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Worm castings: News you should not abuse

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BLUE GRASS, Va.—By now most Americans know that Dennis “The Worm” Rodman accompanied me last week to my exclusive interview with Kim Jong-un, Supreme Leader of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

I got the lion’s share of American media attention, but Rodman, a member of the National Basketball Association’s Hall of Fame, did the heavy lifting when it was just the three of us drinking hot chocolate late at night with our feet up and our hair down. (This is a long-lost figure of speech in my case. In Rodman’s case, you never know what’s going on with his hair, or under it.)

I admit that I was skeptical about Rodman’s diplomatic skills, given his history of head-butting referees and kicking cameramen in their lower-abdominal viewfinders. But I had a hunch that his type of self-aware flamboyancy might find a brotherly response in Kim, who is rumored to jazz up his steamed rice with local, organic, hand-mined salt.

“What,” I asked Rodman before we left, “can you bring to the mission of improving relations between our two countries?”

“I can bridge the gap,” he said.

“Most people think you are a gap,” I said. “Do you have a plan?”

“Kim thinks he’s a brother. He likes hoops. He played in Switzerland where he went to boarding school under a false name. But he never learned street ball. I can show him the tricks—you know, how to bump and grab without getting caught, how to talk trash. Maybe he wants to do his hair green or pierce a few things. I’m like a role model; the kind of Daddy he always wanted.”

“What do you know about North Korea?”

“They need friends. I can relate to that. Kim’s a little over the top. I can relate to that, too. We’re both into annoying The Man.”

“Great credentials for a citizen diplomat,” I said. “OK. Come along, but don’t mess up my scoop interview.”

Kim met us in his kitchen late one night. The Supreme Leader was wolfing down Oreo DoubleStuf Chocolate Cremes. He wore sweats, Michael Jordan Retro 3s and a vintage Chicago Bulls cap.

Rodman presented him with an autographed “91” jersey from 1993 when he and the Bulls won the title. Kim gave Rodman a Soviet-era battle tank painted rainbow.

I gave Kim a half pint of Blue Grass maple syrup. Kim gave me a midget flashlight made in North Korea. “Batteries extra,” he laughed. “We don’t believe in sharing energy with the western media.”

Me: Let’s get right to it. Why are you such a big butt in your neighborhood?

Kim: Simple as fruitcake.

Me: You mean pie—simple as pie.

Kim: *You* mean pie; *I* mean fruitcake.

Me: Oh.

Rodman: Tatoos can get pretty complicated. You need a tat, Mr. Kim, I know the right guy in L.A.

Kim: Why am I a big butt, as you put it?

North Korea is a small, poor country. We’ve always been a vassal to our neighbors—China, Japan or Russia. Our only hope for independence is to be like a stinkbug, annoy everyone so they let us be.

Rodman: I’m down with that—annoying everyone. That was my NBA bread and butter. And that’s how I make a living today. Stinkbug should be my middle name.

Me: Why do you want nuclear weapons?

Kim: Why not? You have them. The Russians, the Chinese, the British and French, Pakistan, Israel. Why you all and not me? I want them for the same reason you have them.

Rodman: Man, you have nukes, no one mess with you.

Me: The more nukes around and the more fingers on buttons, the higher the risk that they will be used either on purpose or accidentally.

Kim: For us, having them is less risky than not having them. If we don’t have them, we’ll get...

Rodman: ...pushed around like some junkie dirt bag on the corner. But Mr. Kim...nukes are real expensive. Like more than all my nose rings. They’re not worth the money. All you ever get to do is hide ’em in holes in the ground.

Kim: They deter attack from enemies. That’s what the Cold War proved.

Rodman: Naw, man. Your nukes will be like nectar to all the bees in the CIA. If you do nukes, those dudes will swarm you without you knowing

it. They'll mess up your computers with viruses and voo-doo rays from space. They'll spike your green tea with LSD.

Kim: You serious, bro? They still do that stuff.

Rodman: Man, I studied up. You do best by putting your dimes into food, not nukes. Like, you can feed 500,000 of your 24 million homies for 50 years for what it costs to make one big bomb and a missile.

Kim: Feed 'em what, bro?

Rodman: Like food and stuff.

Kim: Now, I feed them ideas. None of that Twinkie dinky stuff here. I've cut out all fat, sugar, salt and protein from the North Korean diet. You won't see any fatty woo-woos in my hood.

Me: So you're telling me for the record that there's no famine here, only a compulsory, amped-up Mediterranean diet for everyone?

Kim: Well, not exactly everyone. I eat North Korean and Western—Texas barbeque, corn dogs, fried Coke, Ben & Jerry's Americone Dream. You know, a balance.

Rodman: Hey, if I was running North Korea, I'd bag the nukes and get the Colonel in here. Didn't Marx say something like KFC Fiery Buffalo Hot Wings are the opiate of the masses?

Kim: Sort of. An 8-Piece Bucket and basketballs—you think that'll keep my people shut down?

Rodman: Works for us. Feed your peeps, and you won't need all those prison camps.

Kim: You mean health spas.

Rodman: Right, whatever.

Me: Prison camps.

Kim: They're health spas, like destination resorts. Those in residence are clients, not prisoners. They're free to leave whenever they want, though none do. Each volunteers to receive special benefits for life—free housing, clothes, food, education, health care and meaningful work. North Korea has the lowest labor costs in Asia, and once trained our people never leave for higher-paying jobs.

Rodman: Who you foolin', man? The way you doin' now, you giving the folks a beef with you.

Kim: You think I should bag the spas?

Rodman: Yeah, let people be free.

Kim: How free?

Rodman: Real free, like I want to be.

Kim: Worm, you've given me much to think about.

Rodman: Kim, you awesome, too. Maybe you and me, we do some casinos over here or a reality show.

Kim: You, on the other hand, [pointing his finger at me, Scoop Seltzer] are just another lap dog for Wall Street and its political puppets in Washington. You get an all-expenses-paid spa membership for life whenever you want to activate it.

Me: Should I take the flashlight you gave me when I go?

Kim: Only if you want to see what's coming.

And that's the true story of how Dennis Rodman spoke truth to power and may have changed modern history.

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