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This Man Wants to Convince You Global Warming Is a Hoax

Marc Morano broke the Swift Boat story and effectively stalled John Kerry's presidential run. Now he is working against an even bigger enemy: belief in climate change. Somehow, he seems to be winning.

By: John H. Richardson


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Early on the morning of November 17, Gavin Schmidt sat down at his computer and entered his password. It didn't work. Strange, he thought. He tried a few other accounts and none of them worked, either. Now he was alarmed. As a leading climatologist with NASA's Goddard Institute in Manhattan, he'd been hacked before. He was used to e-mails from people who disapproved of his work, threatening e-mails that detailed the romantic life he was going to have in prison. So he knew what to do: He logged in via the Unix shell command.

A second later, the computer logged him off — and locked him out. Someone was in there, fighting him in real time. Schmidt sent an emergency message to his Web server:

"WE ARE BEING HACKED RIGHT NOW."

When they started the system up again, hours later, Schmidt found a forged Web page and a link to a file holding thousands of what looked like private e-mails written by some leading climatologists who study global warming. In addition to being a massive theft, it was a dark joke. Because the Goddard Institute is the professional home of James Hansen, the scientist famous for first sounding the alarm on rising temperatures back in 1988, and these particular e-mails had been compiled as part of a bitter Freedom of Information fight launched by contrarians who insist that global warming is a hoax, the hacker was posting the e-mails as a malicious tweak. He came in via a misconfigured proxy server in Turkey that was on a list of the proxy servers people use if they want to hide their tracks.

But the hacker had moved on. He'd been working on this for weeks, maybe longer, risking prison on charges of industrial espionage. A few hours later, he posted this note on a blog called The Air Vent:

"We feel that climate science is, in the current situation, too important to be kept under wraps. We hereby

release a random selection of correspondence, code, and documents. Hopefully it will give some insight into the science and the people behind it.

"This is a limited time offer, download now."

Two days later, Marc Morano is riding up the Pacific Coast Highway in the back of a rental car, a big cheerful guy with five o'clock shadow that makes him look like Barney Rubble. He was eleven when his older brother got him a job on the Reagan campaign placing sound bites with radio stations, which eventually led to a job with Rush Limbaugh and three years as communications director for Senator James Inhofe, where he made the words *Global warming is a hoax* world famous. Now he's forty-one and he's enjoying the downtime between political speeches, catching glimpses of the California ocean — on these lecture tours, he just runs and runs and runs until all he wants is a quiet place to drink a beer and smoke a cigar.

But a call comes in from Anthony Watts, a retired TV weatherman who runs one of the leading contrarian blogs, and he has astonishing news about some e-mails from the Climate Research Unit at the University of East Anglia in England. There's explosive stuff there — in one, a scientist actually rejoices over a contrarian's death. How's that for scientific detachment? Another says he's using a trick to "hide the decline" in temperature. A trick!

It's exactly what the contrarians have been saying for years. The leading global-warming scientists are scamming the world. *Billions* of dollars in green energy and CO₂ restrictions and it all comes down to their reputations and their grant money.

So Watts is posting a note on his Web site: "The details on this are still sketchy, we'll probably never know what went on. But it appears that University of East Anglia Climate Research Unit has been hacked and many many files have been released by the hacker or person unknown..."

"Many many" files is right. There are thousands of them, nearly a million words total. Fortunately, the hacker took the time to draw up an annotated list. Watts is posting some of the juiciest.

The timing is perfect. The United Nations climate conference starts in Copenhagen in three weeks. The activists are pushing for a 40 percent cut in CO₂ emissions within ten years, a revolutionary number. The eyes of the world are open wide and suddenly here's this tremendous gift: *Climate-gate*, they'll call it. With any luck, it will be just like the story that put Morano on the map, the one he wrote in a hurry late on a Friday afternoon in the spring of 2004 that was supposed to be the beginning of a vacation. He was working at the time for the right-wing CNS News service, and his boss wanted a pound of flesh before he left, as bosses do, so he made some calls and a contact suggested he call a guy named John O'Neill down in Texas. A few minutes later O'Neill was on the phone, sounding surprised. Yeah, he was leading a group called Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, hundreds of them, all ready to declare that John Kerry was unfit to be commander in chief. Yeah, nineteen of them had actually served with Kerry. They even had his commanding officer, who said he'd had thorn pricks that were worse than some of Kerry's wounds.

Morano knew it was big. He stayed late, digging through clips and calling Kerry's office for comment. "You asked for a pound of flesh," he told his editor. "I may have given you several."

The story ran on Monday under the headline "KERRY UNFIT TO BE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF," SAY FORMER MILITARY COLLEAGUES, when Morano was down in North Carolina, at Nag's Head with his two baby girls. It blew up into international news, turning the Swift Boaters' press conference into a mob scene, the beginning of the end for Kerry, who simply didn't understand what he was up against. It didn't matter that the claims of the Swift Boaters would later be documented to be lavishly financed lies; the actual truth was a lumbering dinosaur in the face of a blitzkrieg. Morano followed it with stories like KERRY'S MEETING WITH COMMUNISTS VIOLATED U. S. LAW and FBI FILES SHOW KERRY MET WITH COMMUNISTS MORE THAN ONCE.

But that was when he still had some institutional support behind him. Now he's all alone in a hotel room with a laptop, a phone, and a BlackBerry, and his only weapon is a Web site called ClimateDepot.com.

Listen and learn, pilgrim. This is how the information wars are fought in the age of the Internet, when an isolated outside voice can swing the debate and change the world. The story starts with Hansen's congressional

testimony back in '88: "The greenhouse effect has been detected and it is changing our climate *now*." Within a few years, the fossil-fuel industry was fighting back with films like *The Greening of Planet Earth*, which said that more CO₂ would actually be good for farmers. Big Oil and Big Coal funded sympathetic think tanks like the Heritage Foundation and the Competitive Enterprise Institute and also outright front groups with names like Friends of Science and the Global Climate Coalition, all of which came up with an endless stream of arguments for why global warming wasn't happening and even if it was, nothing should be done about it. Some of their criticisms were valid, like questioning the more extreme predictions for ocean-level rise or the dubious link to hurricanes, and they were certainly right to bring up the cost-benefit analysis of cap-and-trade. But as the science piled up, each bit of evidence more convincing than the last, more and more people were starting to believe that global warming was real.

The first turning point was 1997, when the nations of the world agreed to limit their CO₂ emissions at the Kyoto Protocol. A year later, the American Petroleum Institute hired a conservative PR expert named Steve Milloy to develop a "Global Climate Science Communications Action Plan." They had to tell a better story and tell it fast. They had to change the narrative. Milloy ran a Web site called Junk Science, joined in time by Climate Audit and Ice Cap and a thousand others, all hammering the same message — *ignore global warming*. There was even an evangelical-Christian faction, led by something called the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation. Then, in 2006, Al Gore killed them with *An Inconvenient Truth*. On one side you had a Nobel-prize-winning vice-president, the world's leading scientists, a Hollywood cheering section, and a growing public consensus. On the other, a handful of legitimate scientists and a small but noisy group of amateurs, ideologues, and cranks. At the peak of the consensus, 84 percent of Americans thought global warming was a threat. The only thing they agreed on more was the existence of God.

Then Morano got hired as the communications director for Jim Inhofe, the dyspeptic senator from Oklahoma. Setting to work, he began compiling so many inflammatory stories and documents on Inhofe's Web site, *Newsweek* said he was "more like a wire service than a spokesman." He began to use the Web in pugnacious new ways, like printing the e-mail addresses of reporters and scientists and inviting readers to pester them. All this made Inhofe's office the global center of the resistance, but it also infuriated people. "Morano is unquotable and uncitable," said one influential climate blog. "Besides his penchant for smear, he just makes stuff up." Another investigated his e-mail list. A scientist threatened him with a libel suit. Eventually other Republicans started telling Inhofe to fire him — he was unprofessional, they said. He appealed to Inhofe's worst instincts.

Morano took those as compliments.

Now he sits at the anonymous desk in his California hotel room and taps away on his Web site, which is funded by Richard Mellon Scaife, the right-wing billionaire who also financed the investigation into Bill Clinton's sex life. Morano starts searching and surfing, setting up Google alerts to aggregate stories to his in-box, grabbing scraps of information wherever he can find them, adding headlines and lining them up on his front page. Click on the headline *Real Files or Fake* and it takes you to a Web site called the Blackboard, where a blogger named Lucia mentions e-mails "between various bloggers and climate science illuminati" but isn't sure whether they're some sort of scam. *May sully the reputations of a number of working scientists* leads to a story on [Examiner.com](#) New York by a writer named Thomas Fuller, who refuses to go into detail because the e-mails are private and would almost certainly "prove embarrassing to those concerned, especially if ... published in snippets and without context." *If legit, this apparently devastating series of revelations will be very hard for the media to ignore* leads to a giddy post at the National Review Online: "The blue-dress moment may have arrived!"

Morano has fun with it too, using goofy illustrations like a cartoon hand hammering a nail into a coffin and a *Scooby Doo* villain getting his mask pulled off. People tell him this is too childish for a publication that affects global policy, but it's part of his vision for his Web site — climate entertainment, he calls it.

As the words leave his fingers and become electric ones and zeros in the information cloud, other people start responding. One of the first is James Delingpole of London's *Daily Telegraph*: "If you own any shares in alternative-energy companies I should start dumping them NOW." Morano's Google alerts pick up the new tidbit and he slaps on another headline and adds it to his Web page. Then other people pick up his stuff and he writes about that and someone else writes about that until it's all swirling around like a digital dust devil in a Michael Crichton novel. Soon Morano's caution begins to fade:

If they are real and not fake, he writes, this is absolute dynamite, and will destroy the credibility of the alarmist

cause.

Physicist on alleged behavior of CRU scientists: "These people should be put in jail as soon as possible."

A scandal that is one of the greatest in modern science.

By dawn, he's done fifteen or twenty headlines and the American media is starting to wake up. New posts are popping up everywhere. "This is not a smoking gun; this is a mushroom cloud," says Patrick Michaels, a contrarian climatologist at the Cato Institute. "The crimes revealed in the e-mails promise to be the global warming scandal of the century," says syndicated columnist Michelle Malkin. "Proof of a conspiracy which is one of the largest, most extraordinary and most disgraceful in modern science," says Andrew Bolt of the Australia *Herald-Sun*.

And finally the big kahuna, el Rushbo himself. This is on his afternoon radio show, maybe eight hours after Morano finally conks out on his pillow. "Something fascinating has happened," Limbaugh begins, giving his listeners a few hints about a "substantial fraud" at the highest levels of the global-warming scare machine and then referring them to Morano's site. "All the details are there. It's a great place to keep up on the global-warming debate. He's probably single-handedly, in a civilian sense, the guy — other than me, of course — doing a better job of ringing the bells alarming people of what's going on here."

So many people rush to Morano's site they overwhelm the servers and the site crashes.

Two weeks later, the e-mail story has exploded into a global scandal. The director of the Climate Research Unit stepped down pending investigations. There's fury even in a mainstream publication like *The Atlantic*: "The closed-mindedness of these supposed men of science, their willingness to go to any lengths to defend a preconceived message, is surprising even to me," writes senior editor Clive Crook. "The stink of intellectual corruption is overpowering."

Slowly, most journalists and politicians are coming to the conclusion that the e-mails don't really change the basic science. The vast majority of them were routine exchanges of data. A few revealed soft spots in the science or doubts that the scientists weren't expressing in public. Others discussed how to deal with skeptics, some displaying a hostility to contrarians that seemed surprising to people who haven't followed the growing nastiness of the fight against global-warming science, which has come to resemble the fights over abortion and evolution. But while they were petty and bitchy, what the documents didn't do was paint a picture of conspiracy and fraud among climate scientists. Still, the polls have been going in the other direction — now only 57 percent of Americans believe the planet is warming, and only 36 percent believe humans have anything to do with it, slightly less than the 37 percent who believe in haunted houses.

In his home office in northern Virginia, Morano grabs that and writes a headline. *More Americans believe in haunted houses than man-made global warming.*

This was the baby's room, so it still has baby-blue walls and Pooh and Eeyore decorations. Downstairs there are paintings of wildflowers and English gardens and a framed sampler on the wall to remind him that *Every Day Is a Gift*. But on his computer screen, the headlines keep piling up like bricks in Tetris. *It's all unraveling now ... Botch after botch after botch ... Are they insane? ... GOP turning up heat over e-mail scandal ... accuses warming establishment of "Scientific McCarthyism" ...*

Then the banner headline stretching across the page:

SAVE THE PLANET! DON'T BREATHE OUT! DOES OBAMA HAVE THE "FORMAL POWER" TO REGULATE EVEN THE BREATHING OF EACH CITIZEN?

You have to laugh at that one. It's such a gross distortion that it's hard to see how anyone could believe it — always the method Morano loves best, using the laugh value of satire to displace the truth requirements of journalism.

"Did you see me on the BBC Friday night?" he says. "Andrew Watson called me an a-hole! That got picked up by Drudge and CBS, and I did an interview with an Arab channel — and did you see CNN? CNN referred to the

climate conference as a 'temple for believers.' CNN!"

The way he tells the story, he was destined for this task. Obsessed with the weather from an early age — at ten, he had a weather kit with a barometric-pressure gauge and cloud diagrams — he'd get angry at the local weathermen for their shoddy work, which he tracked in a little datebook. He was "very much an emperor's-no-clothes kind of guy," one friend agrees. Plus he had five older brothers and sisters and a criminal-defense attorney for a father, acquired a degree in political science, read Milton Friedman, listened to Reagan's speeches and Rush Limbaugh's radio show, and did a stint as a door-to-door salesman for a gutter-cleaning service, where he learned to make his pitch before the door slammed in his face.

But his other big influence was his brother Carl, who started taking him to kung fu and horror movies when he was six — *Enter the Dragon*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, he saw it all. So he became the video guy in high school and made promotional clips for the college Republicans. Then a friend named Joe Mancuso suggested they try doing freelance TV news, so Mancuso bought a TV camera and Morano did the interviews and they tried to sell the footage. They were getting nowhere until Morano got a great idea at the Republican Convention of 1992 — he asked politicians what they thought of the new Rush Limbaugh TV show, then sold the footage to the new Rush Limbaugh TV show.

And so "Our Man in Washington" was born. Working for Limbaugh on a \$200-a-week retainer, Morano would wear a trench coat and a fedora and he'd pretend to sneak into political events. He'd pop out of a trash can or get a bellhop to wheel him into a conference on a luggage cart. He'd get diagrams of hotels and stalk the restrooms, because people always have to go to the bathroom. It was all very *Naked Gun*, very low-rent. And he'd take his clips up to New York to get advice from his older brother, who was producing campy midnight movies like *The Toxic Avenger* for Troma Entertainment. You have to punch them up, Carl always said. They have to be more *bang bang bang*.

Morano had dreams of going the comedy route then — political comedy, like Limbaugh. Instead, he's got a strategy session in Congress tomorrow and meetings with the Heritage Foundation and the Free Congress Foundation and interviews and debates and e-mail blasts to send, plus he's got to get his passport. On Thursday he flies to Copenhagen for the climate conference.

That's when all this peaks. Trillions of dollars are at stake, poor countries are demanding reparations, environmentalists are ready for a showdown. Nearly sixteen thousand officials and observers are scheduled to attend, not to mention Al Gore, Barack Obama, and up to a hundred thousand protesters.

Morano's mission is to stop this — all of it — dead.

He arrives in Copenhagen without his luggage, a tired man in a green golf shirt. His first event is a speech at a conservative foundation a few miles from his hotel. The city is completely jammed, every hotel in a fifty-mile radius filled, eco-art everywhere — a giant glowing globe that symbolizes our endangered planet, the Statue of Liberty belching smoke, red lights strung at twenty-one feet to show how high the oceans could rise if Greenland melts. Even the bus-stop ads say "A Bottle of Hope," which apparently has something to do with Coca-Cola's corporate greening initiative. There are so many bicycles, most people don't even bother to lock them.

Morano gets out of his cab outside a modern building with a glass door, rolling the black leather bag that holds his portable office. Inside, he climbs three stories to a suite decorated with larger-than-life portraits of Ronald Reagan. Down the hall there's a conference room with a lectern and twenty rows of folding chairs. About thirty clean-cut college kids are drinking sodas and bottled water, plus a handful of nerdy-looking older men and one or two of those conservative dominatrix types.

And suddenly it's old-home week. Here's the famous Steve Milloy, who turns out to be a youthful guy with a bulldog chest and an air of permanent irony. "He's the godfather," Morano says.

Milloy laughs: *hahahaha*. He has a very distinctive laugh, flat and braying. "We've got an event tomorrow," he says. "We're constructing a wall, the Copenhagen Wall, like the Berlin Wall that divided the free from the slave."

The idea is a ten-foot cardboard wall with a picture of a modern city on one side and a primitive one on the

other. To illustrate the injustice of rich nations telling poor ones to control their carbon emissions, the college kids are going to spray-paint $CO_2 = Life$ across it, *Hahahahaha*.

Morano spots Lord Christopher Monckton, another famous contrarian. He has googly eyes like Marty Feldman and a plummy English accent straight out of Monty Python. He claims to have been a science advisor to Margaret Thatcher, although environmentalists hotly dispute this.

"I heard you got heckled yesterday," Morano says.

"Yes, Hitler Youth," Monckton answers. He was giving a speech at an event sponsored by Americans for Prosperity, an event just like this one, when a dozen young Americans rose up and began chanting, "*Clean energy makes jobs*." He called them Hitler Youth and they got terribly upset. "They said, 'We have the right to free speech,' and I said, 'Yes, but not in our meeting.'"

"Hahahahaha."

And here's Tom Harris, a thin bearded man who runs the International Climate Science Coalition. He's circulating a petition that demands "OBSERVABLE EVIDENCE" of climate change, a sentiment that has exploded since Climate-gate, he says. "Suddenly I'm getting twenty responses a day, scientists saying, 'Sign me up, sign me up.' They're worried their whole profession will be disgraced."

There's more of them — Phelim McAleer, an Irish filmmaker who is planning to protest by dressing up as a polar bear who is not endangered; Cal Beisner, who runs the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation; Craig Rucker of the Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow. They stand around making contrarian small talk, which includes a lot of speculation about the identity of the e-mail hacker — the Saudi intelligence service is a popular suspect — and an endless stream of "I told you so" moments. "Did you hear James Hansen on *Letterman*?" Morano asks. "He basically said 'bad judgment' — they used 'bad judgment.'"

"Hide it better next time," Harris says.

"And they're also not doing an investigation."

"There's a lot of hardcore evidence of corruption."

Milloy talks about the theme of his latest book, *Green Hell: How Environmentalists Plan to Control Your Life and What You Can Do To Stop Them*. They want to tell us what to eat, where to live, how many kids to have, how soft our toilet paper will be. Obama wants to put smart meters on every house so he can control our electricity. "You can't say you're a socialist but you can say you're an environmentalist and have the same goals — it's too bad Joe Stalin missed this one."

Morano seems uncomfortable with this line of argument. "I would still argue environmentalism is not his big issue."

"Well, every time he opens his mouth he says something stupid."

Morano doesn't encourage him, but Milloy can't help expanding on this fruitful theme. "He was a community organizer. Their whole agenda is international socialism."

Morano drifts over to Monckton, who is telling a story about a trip to the University of Rochester. "I was there to give a speech on the application of probabilistic computronics to the identification and quantification of phase transitions and bifurcations in a chaotic object, as one does... ."

But Morano is distracted by a waving hand. "I'm on," he says. "It's showtime."

This is what Morano has been training for his whole life. After "Our Man in Washington" fizzled out, he became the go-to guy for stories in which the king has no clothes, first at a *60 Minutes* wannabe called *American Investigator* and then at CNS News. He specialized in exposés of animals-rights activists, rain-forest

warriors, and holier-than-thou Hollywood do-gooders. A classic Morano story was adding up how much the movie stars spent on planes to visit some sustainable ecovillage in Africa.

He started getting juicy leaks. First it was Kerry. Then word came from deep within the Bush administration that NASA was having terrible problems with James Hansen, the famous global-warming whistle-blower, who was refusing "to follow protocol when it came to granting media interviews." That blew up into a huge story too.

Then someone told him to check out Congressman John Murtha's past, and Morano spent a week in western Pennsylvania going through old newspaper files. He resurrected stories about Murtha's role in the ABSCAM scandal and the "controversy" over his two Purple Hearts, which added up to nothing but rumors spread by political opponents.

He was being honed. If you look at him in video from *American Investigator*, he was skinny and nervous and glassy-eyed. Now, as he stands at the lectern at the front of the room, he's a professional, smooth and confident. He has the advantage of an absolutely clear purpose, running down the plays like a guerrilla leader planning an attack on an enemy village. "Don't quote the skeptics," he begins. "Use the words of their fellow scientists."

He pushes a key on his laptop and a slide appears on the screen behind him: COPENHAGEN CLIMATE CHANGE TALKS MUST FAIL.

"Let's play a little game. Who said this? Was it Sarah Palin? Was it Senator Inhofe?"

A familiar voice calls out: "James Hansen, *hahahahaha*."

"James Hansen! James Hansen said this conference must fail! So if anyone asks you this week, How can you be against this? say, We stand shoulder to shoulder with NASA's James Hansen!"

Morano stands at the podium grinning. The joke, of course, is that Hansen opposed the conference because it didn't go nearly far enough to solve the problem, which is the opposite of Morano's distorted meaning.

He triggers another slide. It's a prominent scientist saying the Climate-gate scientists should be barred from the United Nations climate process. "This is not a skeptic," he crows. "This is a UN scientist!"

Next is a leading British science journalist saying that most of his environmentalist friends have gone into denial about Climate-gate, hoping the crisis will go away.

"Again, you don't have to quote a skeptic. *Use their words*."

His brother Carl laughs about it. "When he touts these scientists and I say, 'You're just picking and choosing the stuff that fits your agenda,' he just starts to skirt around it."

Morano is always genial, and he's careful not to go too far — one reporter who tussles with him mentions his "lawyerly precision." What Inhofe actually said was that "*catastrophic* global warming is a hoax," for example. But he knows that the details aren't as important as the story, and there's no better story than greedy politicians grinding the free man under their boot heels. The senator who called cap-and-trade the "most significant revenue-generating proposal of our time"? That's all you need to know. This is an ideology. Al Gore saying the U. S. climate bill will help bring about "global governance"? This isn't about science! It's about *controlling humans*.

But it's always clear that he'd rather have fun. This is his genius, especially in a world given to screaming caps and paranoid detail. It's another way he's changing the narrative, showing that one side has a sense of humor. He recites the "Al Gore Earth Prayer."

Al Gore, who art in thy fully offset private jet,

forgive us our emissions...

The next day, they fan out and work the media. That's how this war is waged, in column inches and nightly news clips. Milloy does his Wall, Monckton gives a speech, McAleer puts on his polar-bear suit, and Rucker leads his college students around with megaphones and counterprotest protest signs that say, "CO₂ Is Good," filming their interactions with the humorless greens — at one point, a green tears at one of their signs, accidentally pushing one of them to the ground. The contrarians are thrilled.

Morano's got the big media break, a debate on Sky News with a stuffy British professor named Mark Maslin. They shoot it near the Parliament building, where a big protest is gathering. Maslin's in a studio in London, under a blue light that makes his face look like Spam. Morano's standing on a sunny street, wearing a crisp blue shirt and yellow tie and a black coat draped comfortably around his shoulders. He presses on his earpieces to shut out the noise of the crowd and leads with the Hansen quote.

The nerve of quoting James Hansen, Maslin sputters.

They bat statistics back and forth until Morano says that climate models "violate seventy-one out of the eighty-nine principles of forecasting, according to the experts."

Maslin seems almost amused. "I have to say, this is a wonderful bit of spin."

Anyway, Morano says, sea levels are not rising. To prove it he quotes a study by the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute that actually says sea levels rose nearly eight inches in the last century. This obvious mistake leads Maslin into his fatal error, which is patronizing Marc Morano. He begins his lecture in the patient, harried voice of a kindergarten teacher in a special-ed class: "If you look at the IPCC report, five thousand leading climate scientists — " Morano's eyebrows go up. "Five thousand?"

This time Morano knows the right number — it's actually closer to thirty-eight hundred.

"Look at the evidence," Maslin pleads. "Temperatures have been rising for the last 150 years, this decade the warmest ever recorded, sea ice has been retreating, you can take a supertanker from the Atlantic to the Pacific for the first time in human history. Why do you not believe the science? Why suddenly are scientists lying to you?"

But Morano won't let the five thousand go. Despite his own howler about the sea levels, he hammers away. "You can't get away with this, Professor," he says. "Climate-gate has shown it! You need to apologize and retract that immediately!"

Maslin curls his lip in disgust. "Absolute rubbish. I have been having this debate for the last twenty years, the key is that every intelligent person ..."

Morano's eyebrows go up. "Oh, *intelligent* people."

Maslin keeps trying, telling him he's spinning, that he's wrong on the science, but Morano charges forward with righteous fire. "Matt, check out the claim of five thousand UN scientists — that is a bald-faced ... error. The professor needs to retract it. And interestingly, a few days ago you said four thousand. Why not just say a hundred thousand?"

It's a slaughter.

So that's how it's done, Morano says later. He's the turd in the punch bowl, that's all he is and all he can be. But that might be enough. If they can use the echo chamber to reach enough people, they can confuse them enough to change the narrative. It's asymmetrical warfare updated for the age of the Internet.

Just look around. The streets are streaming with thousands and thousands of people. Correct that: The streets are streaming with The People. They go by in endless *Les Misérables* columns of denim and defiance, shivering and carrying signs that say "There Is No Planet B" and "Climate Justice Now!" The sky goes dark and the

streetlights come on and things get festive in the artificial light, with giant puppets and men wearing snorkels and men dressed as chick-ens, buses with loudspeakers instead of engines pushed along by human arms, bicycles and families with children, sixty thousand human souls marching toward the conference center.

And here are the contrarians, a tiny speck of opposition. Craig Rucker is standing in front of the Copenhagen Wall watching the crowd flow past. "You got to hand it to these folks," he muses. "We'd never get this many people turned out."

Steve Milloy cackles. "God must love idiots, because he made so many of them — *hahahaha*."

The contrarians get excited when the real radicals start marching by. "Look, it's the anarchists," one cries out. The anarchists go past in a float festooned with signs — FUCK GREEN CAPITALISM, WE WANT COMMUNISM, and RESISTANCE AGAINST THE CLIMATE GAMES OF THE RICH — and a ripple of satisfaction shivers through the contrarians. Communists! That's what it's all about, baby!

The only drawback is it's so damn cold. "Where is global warming when you need it, *hahahaha*."

But inside the convention center, it's warm and lit by high fluorescent lights that give off a technocratic glow, and Morano is walking through a vast room filled with trade booths from all the various companies and NGOs. He has no interest in the crowds outside. He's looking for the media room.

There it is — a vast open space the size of a football field, with rows and rows of long desks equipped with data lines and power outlets.

As he walks in, someone points him out — that's Marc Morano, the Swift Boater who did the story on John Kerry.

The funny part is, he's not even supposed to be here. He doesn't have press credentials. But he finds a quiet spot to sit down, opens his rolling briefcase and takes out the tools of his trade, and a few minutes later a radio station calls and makes him legit. It's *immoral* to tell Africans they can't use electricity, he says. Al Gore uses more electricity in a week than twenty-eight million Ugandans use in a year! It's all just white wealthy Westerners telling 1.6 billion people, *predominantly of color*, how to manage their economy. It's a new form of colonialism!

As he speaks, an older man with gray hair watches him in increasing disgust. "Who are you with? What are you doing here?"

"I'm doing an interview with Fox News."

"Faux News? Oh, that explains it."

"I guess no dissent is allowed here," Morano says.

A few minutes later, security comes over and asks to see his badge. The old man must have ratted him out.

You know how this story ends. The climate conference is going to fall apart. They don't agree on emissions targets or reparations or global regulations.

And Morano comes out on top of the world. *Newsweek* calls him "King of the Skeptics," *Rolling Stone* calls him the "Drudge of Denial." He goes back to the office with the baby-blue walls and Winnie the Pooh trim, and every time he checks his BlackBerry, he seems to find another story about him. He even comes out of the bathroom staring at the BlackBerry: "He can be imagined as the love child of Matt Drudge and Karl Rove."

He looks up, a bit abashed. "That's not very nice," he says.

But his beautiful wife is there to defend him. "Marc's not afraid to go head-to-head," she says.

She looks at him fondly while he changes the baby's diaper.

All of this is up ahead clear as day, even as the security guards in Copenhagen flank Morano and walk him out the media-room door. There are thousands and thousands of people out there protesting in the cold, but he's the one changing the narrative. That's why the idea of climate entertainment is so brilliant, because the other side is all about apocalypse. He's tapped into a new spirit in modern conservatism, the rebellious snarkiness that links Glenn Beck and the Fox network to James O'Keefe, the undercover filmmaker who made the ACORN "pimp" video. It's a style closer to puckish agitprop than journalism, which makes accuracy much less important than laughs. When Obama asks, "Why don't we have a European-style health plan?" and Fox cuts away before he explains why we don't, it's the same as Morano misrepresenting Hansen. Only a stuffed-shirt egghead elitist would complain. And the great ocean liner of public opinion turns.

Craig Rucker really says it best, coming into that Danish restaurant with that big grizzled grin on the night of the protest, when everybody is exhausted from walking miles and miles back into town. "We're in *The New York Times!* This is a record! *Never have I seen such a spartan crowd get such elaborate press!*"

One more interview before the night winds down. But first he needs a bar where he can smoke a cigar and decompress.

But smoking, of course, is illegal in this socialist paradise.

He wanders up and down the frigid streets. They say you can smoke in some of the "dirty bars" near the train station, but even the transvestites turn him away. But then, up ahead, shimmering in the distance ...

"That's the new international symbol of freedom — an ashtray."

Inside the bar, everything is red and noisy. Morano takes a Tupperware container out of his rolling briefcase and orders a Christmas beer. He takes a cigar out of the container — two cigars, actually. *Let there be laughter and the sharing of pleasure*, that's his motto. And soon he's working the cigar, the beer, the BlackBerry, and a phone pretty much simultaneously, helping the contrarians plot a raiding party against the Greenpeace ship anchored on the river. "Hey Craig, Fox wants to know when we're doing that thing... . Hey Lena, Fox News is calling about the event tomorrow... ."

They're going to sneak aboard and hang a banner off the port side that says "Ship of Lies" — that's funny, right? "It's going to be a great visual," he says.

He listens for a moment, then nods his head. "Preferably, we're looking for blood or other personal injury."

Then the phone rings again. It's his interview calling. "Is the music too loud?" Morano barks. "I'm talking to you from one of the only places in Copenhagen where you can smoke!"

Yes, the Climate-gate story is huge, he says, a game changer, like the Death Star at the end of *Star Wars*. Politicians are running for cover! Their movement collapsing in disgrace! He has the zest of a child documenting the mistakes of the grown-ups in his little notebook of vindication.

Finally he puts down the phone and goes back to his cigar. The power drive seeps out of him in a pneumatic sigh and he settles back into the red leather booth, taking a sip of the beer he's been ignoring. He seems happy. He talks about the new house he's going to buy now that the kids are bigger and he's making money. He wants it to be in the country — in the mountains maybe, with trees all around, a place where he can fish off his own dock. That would be ideal, your feet in the water and nothing in sight but trees. The truth is, Marc Morano really loves nature.

He smokes his cigar down to the butt.

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