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Everyone knows the first blow struck against the United States in World War Two was at Pearl Harbor on December 7th 1941. What few recall, is that it was NOT the surprise airstrike that began its attack at 7:48 a. m. While the aerial assault had already been launched when the casus belli occurred, there was a theatrical trailer before the feature presentation.

A US destroyer engaged and destroyed a Japanese min-sub while it attempted to enter the military harbor at Pearl at 6:37 a. m., more than an hour earlier. At that point, the US was at war, yet telegrams weren't swarming to and from the US War and Navy Departments.*www.noVe()*@oM.

Those government agencies weren't sounding the clarion call to all bases in the Pacific and the Far East to man the defenses, sally forth with the warships (the Pacific Fleet and Asiatic squadron) and launching the US Army Air Corp to find and engage the forces of the Empire of Japan (EoJ).

There were multiple reasons for this, but the crucial one was that the US thought it had more time. Contingency plans for fighting the EoJ and the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) were, with minor tweaking, three years old. Since there was no US war plan for a first strike on Pearl Harbor, no one in the US Navy understood how fucked they were about to get.

In contrast, the Japanese plans weren't finalized until a month before the attack, so they knew precisely what they had to do. A final bit cultural bias correction (for Americans) is that, for the IJN, Pearl Harbor wasn't even the pivotal move. In the long term, the destruction of Battleship Row at Pearl meant little.

US striking power was going to be pretty minuscule for the first six months of the war, no matter what the outcome of the surprise attack turned out to be. The Pacific War was a sideshow. The Japanese 'must win' was on the other side of the world in places like Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines and Burma. Those regions had the raw materials Japan needed.

The Philippines was a US possession with its own sad, underequipped and inadequate military. No matter what happened at Pearl Harbor, the forces in the Philippines weren't going to get an ounce of aid from the mainland. The Japanese had to take the Philippines because it sat astride the main sea route from the riches of Southeast Asia to the Japanese Home Islands.

The US had been mobilizing for a year and had been spoiling for a war with Japan for six months, yet it had nothing ready to send to the Philippines. They kept thinking they had more time. The British Empire had already been fighting in Europe for two years and they also knew a war with the Empire of Japan was coming, yet they kept putting off the needed reinforcements and force modernizations in their possessions, too. They also thought they had more time.

The Dutch... eh, you couldn't blame the Dutch for their pathetic effort. Their homeland had been overrun by Nazi Germany in 1940, so they had nothing to spare for their greatest colonial possession (yes, in 1941, tiny, little Holland owned the massive Dutch East Indies, aka Indonesia).

How does this relate to the tale? The Seven Pillars was playing the role of Imperial Japan, the Amazons were the US Pacific Fleet, the 7 Ninja Families were in the position of the Philippines, the Black Lotus were British South East Asia and the prize was the Earth & Sky/Dutch East Indies.

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The 9 Clans, the Amazons and the Earth & Sky ALL knew they were going to have to fight the Seven Pillars in their near future. The 9 Clan expected the Seven Pillars to drop like a ton of bricks on their ancient enemies, the Black Lotus, in Southeast Asia, even though the key financial support for the Black Lotus was the Ninja Clans and their influence in Japan.

In retrospect, knocking off the ninja first made perfect sense. Without the Ninja, the Black Lotus would be in dire financial straits. Duh. The Amazons had thirty years to make a contingency for the Seven Pillars launching a preemptive attack. So many of their children gathered in one spot was a perfect target... and no Amazon planners had seen it coming.

The Amazons, despite their global air/sea-lift capability, thought their bases in the western North America were safe. Even then, they were thinking global military strategy, not diplomatic blackmail. Attacking the camp gave no serious strategic advantage. Even wiping out the entire complex wouldn't noticeably weaken the Amazon's war-fighting capability.*www.noVe()*@oM.

The Seven Pillars' plan was to buy time by holding the children hostage. Either the Amazons would make concessions, or at least negotiate until the 7P could cripple the 9 Clans and the Earth & Sky before the Amazons launched their expected counterstroke. Even the actual calamity at Summer Camp wasn't a terrible blow to their stratagem.

The Amazons were seen as a peripheral nuisance, even though they had freeholds in both Indonesia and Australia. They were bit players in East Asia. The Seven Pillars knew the Amazons would be coming for them eventually. They had gambled with the lives of a few hundred of their elite troops and lost.

The failure of that mission was an inconvenience, not a catastrophe. In Asia, tens of thousands of Seven Pillar operatives, troops and pawns sprang into action and the ninja and Earth & Sky were in deep kimchi. So, if the Seven Pillars was in the midst of their Asian pseudo-secret blitzkrieg, what the fuck was going on in Aksai Chin?*www.noVe()*@oM.

It made no sense to everyone in the loop except me... and less than ten other Amazons. Historically, both Germany and Japan started their global ambitions in the mid-twentieth century with surprise attacks and both succumbed because they failed to appreciate the qualities of their enemies.

Only one quality mattered at this critical juncture. It was the military genius leading the Earth & Sky. Yeah, he barely had a week on the job. It turned out to not really matter. The E&S knew precisely who'd they had to beat in order to succeed – the Seven Pillars. For sixty years, they'd been ramping up their resources and refining their plans.

I invented a saying I was going to tell Temujin if we ever met; 'don't dance on the graves of your enemies until you know the strength of their children'. More on that later.

"Hana, set up the meeting and give me the number of whomever runs security over there," I requested.

"I'll do what I can to set up the meeting, but let me handle the security matters," she counter-offered. "Jormo won't like you having any part of our procedures."*www.noVe()*@oM.

"I understand that and his low opinion of me. I also know that this is a case of who you know being more valuable than what you know," I pleaded. I really owed Hana.

"These people feel obligated to me on a personal level. It will be more than business if I make the request, I promise you," I urged her. Pause.

"Deal. Keep me informed C  el," she requested before hanging up. Vincent looked me over.

"Did you just conspire with some sort of corporate entity to interfere in the internal security of one, or more foreign countries?" he quizzed me. My answer caught him off-guard.

"Yes, I did. Please don't arrest me," I met his gaze. My open confession floored him.

"That's why you didn't want George here," he nodded. I wanted to do summersaults into a handstand. A bright man who wasn't an insult to all masculine virtues. This guy had to meet Felix, who I imagined was starting to feel awful lonely at work.

"C  el, when we get Virginia back, we keep him," Pamela grinned. Our minds were in synch. "Are you divorced?" she asked Vincent. He mulled over his obligation to reply.

"Widower," he confided. "Medical malpractice three years ago."

"My sympathies," she nodded. "I hope you are ready to get back in the dating pool."

"Excuse me?" he sounded perturbed. "My private life is none of your business."

"Giving you a bodyguard that you look relaxed around is our business," Rachel caught on.

"I'm a federal agent. I don't need a bodyguard," he countered.

"I will make you a deal," Pamela smirked.

"Pick any person in this car. If you can take them in a combination of unarmed, armed, pistol and long-arms, I'll shut up about the bodyguard," Pamela challenged him. I saw it in his eyes. He was about to call me out. Instead he gave Rachel and Pamela a second look.

"You," he indicated Pamela. He hadn't chosen the oldest.

He had picked the one the rest of us deferred to. Good man.

"Very well," Pamela shook his hand.

"Hey Agrippina Minor, do you even remember what bullets and guns are used for?" I teased her.

"Suck it up, Caligula," she responded.

"I throw bullets to trip up my enemies up so I can catch them and beat them with the butt of my Barrett boom-stick," she mocked me.

"Bruce Campbell is an under-appreciated comedic talent," Vincent offered.

"Quick," Delilah reached forward from the rear seat. "Do you have any daughters of dating age?"

"Oh... I suggest you show us your daughters so we keep them safe from C  el," Rachel clued in. "He's a great male, but requires constant supervision."

"Male?" Vincent looked at me.

"Yeah. When you and I roll into Havenstone, we'll double the male population in the building," I informed him.

"Brian is gone," Wieslawa enlightened me.

"Oh..." I grunted. Brian's attitude had made his departure inevitable, that sanctimonious bastard.

"Gone?" Vincent prodded me. He was right to suspect nefarious 'goings on'.

"Wieslawa, where did Brian get stationed?" I asked.

"Sydney... Austria... no, Australia... the continent," she worked through her imperfect English.

"Yeah, I recall Brian having a thing for didgeridoos," I mused. A minute later.

"He's been kidnapped and smuggled to another country, hasn't he?" Vincent asked the group.

No one said anything.

"Thank you for not lying to me," he remarked. "Was he a bad person?" Trick question.

"Vincent, if you want, we can arrange a phone call so you can talk to the guy," I offered. "I think he's currently a locust-wrangler in the Outback."