When the doctor finished with Fairmaker, Horc again spoke down to Fairmaker, “I’m letting you go again. There won’t be a third time. Tell the NorthWest City Servants, that these townships are mine. If anyone tries to come back again, I will kill all of them, and 100 citizens for every Mediator they send. And if they keep harassing me, I will wage continuous battle on them, and that will not end well for them. Now go and don’t ever, ever let me see you again.”

With those words, Mediator Fairmaker again scurried out of his office, and on to his Yatz, and took off as fast as he could.

As he disappeared in the distance, Horc again smiled to himself. Everything was going as he planned. The next part was going to be the most difficult yet, and this time he wouldn’t have any manuals to help him know what they were going to do. Of course, Mediator Fairmaker would check in, and next time they would be coming back in much larger numbers. Next time, without a manual to go by, it would be a battle of wits between him and them, which made Horc feel very confident. But he knew they would have to pull in Mediators from all over the region, so it would be at least 3 dY before they came back, so plenty of time to prepare.

There was actually less preparation to do now than before. He already had most of the plans laid out, so there was just training to hone everyone’s skills. Surprisingly, after all his victories, many came forward to join his group. He could have had a fair contingent of enforcers if he wanted, but that would have been counterproductive to his goals. Instead, he enlisted a select few of them as laborers – reinforcing the Mediator’s office walls and boarding up all the rear and side entrances, putting special placements in the upper floor of the building across the street and too the sides, and coating them with special materials to help make them flame retardant. In return, he let most of those select few labors have free days, where they could do anything they wanted, to anyone they wanted, without punishment (as long as it wasn’t against the enforcers).

The Mediators had left 3 more kill sticks, giving them a total of 8, for his core group of 7 enforcers. Just about right.

For the next 2 dY, Horc relaxed the mood a little. Not working him men quite as hard but keeping them satisfied with going after the tax men when they appeared in any of *his* townships. He didn’t want them

dead; just believing they would be dead, and made to believe so in a public way, if they ever came back again. Horc of course confiscated all tax revenues. He in-turn paid his men well so that they could indulge themselves.

But then as the third dY after Mediator Fairmaker left approached, Horc tightened up the reigns again. Making work schedules much more rigid and demanding more discipline from his enforcers. They ran through scenarios and responses, learned how to work each of the various placements around the Mediator's Office, and what their primary, secondary and tertiary duties were at each of those stations.

This time, the Mediators appeared in the latter morning; apparently having stayed far away the night before not to risk being uncovered, and then coming in as early as they could considering the ride. And this time, there was 17 of them, all with kill sticks and ready to use them.

Again, Horc received warning a couple mD before they arrived, which was all the time they needed to take their positions. Horc, Bvad and Lrak all took up fortified positions in the Mediator's Office, two took reinforced positions on the second floor of the building across the street, and two other took positions atop the roof of the building on either side of the Mediator's office. So 7 of them total.

As the Mediators arrived, they didn't try to walk in like before. Instead, over block away, they fanned out so they could approach from both directions. Their approach was slow and meticulous – going maybe a DL forward, assessing their surroundings, and repeating. From each approach, there were two columns, each with four men, and each column hugging close to the buildings on their side of the road. Each column communicated with the others using hand signals and gestures.

One of the columns was lead by Mediator Fairmaker. When Horc noticed this, he couldn't help but feel a little admiration for Fairmaker. Horc had put him through a lot, yet he didn't shy away from his duties; he was devoted to his purpose and mission.

The 17th man took point in the middle of the road between and in front of the columns approaching from the north. He was clearly the Lead Mediator.

Just as they had practiced, Horc and his men hung back; quiet and invisible from the street, waiting for the right moment.

Nearing the Mediator's office, the Mediators started gathering together, the distance between them shrank to only a man's width between them, as did their height as they hunched over more and more as they got closer. It was clear they had practiced this during training for this mission. When they were

only about 7L away on both sides, the Lead Mediator could be seen trying to make out what was the status of the Mediator's office. He saw the door had been reinforced and was shut tight. The windows had been boarded up, and the entire building seemed to have a whole extra layer built around it.

He then moved in the middle of the street, right in front of the Mediator's office, and called out, "Horc, by order of the NorthWest Regional Servants council, I am ordered to take you into custody. If you surrender yourself, you will not be harmed." The Lead Mediator stood there waiting for a response.

Horc knew he only had a few moments to make a move. While the Mediators might feel safe pressed against the buildings on both sides of the street, they were actually very vulnerable once his men showed themselves; much more so than if they were bunched in front of the Mediator's Office and below the front overhang.

His strategic move would have been to take out the Lead Mediator, sowing disorder in the rest of their ranks. But today's strategy was far larger than this tactical encounter today, and Horc also had a reputation to uphold; he couldn't not keep his word twice, despite the newfound admiration for Fairmaker; so his opening shot hit Fairmaker square in the head, taking him down immediately.

That opening shot was also the signals to everyone else to open fire. As they rose, the four enforcers on the other buildings each had a clear shot on 4 Mediators on the other side of the street. Likewise, Bvad and Lrak had fairly clear shot to the north and south columns on the other side of the street as well as the Lead Mediator. All six of them shot at roughly the same time, taking down 4 of the Mediators, and severely injuring and incapacitating the Lead Mediator. With 5 Mediators out, the odds were now 7 to 12.

But while the kill sticks gave the ability to kill at a distance, besides not being highly accurate, they were also not fast to reload. And now all their positions had been revealed, with a very narrow protected space. As the four exterior enforcers rose to take another shot, two went down. But the other two were able to take out two of the mediators. Likewise, Horc and the two enforcers took out 2 more. Odds now 5 to 8.

For the next round of shot, one of the external enforcers was taken out as he rose, but the other scored a shot as well. At this point, Horc and the other two didn't have good shots from their position. They shot, but all missed. Odds 4 to 7.

Knowing the position of the last external enforcer, most of the Mediators trained their fire in preparation for him coming up; and when he did he fell under a hail of cross file. Odds 3 to 7.

Horc could see the discipline of the Mediator's training was starting to succumb to the chaos and disorder of battle. Their lines were loosening, with each man starting to act on his own and forgetting his training to work cooperatively as a group. This was evident as they started to lay siege to the Mediators office. Instead of staying close to the ground and using the buildings for cover, they were moving to the middle of the street, shooting towards the Mediator's Office without a clear target. And instead of ducking again to reload, they just stood there like in a trance. Two more Mediators down. Odds 3 to 5.

Horc started to get concerned. As things were going, they were in a very good position to win this fight, and that would set his plans back at least nearly a full year, and in that time, he and his followers might well become so entrenched as to not be able to be dislodged with what this society had to muster against them; but he would not be able to muster what he needed to rule all of Necedah.

The Mediators were now arranged in an absurd arc around the Mediator's office, standing in full view, as if by will alone they could evaporate the front wall; while Horc, Bvad and Lrak were behind strong fortifications. The Mediators were at least shooting for the loopholes, but with little chance of any real success. Two more Mediators down. Odds even at 3 to 3.

At this point, Horc went back, picked up the second killstick, went forward so he could get clear aim, and then shot. Bvad and Lrak fell to the floor without ever knowing what hit them.

Horc then opened the door a crack. The 3 remaining mediators were almost catatonic with fear and mental chaos. Horc needed to be careful, as their actions might not be reasonable or predictable.

Horc yelled out, "By the Mediators rules, and addendum 7 of the Nice Laws, I am surrendering myself to you for safe passage to a Regional Mediator. You are sworn to take me there safely."

The Mediators stood in an almost daze, but as the gunfire was overtaken by the silent calm, thought and reason were coming back to them. Like coming out of a coma, they started to acknowledge each other and talking to one another.

One of the Mediators yelled back, "Yes, if you surrender yourself, we will safely transport you back to NorthWest City to see a Regional Mediator. But you must come out unarmed and with your hands in plain view. If you do not comply, we will shoot you. Understood?"

“Yes, understood. I’m coming out now slowly.” Horc edged the door open more, than slowly walked through it, his hands extended in front of him. Moving towards the Mediators, he noticed all the kill sticks pointed right at his head. He hoped none of them was overly anxious and fired by mistake.

When Horc was right in front of them, they looked at each other with a common “what now” expression. “I believe according to the Mediator’s manual, you are supposed to restrain my hands and secure me in such a way that I cannot run away.”

“Oh, yes, OK.” One of the Mediators then clumsily looked for and found a rope, and then put it around Horc’s hands. Horc knew it was a poor job and he could easily have gotten out of it, but he played along.

That night Horc spent the night “locked” in the room of a local inn. Again, he could have easily escaped but instead just looked out the window. He saw wagon loads of people start to arrive. By what he could make out, they were largely the likes of psychologists and support staff to help the local citizens deal with the violent horrors they had lived through. He had to give credit to the planning of the NorthWest Regional Servants, although their confidence in winning the battle with him was clearly excessive. But he would gladly concede their success, as long as it got him what he wanted.

The ride back to NorthWest City was long, but comfortable enough, at least as comfortable as it could be riding a Yatz 5 dD each day. A different set of Mediators had come in to take him back, apparently taken from an area to the east who knew little of what had happened. Along the way, he used his old charm techniques to befriend them – funny, smiling, laughing, never threatening. It wasn’t that far into their journey that the Mediators were no longer being vigilant about assuring Horc’s hand restraints were firm, nor restraining him at night with more than a blocked door. Horc had promised to cooperate. And he did, because it benefitted him.

When they arrived at NorthWest City about 1 dY later, the regional and local Mediators were not as friendly. They didn’t know Horc, but they had heard about the unthinkable acts he had committed. There he was put in shackles and locked in a cell in an otherwise vacant facility each night, except for 5 Mediators who were to watch over him.

Despite all the horrible things he had done back home, Horc knew he needed the Regional Mediators to cement that intellectual knowledge with emotional revulsion as well. One night, in the depths of darkness, Horc broke his shackles and quietly broke out of his cell and then proceeded to brutally killed all 5 guarding Mediators. He didn’t try to get out of the facility. He just sat there.

When the morning crew came in, they saw the bloody carnage, and called for help. Soon, a multitude additional Mediators rush in and Horc let them overpower him and put him in chains – chains on his hands and feet, all somewhat tightly connected to a metal neck collar with 10 round hooks around it – a unique contraption they obviously had had specially made and waiting for him. When the Mediators came to get him now, 10 Mediators with 2L metal rods would come and attach their rods to Horc’s neck collar without ever coming close to him, then spread out around him. That way, he was always 2L or more away from any of the Mediators, and he had no hopes of overpowering all 10 of them. When they made their way in or out of the Regional Mediator’s chamber, it made for quite an impressive spectacle.

Horc’s trial was short, with Horc confessing that he did everything they accused him of doing. Moreover, Horc said his only regret was not defeating the Mediators and keeping those townships for himself, and he would try again if he had the chance, and didn’t care who or how many people he would have to kill to make that happen.

The Regional Mediator took a while after the mediator session to render a judgement. This Mediator had never presided over someone accused of violence before, much less such horrific acts of violence. None of his colleagues had heard or read of such a crime. In fact, he had difficulty finding any relevant Mediator findings before. But in the end, he knew exactly what he needed to do.

“Horc,” the Regional Mediator started, “You are the vilest person I have ever seen, in fact ever heard of, in all the annuals of history.”

Horc smiled.

“There is very little legal guidance here; there is no case law. Nothing like this has ever been recorded before,” the Mediator continued.

Horc smiled.

“You show no remorse, in fact you have said you would do it again if given the chance. “

Horc nodded, and smiled.

“But the finding here is fairly clear.”

Horc’s smile grew.

“Horc, are you familiar with the Violent & Criminally Insane Institute in SouthEast City?”, the Mediator inquired. Horc gestured no, but gave a little grimace, letting the Mediator know he was being played

with. In actuality, Horc was intimately familiar with it – at least as much as you could be from about 120 ML away. He knew all the inmates as of the last report submitted to CentralCentral University. He knew their names, their crimes, their public history. He knew how many guards were there, the size and layout of the facility, and all the publicly available instruction manuals for the facility.

Nonetheless, the Mediator felt compelled to go through the ritual of informing him. “The Violent & Criminally Insane Institute is a special facility – home – that the Necedah Union has constructed about 100 KL northeast of SouthEast City. Its sole purpose is to house and help those that the Mediator system has found to be unsuitable to live freely in society due to violent or chronically criminal behavior. Luckily, in all of Necedah’s 500 Million citizens, only about 100 have been sentenced here.”

“103,” Horc thought to himself.

The Mediators tone changed from compassionate caretaker, to objective judge.

“Due to your frankly unimaginably violent behavior over much of your lifetime, you are hereby committed to be interned in the Violent & Criminally Insane Institute in SouthEast City. Hopefully for you, but also society, they will find a way to cure to what is so disturbingly wrong with you.”

Horc smiled wide.

“There, you will stay until you are cured of your mental defects or live out your natural life.”

“In your delusional dreams,” Horc thought to himself. “In a few years, you will all be bowing to me,” he continued in his mind. He smiled.

“Because of your considerable violent actions in the past, I am ordering a special transport cage be built for you so that you have no risk or hope of escaping until you are delivered to the Violent & Criminally Insane Institute. You will be held in our holding facility until that transport cage is ready for you.”

Horc’s smile dimmed slightly. He had not counted on the delay of having a specially built cage made, but it was small in the overall scheme of things.

About 2 dY later, Horc was led to his transport vehicle. It was very odd looking. The carriage section was all metal, and there were side seats for 6 Mediators who would be riding on the outside of the transport cage. The carriage looked very heavy with 12 large, powerful Yatz harnessed to pull it. There was also 6 Mediators on Yatzback in front of him and another 6 behind – for a total of 18 Mediators assuring he stays in custody. Getting close to the cage, he noticed it was a cage inside a cage, each layer

with a door that locked solely from the outside. Both cages had a small window on both the left and right so that Horc could get a tiny view of what they were passing by as they travelled. He also noticed that each of the side seats looked to have a small hole the Mediators could open for their kill sticks to shot inside if needed. The central cage had a slightly raised and isolated metal grate floor, walls and ceiling. He also noticed 3 large enclosures on the back that looked like it could be large batteries. So it seemed they could electrify the cage if Horc ever got out of control. Horc assumed the chains he would be placed in at the middle of the cages would be grounded, so it could be a very unpleasant situation if that every happened.

The ride to SouthEast City and the Violent & Criminally Insane Institute was a long one, taking just about 3.2 years. They made fairly good time; about 7 KLpcD riding 5dD each day – even in the dark time of the cold season. Hence they make about 350 KL per day, but the overall distance was about 112 ML to travel.

Along the way, Horc was a spectacle. People would line the streets looking at the Evil Monster as Horc's procession made its way through towns along the way. Horc always smiled when he saw this. He knew someday soon they would be greeting him when he came to town; not as a criminal, but as his subjects.

The biggest scene was when they went through CentralCentral City on their way to SouthEast City. While SouthCentral City might be the industrial hub of Necedah, CentralCentral City was the administrative hub, with CentralCentral University housing the Grand Servant Chambers. And the leaders of the City, in fact of the Necedah Union, made a point of using this as an opportunity to talk about why it was important for everyone to be nice for their own benefit, and why the Nice Laws were so important. There were people lining the streets long before they made it to the city. When they did, they were greeted by 50 additional Mediators from all over the CentralCentral region, to help escort Horc's moving prison through the streets, under a guise of providing additional protection should the Evil Monster escape.

Horc even noticed that they made a very unusual stop midday in the center of the city. Although the sound was muffled and he couldn't really make out what people were saying, he could tell they were making grand speeches about him and society.

After about a 5 cD delay, they continued onward, the crowds still lining both sides of the street; but they thinned out as did the city as they made their way, until eventually it was the same flat, green landscape in both directions just like almost everywhere else along their journey.

About 3.2 years after starting their journey, Horc noticed that it was LowSun Day outside. He knew very soon they would be arriving at the Violent & Criminally Insane Institute about 100 KL northeast of SouthEast City. Almost 5 years in the making, he would finally be able to implement the last phase of his grand plan. He just had to convince the other 103 inmates to join him in his plan to dominate all of Necedah. This was going to be fun.