SECRETARY STERN

Big Brother

"This war on terrorism is going to continue for an indefinite period of time." - Tom Ridge, first Secretary of Homeland Security

Terrorism. It's a politician's best friend. As long as there are terrorists, or at least, the threat of terrorists, Washington can do just about anything in the name of security.

You grew up in the shadow of 9/11, amongst daily reports of terrorists who wished to destroy our very way of life. You saw the fear, and you realized what everyone in Washington had also figured out: the only way an aspiring politician could advance in this new world was to play on that fear. Exploit it. Make yourself the only thing standing between America and apocalypse.

The college you attended was in a small town. During your senior year, the mayor announced her retirement. You knew your chance had come. You didn't run for mayor - instead, you organized an investigation into a growing terror cell at your school. The Students for Diversity in Education looked innocent enough from the outside, but an awful lot of them were foreign students from the Middle East, and it was easy enough to create an incident around a package sent to club headquarters by an Iranian parent. People at your college started talking about you, and you got a friend of yours to put an ad in the local paper for you as a write-in candidate. You won in a landslide.

From there, it was a ladder to climb, one step at a time. You had a reputation as tough on terror right from the start, which set the drumbeat for every campaign you've ever run. The plan was simple: your opponent wasn't malicious, just hopelessly naive. Terrorists are all around us, and for some reason, only you amongst all the candidates were able to see them. It worked every time.

Finally, you got the phone call from President Carroll. Your moment had come: you were to become the Secretary of Homeland Security under the new administration.

Since you've been in office, things have gotten easier. Terrorists actually *are* all around you, and it turns out the tactics don't change very much when you're actually fighting them as opposed to fighting manufactured enemies. Real terrorists fight back more, though. That's why you've been a big supporter of military research into publicly-palatable weapons to be used in such cases.

One project you're particularly excited about is Resonance. It's a genetically-engineered virus that was originally developed to treat Braiden's Syndrome, but evidently has crowd control applications as well. It's completely nonviolent, totally controllable, and 100% effective. With the help of science, you can perfectly control large groups of people at once. It's a politician's wet dream.

Secretary Highmore is the Secretary of Defense. As a business-person, Highmore thinks that the way to address everything is through numbers and calculations. Highmore doesn't understand that people respond to emotions: primarily fear and anger.

Advisor Cahill is the National Security Advisor. The two of you get along pretty well. Cahill is almost as scared of the terrorists as you would like all the citizens to be, and has been a great driver for the fear that keeps you in power.

Speaker Lancing is a vocal opponent of Project Resonance, and President Carroll, in the opposing party. The speaker of the house has a great deal of power, which means Lancing has the clout to cause a lot of trouble for the project.

Undersecretary Bourne ran against you when you were first running for congress. The poor idealist didn't have a chance. You leaked information about a "terrorist cell" at just the right time in the campaign, and Bourne came away looking weak. You rode the anger straight to victory.

Major Roderick was supposed to be speaking to you about Resonance. You don't remember whether you ever got around to hearing what Roderick had to say.

Agent Bale is the chief of the secret service assigned to the protection of the preisent. Bale is excellent at the job because of a remarkable single-minded devotion to the task. You are the agent's direct superior in the chain of command.