

Syria, the MSNBC host Brian Williams declared the images “beautiful.” One week later, Trump went for more spectacle, dropping the U.S. military’s largest non-nuclear weapon on a cave complex in Afghanistan, an act of violence so indiscriminate and disproportionate that analysts struggled to find any rationale that could resemble a coherent military strategy. There was no strategy—the megatonnage was the message.

Given that Trump ordered the use of a weapon that had never been deployed in combat before, and given that he did this just twelve weeks into his presidency and with no obvious provocation, there is little reason to hope he will be able to resist putting on the show of shows—the apocalyptic violence of a full-blown war, made for TV, with guaranteed blockbuster ratings. Well before Trump, we had wars that were fought as televised entertainment. The 1990 Gulf War was dubbed the first video-game war, complete with its own logo and theme music on CNN. And that was nothing compared with the show put on during the 2003 Iraq invasion, based on a military strategy called Shock and Awe. The attacks were designed as a spectacle for cable news consumers, but also for Iraqis, to maximize their sense of helplessness, to “teach them a lesson.”

That fearsome technology is now in the hands of the first reality-TV star president.

[Peer Review]

## PUBLIC ENEMY

*From the jury selection process that took place over three days in June for the trial of Martin Shkreli, an investor and hedge fund founder who is facing eight counts of securities and wire fraud. In 2015, when Shkreli was CEO of Turing Pharmaceuticals, the company raised the price of its drug Daraprim by 5,000 percent. In 2016, Shkreli was widely criticized for defending the 400 percent increase in the price of EpiPen, an emergency allergy injection sold by Mylan. More than two hundred potential jurors were excused from the trial. Judge Kiyoo Matsumoto presided. Benjamin Braffman is a lawyer representing Shkreli.*

THE COURT: The purpose of jury selection is to ensure fairness and impartiality in this case. If you think that you could not be fair and impartial, it is your duty to tell me. All right. Juror Number 1.

JUROR NO. 1: I’m aware of the defendant and I hate him.

BENJAMIN BRAFFMAN: I’m sorry.

JUROR NO. 1: I think he’s a greedy little man.

THE COURT: Jurors are obligated to decide the case based only on the evidence. Do you agree?

JUROR NO. 1: I don’t know if I could. I wouldn’t want me on this jury.

THE COURT: Juror Number 1 is excused. Juror Number 18.

JUROR NO. 18: Both of my parents are on prescriptions that have gone up over the past few months, so much that they can’t afford their drugs. I have several friends who have H.I.V. or AIDS who, again, can’t afford the prescription drugs that they were able to afford.

THE COURT: These charges don’t concern drug pricing. Could you decide this case based only on the evidence—

JUROR NO. 18: No. No.

THE COURT: —presented at this trial and put aside anything you might have heard in the media?

JUROR NO. 18: No. No.

THE COURT: Sir, we are going to excuse you from this panel. Juror Number 25, come forward, please.

JUROR NO. 25: This is the price-gouging, right, of drugs?

THE COURT: This case has nothing to do with drugs.

JUROR NO. 25: My kids use those drugs.

THE COURT: As I said, the case does not concern anything that you might have read or heard about the pricing of certain pharmaceuticals.

JUROR NO. 25: It affects my opinion of him.

THE COURT: I am going to excuse you. Juror Number 40. Come on up, sir.

JUROR NO. 40: I’m taking prescription medication. I would be upset if it went up by a thousand percent. I saw the testimony on TV to Congress and I saw his face on the news last night. By the time I came in and sat down and he turned around, I felt immediately I was biased.

THE COURT: Sir, we are going to excuse you. Juror Number 47, please come up.

JUROR NO. 47: He’s the most hated man in America. In my opinion, he equates with Bernie Madoff with the drugs for pregnant women going from \$15 to \$750. My parents are in their eighties. They’re struggling to pay for their medication. My mother was telling me yesterday how my father’s cancer drug is \$9,000 a month.

THE COURT: The case is going to come before you on evidence that you must consider fairly and with an open mind.

JUROR NO. 47: I would find that difficult.

THE COURT: And that’s based on your parents’ experience with medication?

JUROR NO. 47: It’s based on people working very hard for their money. He defrauded his company and his investors, and that’s not right.

THE COURT: Ma’am, we’re going to excuse you. Juror Number 52, how are you?

JUROR NO. 52: When I walked in here today I looked at him, and in my head, that's a snake—not knowing who he was. I just walked in and looked right at him and that's a snake.

BRAFMAN: So much for the presumption of innocence.

THE COURT: We will excuse Juror Number 52. Juror Number 67?

JUROR NO. 67: The fact that he raised the price of that AIDS medication, like, such an amount of money disgusts me. I don't think I'll ever be able to forget that. Who does that, puts profit and self-interest ahead of anything else? So it's not a far stretch that he could do what he's accused of.

THE COURT: Please go to the jury room and tell them you have been excused. Juror Number 70.

JUROR NO. 70: I have total disdain for the man. When you go back to how he was able to put so many children—

THE COURT: You have negative feelings?

JUROR NO. 70: Very.

THE COURT: Would those feelings prevent you from being fair to both sides in this case?

JUROR NO. 70: I can be fair to one side but not the other.

THE COURT: We will excuse you from this jury. Juror Number 77.

JUROR NO. 77: From everything I've seen on the news, everything I've read, I believe the defendant is the face of corporate greed in America.

BRAFMAN: We would object.

JUROR NO. 77: You'd have to convince me he was innocent rather than guilty.

THE COURT: I will excuse this juror. Hello, Juror Number 125.

JUROR NO. 125: I've read extensively about Martin's shameful past and his ripping off sick people and it hits close to me. I have a mother with epilepsy, a grandmother with Alzheimer's, and a brother with multiple sclerosis. I think somebody that's dealt in those things deserves to go to jail.

THE COURT: Just to be clear, he's not being charged with anything relating to the pricing of pharmaceuticals.

JUROR NO. 125: I understand that, but I already sense the man is guilty.

THE COURT: Well, I'm going to excuse you. Juror Number 144, tell us what you have heard.

JUROR NO. 144: I heard through the news of how the defendant changed the price of a pill by up-selling it. I heard he bought an album from the Wu-Tang Clan for a million dollars.

THE COURT: The question is, have you heard anything that would affect your ability to decide this case with an open mind. Can you do that?

JUROR NO. 144: I don't think I can because he kind of looks like a dick.

THE COURT: You are Juror Number 144 and we will excuse you. Come forward, Juror Number 155.

JUROR NO. 155: I have read a lot of articles about the case. I think he is as guilty as they come.

THE COURT: Then I will excuse you from this case. Juror Number 10, please come forward.

JUROR NO. 10: The only thing I'd be impartial about is what prison this guy goes to.

THE COURT: Okay. We will excuse you. Juror 28, do you need to be heard?

JUROR NO. 28: I don't like this person at all. I just can't understand why he would be so stupid as to take an antibiotic which H.I.V. people need and jack it up five thousand percent. I would honestly, like, seriously like to go over there—

THE COURT: Sir, thank you.

JUROR NO. 28: Is he stupid or greedy? I can't understand.

THE COURT: We will excuse you. Juror 41, are you coming up?

JUROR NO. 41: I was looking yesterday in the newspaper and I saw the defendant. There was something about him. I can't be fair. There was something that didn't look right.

THE COURT: All right. I'm going to excuse you. Juror Number 59, come on up.

JUROR NO. 59: Your Honor, totally he is guilty and in no way can I let him slide out of anything because—

THE COURT: Okay. Is that your attitude toward anyone charged with a crime who has not been proven guilty?

JUROR NO. 59: It's my attitude toward his entire demeanor, what he has done to people.

THE COURT: All right. We are going to excuse you, sir.

JUROR NO. 59: And he disrespected the Wu-Tang Clan.

[Diagnosis]

## THE SEVEN-YEAR ITCH

*From a letter written by Patrick Leigh Fermor to Enrica Soma in 1961. Soma was a model and ballerina, and the wife of the director John Huston. Fermor was the author of numerous travel books and memoirs. The letter is included in Patrick Leigh Fermor: A Life in Letters, which was edited by Adam Sisman. It will be published in November by New York Review Books.*

**M**y darling Ricki,

1,000 thanks for your Paris letter, and apologies for delay. I've committed myself, only yesterday too,