

On Wednesday, 29 May 2019, Special Counsel Robert Mueller finally broke two years of silence about the investigation he led into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election. Mr. Mueller's address to reporters was full of implication and subtext, coded meanings and sly allusions. In an effort to shed light on Mr. Mueller's possible opinions and convictions we have decided — after a great and conscious struggle — to publish an early draft of the report. We received this document from H. James, a member of the special counsel's team who, in the higher interest of serving his country and informing the populace, has defied the aura of leak-proof professionalism that has surrounded the investigation from its onset. We hope this transparent and easily interpretable file makes the nature and extent of Russian interference, and of President Trump's relationship to that external influence, clear and unambiguous.

If we had confidence that this early draft was in fact a fabrication concocted by two Yale undergraduates, we would have said so.

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Report On The Investigation Into
Russian Interference In The
2016 Presidential Election

Volume I of II

Special Counsel Henry James

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I. The Appointment of the Special Counsel and the President's Reaction

The President had always liked his Russia. That such affection should amount to the vulgar phrase which so often waited in the antechambers of his mind — that act of “counting it up,” precisely, was what he, most certainly and most vaguely would have been unable to fail not to deny. Such evasions and unconscious procedures of self-deceit were all the riper and more frequent now, when that very term more than ever seemed to have grown tired of the waiting-room, seemed quite to knock on the wooden door, to proceed through the shimmer of gold and aged tapestries, and to seat itself before the cabinet des affaires at the center of the inner sanctum of his consciousness. He had, he breathed a sigh of relief, absented himself from that room in time. Still, the phrase seemed patiently to lie there in wait, and he shuddered — as he had in New York three years ago — at the thought that the nefarious and unspeakable word — “Collusion” — might have taken up its residence in so vital and central a chamber of his mind.

It had occupied that space enough three years ago, when the special counsel had first begun the series of hunts from whose heart-sickening and neck-rending net he had thought himself at last secure. He remembered now, or half-remembered, what he had, all unwittingly, blurted out to Donald Junior, across the capacious Carrera and the void of an air filled with all that they had exchanged, in registers of tenderness suddenly transmuted to alarm, in the last two years of giddiness and guilty joy.

“It has quite put me out,” he had said. “It’s the end of my presidency.”

“The end?”

“The very end.”

His eyes blazed into a triumph more melancholy for the ephemerality which it confessed, a transience which seemed, peering out of his deep umbrage, to say, in tones he would have used of old to evoke a different sort of putting out, “I’m fucked.”

It was in the active avoidance of that dreadful phrase that he now stood in the Oval Office, looking out the window. It seemed to have risen from the dead, like some gothic ghost or antique spirit of a children’s tale, to torment him afresh. Attorney General Barr, across from him, adjusted his spectacles, and cleared his throat.

“They quite put you through on the idea of obstruction.”

“Oh! — obstruction.” He felt he knew obstruction. That at least would scarcely make him flinch. Barr stood a moment in silence.

“And for Donald Jr. to emerge so unscathed —” he paused. Then, bravely, “That is something more indeed.” His eyes came to a rest on the expressive back.

“Unscathed? Quite unscathed?”

Barr hung fire. Then, his courage flaring even into triumph: “Altogether safe!”

Donald turned to face his advisor, whose expression of placid and soothing calm held for the moment all that was between them. “Of course you’re upset,” the eyes behind the straighteners seemed to coax, “but what did you expect? You obstructed knowing full well that they would call your obstruction collusion — that’s just their manner. But what do we care about them, when we have — really to so great an extent — each other. The world is all before us, and we’ll be hanged if we let them so enclose and circumscribe it by the vagaries of their terms”

For a moment, he longed entirely to yield to that mute exhortation. He felt as if he had been washed over in a tiny skiff, despairing, gasping for air within the hull of the overturned boat, when a sudden burst of wind had borne him up, and carried him, across miles of waste and watery expanse to the mainland of his thought. “To so great an extent?” His eyes could not help answering back. “To so great an extent,” the eyes behind the glasses answered.

Then of a sudden, through this tightened circle, as at the issue of a narrow strait into the sea beyond, everything broke up, broke down, gave way, melted and mingled. Barr was moving across the room toward him. Still, he had an immense desire to appear to resist. “Don’t you see,” he sounded the note of despair, as if — inconsequentially — in his own defense. “Not obstruction, but collusion!”

He said it at random, to hear himself say something; but it was not what he meant. The world, in truth, had never seemed so large; it seemed to open out, all round him, to take the form of a mighty sea, where he floated in fathomless waters. He had wanted help, and here was help; it had come in a rushing torrent. I know not whether he believed everything he said; but he believed just then that to let him take him in his arms would be the next best thing to avoiding impeachment. This belief, for a moment, was a kind of rapture, in which he felt himself sink and sink.

But Barr’s next words were the storm entire: “See? I see only no obstruction and no collusion.”

And the truth of it had, with this force, after a moment, so strangely lighted his eyes that, as for pity and dread of them, he buried his own in the attorney general’s breast.

II. Questions From the Special Counsel’s Office to Donald Trump

SPECIAL COUNSEL’S OFFICE: Did any person or entity inform you during the campaign that Vladimir Putin or the Russian government supported your candidacy or opposed the candidacy of Hillary Clinton? If yes, describe the source(s) of the information, when you were informed, and the content of such discussion(s).

TRUMP: I have not the slightest recollection of being told during the campaign, that Vladimir Putin “supported” my candidacy or “opposed” the candidacy of Hillary Clinton. However, he has never for a moment yet bored me — never been wanting, as the cleverest Russians sometimes are, in tact. He has never talked about his tact — as even they too sometimes talk; but he has always had it. He has never had it more than just lately. He has never been anything I could call a burden.

SPECIAL COUNSEL’S OFFICE: You speak of being tired of Putin as you might speak of being tired of roast mutton for dinner.

TRUMP: I'm not a bit tired of him.

SPECIAL COUNSEL’S OFFICE: Oh, if you don't do him justice!

TRUMP: I should be a beast, eh?

III. WHAT DONALD KNEW

They caught the jetliner, which was just rolling onto the runway, transported through space by wheels and axles that rotated in the shimmering golden reflection of the sun. The plane rose, slowly and imperfectly; but at last, as they looked out onto the houses receding beneath them, Bob Mueller had the courage to revert. "I didn't look back, did you?"

"Yes. Vladimir wasn't there," said Donald.

"Not on the tarmac?"

Donald waited a moment, chewing a hamburger with gluttonous bites that said, with the unmistakable silent expression of teeth gnashing against processed meat, "There was no collusion, never the faintest hint of that foul haze which so reliably and with such stubborn intensity surrounds that well of corruption, that bog of subterfuge, that swamp which remains in such dire need of drainage. But obstruction? Yes, quite. There is — there was — obstruction. But only a bit of

obstruction — and one must grant every man his bit of obstruction, lest one limit oneself to only the vilest pleasures — and that bit was, after all, meant only to obstruct those foul swamp creatures, who, quite unable to do so themselves, now seek to prevent — to obstruct — the restoration of greatness, again, to this union.”

Bob Mueller was also silent a while. "You know, the Democrats had it wrong," he finally observed, with the tired resignation that 22 months of fruitlessly rummaging in the gold-embossed wardrobes of George Papadopolous' vulgar consciousness had wrought upon his sweat-soaked brow. "Putin told me, 'I'm with her.'"

"Oh, I know!" Donald replied.

Bob Muller gave a sidelong look. He still had room for wonder at what Donald knew.