

# The Isle of Corn

## A Brief Tell of Dreams Gone awry

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By

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Once, not so long ago and not so far away there was a land called the Isle of Corn. The isle had soil that was perfect for growing corn. Corn was so important to the island that their currency was based on it and even there dollars were referred to as Kernels. The Corn Islanders build their capital city on the banks of a wash that ran into a beautiful cove on the east coast of the isle and named it Washtown. The Isle had become very wealthy due to exporting corn and corn based products to the other islands and was able to build a beautiful palace for their president, which they named the White Palace. The other Islands became very jealous of the Isle of Corn's fortune and resented it even though they did sell the corn to them at a very reasonable price.

As fate would have it, a small family consisting of a father, mother and young son named, Marvin Talker Cornfield, moved to the Isle Of Corn to find their fortune. While growing up, the young man noticed that some of the Corn Islanders had many bushels, while so many more Corn Islanders had but one. This appeared be totally unfair to him, and reminded him of how the Other Islanders had so little while the Corn Islanders had so much. What bothered him the most, was no one seemed to care, not even the ones that had less.

As he grew up and went to school, it became clear he was very intelligent and could speak eloquently. He developed a reputation of having a silver tongue that could speak golden words and gained the nickname of Marvelous Talker. At a young age he wrote an article that was published in the newspaper that spelled out his dream of an ideal nation crowned with fairness. The top educators of the island who formed the Guild of Learned Educators presented him a monetary award and trophy for his article. The News Paper Editors Guild also presented him a medal and a college scholarship for his eloquent article.

As he continued his education, his reputation spread near and far. While in college, he ran for class president and won every year he ran for the office. He later ran for county senator and easily won. He received constant news coverage and became well known to all on the Island.

The Guild of Learned Educators and the News Paper Editors Guild pushed him to run for president even though he had not been born on the isle. He was told that it didn't matter since he was so well liked and that no one would notice or care about that rule, particularly since the News Editors told him that they would not include it in any of their stories and would ridicule and discredit anyone who did. Fortunately for him this proved to be true. With the support of the newspapers he ran and won the presidency of the Isle of Corn with ease.

On the first day of his presidency he appointed a Minister of Corn Distribution to redistribute the corn fairly. He gave him the power to use the military and island police to guarantee that his will would be done as he deemed appropriate. He then signed a decree stating that if anyone refuses to give up any of their requested corn, they would lose it all down to the last kernel. As it was ordered, so it was fulfilled.

As the first year progress all was more than well. There was an overabundance of meat of all kinds, fruit and vegetable were plentiful. There was so much bread that some had to be thrown away. There was such a demand for more money that President Cornfield had the mint print more Kernels with no consideration of the volume of corn to back it. He thought that why should the currency be held back by the lack of corn, after all the Kernel should stand on its own and needs nothing to back it. In all respects everything was getting better every day. So much for the nay sayers that had opposed him he proudly thought they can't begin to stand up to my golden words, after all who would even bother to listen.

Early in the second year there was a frantic knock on the White Palace door. One of the aids answered it and discovered it was the Minister of Corn Distribution in a total panic. He quickly led him to the president who was playing croquette in the back yard. President Cornfield told them to wait until he finished his game and then he would talk with him then, "After all one must have one's priorities." He said.

An hour later, President Cornfield casually came in to talk with the Minister. The Minister explained that there was no corn coming in from the farms and that the people were getting upset, which was starting to lead to a panic. President Cornfield told the Minister not to worry. He then called the army and told them to come by and pick up the Minister and himself. When they arrived, President Cornfield told them that his plan was to go out to the farms and confiscate the corn and punish the corn farmers with a great tax for harming his county. After all no one could stand between the President Cornfield and his dream.

It took only a short time to get out to the corn plains, but to his surprise the fields only had weeds. Granted they were pretty weeds but bitter smelling. As his convoy continued to drive through the corn plain he only found abandoned dilapidated houses, rusting equipment and an abundance of bitter weed with no corn what so ever. Finally he saw an old man sitting on the porch of an old farm house reading a magazine. He quickly turned in, got out and approached the surprised man. President Cornfield demanded "Farmer, where is the corn?" The old man looked at him with dismay and said "I am not the farmer, only a farm hand. The farmer left months ago as did all the other farm hand." The President said he did not care about that, he just wanted to know where the corn was. The old man asked "Where have you been? Have you had your head in a hole in the ground and not know what has happened?" This angered The President Cornfield and he said "I am the President and you cannot be rude to me or you will regret it!!!" The farm hand glared at him, got up, holding the magazine, walked down the porch stares and walked out behind the barn. The President became

incensed by the behavior of the farm hand, but followed him to the back side of the barn. There he saw twelve siloes. The farm hand walked to the door on the first one and swung open the door. The squeaky hinges echoed loudly through the silo. The door then slammed into the side of the silo causing another loud resounding hollow echo. The President looked in and saw only two corn birds and a corn rat lying dead on the floor. The President asked the farm hand what happened and he replied that they had starved due to lack of corn. He then continued to open each silo, each with the same results. President Cornfield said that he did not care about the birds and the rats, he wanted to know what had happened to the corn. The Farm hand glared at the President and exclaimed "Your people came and took it all. The farmer tried to explain that this was planting corn, but your people would not listen. They said we were selfish and evil and that we would not get to keep any corn what so ever per your edict." He went on to say that there was no corn left on the Island, that it had all been taken and eaten, so there would never be corn again unless they could get some seed elsewhere." The farmer then handed him the magazine he had been holding, it was the Corn Island Gazette which was open to an article that was headlined "NO CORN LEFT TO PLANT, IS STARVATION INEVITABLE?"

President Cornfield turned and walked back to car. He could not understand how this could have happen. He turned to the Minister of Corn and asked "What do we do now?" The Minister replied "The fruit and vegetable farmers, they should have plenty, we took nothing from them last time, so they owe us this time." With a wave of President Cornfield's arm they loaded up and off they drove to the fruit and vegetable plains. Unfortunately these farms also look barren. There were no fruits or vegetables, only bitter weed there and it wasn't growing at all that well. As were the corn farm houses, so were these, all run down and abandoned, surrounded only by rusting equipment. Finally they saw a young man loading his car at an old rundown farm house. They stopped and walked up to the surprised looking young man. "Where are the vegetable and where are the fruits?" demanded President Cornfield. The young man explained that the soil in these areas wasn't very fertile and needed manure to make it grow. He explained that they knew that the corn crop had failed and that there would be a food shortage. They therefor had quickly planted every seed they had. Once it started growing they went to the ranchers and dairy farmers to get the manure as they had in the past. When they got there, they were told they could not get any manure, not at any price and to take their valueless Kernels and leave. Without the manure, everything died leaving no seed to plant ever again.

Now President Cornfield was more than angry. He knew the ranchers and dairy farmer had voted against him, but he was surprised they would ruin the nation just to take his beloved White Palace from him. This was now personal. He ordered the army to follow him to the ranch land.

As they started driving though the ranch and dairy land, things started looking ominously familiar. All they saw was poorly growing bitter weed and no animals. The ranch houses were dilapidated and abandoned, surrounded only by rusting equipment. They drove for hours before they spotted a family loading up a car at a dairy farm, so they pulled in and stopped abruptly. President Cornfield approached the man and demanded "Why wouldn't you sell the fruit and vegetable farmers any manure, and where are the animals?" The dairy farmer looked at the President with dismay and said "They are all gone, sold for meat or starved. What planet are you living on, or are you just ignorant?" His response aggravated President Cornfield and he responded in kind "I am the Government, you dare not insult me or question my intelligence!" The farmer closed his eye briefly and then turned and walked up the hill behind the house. This behavior further angered the President

but he followed him to the top of the hill. There the farmer pointed down into the valley. The President gazed down into the valley and saw many bones scattered across the valley floor partially hidden in the bitter weed. The farmer turned to President and said "No animals, no manure." President Cornfield demanded to know what had happened to the animals. The farmer answered "starved!" The President with a dismayed expression on his face exclaimed "Starved from what? There is plenty of greenery down there! How could they starve?" The farmer explained that animals could not live on bitter weed alone. If that is all they eat it will poison them. He then, without muttering another word, turned and walked back to the other side of the farm house and on behind the barn. The President quickly followed and was astonished when he rounded the corner of the barn. There he saw twelve siloes, just like the ones he had seen earlier at the corn farm. The farmer dramatically opened each silo just as the other farmer had and with the same results. All were empty. The farmer then explained "If you mix corn with bitter weed the animals do very well, but without corn they die. As the animals started to die we sold the best to the meat markets at a reduced price. That is why meat was over abundant and the price was low. The rest simply died; there was nothing else we could. There are no more animals to breed so unless we can get animals elsewhere there will never be any more farm animals on this island."

The President silently pondered "What can I do? The problems appear to all be based on my corn decision. I can't blame the incompetent Minister of Corn since I appointed him. Who can I hold accountable so I do not lose my beloved White Palace. I know that's what they will want after all they wanted me to fail. Maybe there is another food source." He turned to the Minister of Corn and asked "Are there any other food sources we can nationalize so we don't lose our jobs?" the Minister pondered for a long while and then said "What about the wheat and bean farmers, they do not rely on corn in any way. We can declare a national emergency and confiscate those resources and we will look like heroes. They may even crown you king for life!" President Cornfield smugly said "Let's do it! By the way what happened to the trucks? Didn't we have a lot more of them when we started." The Minister said that they had run low on gas and had turned back to find fuel. They should be back with the convoy shortly. The President ordered that they should stop at the next filling station on the way to the wheat and bean prairie just to be safe.

As they drove toward the prairie they started looking for filling stations, but each one they past was closed. One by one trucks and cars started running out of gas and dropping out of the convoy. Finally they saw an open filling station and stopped. They asked for gas but the operator said he was unable to put any gas in their cars. The President knew that the refinery companies had voted against him and was extremely unhappy that they would risk the nation's wellbeing just to get him out of his beloved White Palace. The owner of the filling station assured him it was not that, it was simple there was no electricity. The owner thought for a minute and said "I think I have a bucket that we might be able to lower into the tank and get the gas out." He quickly ran in and got the bucket and it work perfectly. He was able to fill a few of the cars but had none left for the remaining vehicles. President Cornfield then ordered the Minister to pay for the gas. The Minister offered to pay the owner with Kernels. The owner shook his head and refused saying "Kernels are based on corn and there is no corn anywhere, they have no value what so ever, but I will take two of your cars and one truck." This insulted the president, after all a Kernel was a Kernel and what did it matter if there was no corn behind it. The President wanted to arrest the owner for his unacceptable behavior but since he had lost all the military trucks along the way, there was nothing he could do but agree. Besides, he thought, once the military trucks get back we will send them back to the filling station get the cars back and he will pay a dear price for this insult.

Since there was no more he could do for now, off they went toward the prairie. As they drove deeper into the prairie all they saw were red dirt fields with nothing growing at all, not even bitter weed. As they strained to see if there were any farm houses in sight they were engulfed in a fierce dust storm that lasted for hours. As it finally past and the air started to clear they did see one house in the distance. They cautiously approached and saw an older couple with a younger couple with kids. They were loading a car by strapping items to the roof. There was a rocking chair strapped to the trunk and an old trailer over loaded with all their possessions. Memories of the book *Grapes of Wrath* shot through his head. President Cornfield then approached cautiously and asked what had happen to the wheat and beans. The farmer explained; "This land is always dry, so we have to pump water from deep in the ground. We had heard about the other crop failures and knew we had to plant all we could so the islanders would not starve. We watered the soil and then planted all our seed, every single one. Once it started to grow we again turned on the pumps, but nothing happened. We had no electricity and haven't had any for weeks. No water, no crops, it all died. Now we have no seed to plant ever again, so we must leave." President Cornfield was in shock. He wanted to know why the electric company wanted to harm the country just to get him. He though these people must truly be evil. He turned to the Minister and said, "Let's head back to Washtown and get the power back on. Someone's head will roll over this, but at least the islanders will think of me as a hero!"

It was a difficult getting back to Washtown. With the power off, the traffic lights were not working and there were numerous traffic jams and wrecks. They saw factory after factory closed. They saw stores that were closed with signs in the window saying closed due to no power. They saw one store sign that showed shirts priced at one Kernel, that was marked through and written in was two Kernels, that was also marked through replaced with 50 Kernels. Finally that also was marked through and the sign stated, "Will barter for anything of value for shirts, NO WORTHLESS KERNELS ACCEPTED." President Cornfield was very angry and was really ready to go after the owner of the power company. As they pulled into the parking lot they saw people carrying out chairs, paper, computers, and even light bulbs. He asked what was going on. One person stopped and explained "We were paid in Kernels and they are worthless, we must have something to trade for food."

The President went into the plant and started looking for the owner. He found him in his office loading up everything he could into a cart. President Cornfield asked what he was doing and the man replied "I need something to trade for food, if I can find any at all and besides there is no fuel to burn to generate electricity." The President knew the new boilers used refined fuel but he also knew the old boilers did not, so he demanded "Why don't you use the old boilers, I remember when they used to really smoke up the town, why not do that again." The owner look at him long and hard and then pointed out the window. The President walked to the window and saw dozens of large square siloes. He sighed with relief because he knew these weren't corn siloes and he couldn't be blamed for this. Again he demanded "Why don't you fire up those older boilers and get the power on that way, I know those don't run on corn so don't try to bluff me." The owner replied "Alright wise guy, you got me there. Although they may not run on corn proper, they do run on corn cobs. No corn, no cobs. So stuff that up your kazoo!" The President had never had anyone talk to him like that. This man was large and angry. So President Cornfield quickly turned around and left. The President knew he would be back though and next time with the army and the owner would surely suffer for causing this indignity.

Now it was off to the refinery. He knew they had worked against him in the election and now it was payback time. As he and the Minister reached the refinery, they were stunned. The parking lot

was covered in dust, the doors and windows were banging in the wind. The gate and fences were all in disrepair. The guard shack was lying on its side, destroyed. The President cautiously entered the building and followed the signs to the owner's office. There they found a man standing in front of his family huddling in the corner. He was holding a lamp as a club and was standing firm ready to defend his family. The President did not identify himself, but demanded to know why the refinery was not working. The man replied by pointing out the windows. As the President turned he saw hundreds of the painfully familiar corn siloes. He asked the owner "Are they all empty?" The owner replied "Yes, the President's men have already taken it all. I tried to explain this was corn to create fuel and chemicals to run our factories and cars. They would not listen. They said we were selfish and evil and that we would only get to keep a very little of our corn. We did all we could to make it last, but it simply wasn't enough. If I ever meet the President I will hit him with this lamp as hard as I can!" At this point President Cornfield was glad he had not introduced himself. He quickly turned and walked away before he could be recognized in the low light.

The President and the Minister of Corn headed back to the White Palace, but the car ran out of fuel a mile from the White Palace. There were many angry crowds walking the street so they had to sneak down allies and come in the old back gate. He tried to call all his other ministers, including the General of the Army and the Admiral of the Navy, but the phone would not work due to no power. At this point his silver tongue was beginning to tarnish, the golden words were slowly turning to lead and Marvelous Talker had become Bumbling Mutterer. He now had to send runners to members of his cabinet to get them into the White Palace for the meeting.

Once all were there, he called the meeting to order. President Cornfield wanted to ask for help from the Other Islanders, but the General of the Armies said that the Other Islanders don't like us and if they know we are weak they will attack. President Cornfield disagreed saying that we had given them thousands of free bushels of corn and they would be thankful since we had humbled ourselves before them. He said I will phone them and let them know what is going on. With my silver tongue, golden words and vision of my island I will persuade them to help me. He waived away all other objections and reach for the phone. As he tried to dial the phone, a puzzled look started to show upon his face. The General of the Armies sniped "No power, no phone." The President replied "Then I will broadcast my message via radio." The General then said "No power no radio." The President replied "Then I will get the publishers to finish printing my new book and we will fly over to the Other Island. There I will hand out my books and talk directly to the people." The General responds "Two problems, one no power they cannot print the books and two no fuel, the airplane will not fly." The President in anger responds "Then I will email copies of my book in eBook format" The General interrupts in dismay "No power, no email, no 'e' anything!" President Cornfield stands before them with a blank expression pondering what to do next. He looks out the window and stares at the new Navy ships but dismisses that idea since he finally understood there is no fuel, none at all. He then looks at the old ships and thinks to himself "They don't use refined fuel." and says out loud "We can use the old ships, they do not use refined fuel." The Admiral interrupts and says "But they do use corn cobs, no corn, no cobs." President Cornfield is totally frustrated and turns and stares out the window toward the sea. Suddenly he sees ships on the horizon and exclaims "See, look at the ships, they have heard of our plight and have sent help!" The Admiral looks through his binoculars and replies "Those are war ships, they are coming to invade." The President turns to the General and orders him to call up the troops. The General replies "You left them out on the road with no fuel and no way to get home. You have assured that there is no way to get them here to defend us." The president turns to the Admiral and orders him to call up the Navy; after all they do have guns even if the ships can't sail. The

Admiral replies "The ship needs power to operate the guns, no fuel, no power. The men must raise the white flag and abandon the ships" President Cornfield hollers back at them "If you will not do it, thin I will save my Island by myself. I will negotiate a peace with them on my own" The Minister of Corn in astonishment asked how? He replied "With my silver tongue, my golden words and my dream of what this country will be, that will convince them to unselfishly help us. I will not give up my White Palace!" The General and Admiral replied in unison "Your White Palace? I thought this was the Corn Islander's White Palace" After the comment, they all stood up and left the Whit Palace in disgust leaving the President on his own. In retrospect, this probably was a bad decision.

The President walks down to the pier to welcome and to negotiate with the Other Islanders. As they arrived they greet each other. The Other Islander Leader approaches to start a conversation, but the President, filled with confidence, starts to talk and explain his vision and ask for their help. The Leader said that was all very nice and that they have brought corn, animals, seeds of all kinds and even manure, which may not be needed since the Island appears to have an abundance of manure. The President was a bit confused by the final comment but continued "Thanks, now let's get that corn unloaded so my people can eat" The Leader replies "Oh you misunderstand, the corn is not for eating, or at least not by people. This corn is for planting, feeding the animals and for use at the refinery. The animals are for breeding not eating and all the other seed and beans are also for planting, not eating. We have bought plenty of food for eating, but it is for us and not the Corn Islanders. But before we can plant the corn, you must give use the corn land to plant on." President Cornfield replies "Well if that is necessary and you will ask for no more. Oh most importantly, I must be able to keep my White Palace." "Well that is acceptable as long as you are President of the Corn Island people on Corn Island. Additionally there is more, since the dairy farmers and ranchers have no animal, we need that land also." "Well as long as I keep my Palace." "Oh and since the vegetable and fruit farmers cannot afford to buy the manure, we also need that land." "Well as long as I get to keep my Palace." The Leader continues "And since the refineries cannot afford to buy the corn we will also need the refineries." "Well as long as I keep my Palace." On and on it went until all was agreed to.

A year passes and all is well. The corn is high, all the farms and ranches are in full swing. There is food for all, fuel for all and power for all. The houses are looking well-kept and the people are happy. President Cornfield realizes that it's time for his reelection, which he believes will be a shoe in since all is well in the land. He goes to meet with the Other Island Governor General to work out how the election will take place. He explains how his now ready to reimplement his dream of equal corn for all again, but to do so requires him to be reelected. The Governor General says not so quick. You are the President of the Corn Islanders and these people are Other Islanders. The President looks shocked. The Governor General says drive around the Island and see for yourself, so he does. Look as he might, he see virtually no native Corn Islanders. Once in a while he sees one begging at a street corner, sleeping under a bridge or being loaded into the back of an army truck. He returns to the White Palace and notices his stuff and his family are being moved out to the lawn. He asked the Governor General what is going on and he replies. "Well per our agreement, which stated "as long as you are the president of the Corn Islanders you can live in the White Palace", but you are no longer the President of the Island, you are only the President of the Corn Islanders, so you must go be with them." The Presidents limousine is summoned and pulls up to the front of the Palace. The President walks over to get in, but the Governor General pushes him aside and says "No this car is now the Governor General's car. You, your family and your possessions will have to ride in the back of the truck. President Cornfield climes into the back of the truck and off they go. They drive through the

corn farm land with its beauty and on through the rich ranch land, the wheat plains and on into the mountains to the desert canyon lands. Down they go into a deep canyon where it gets dryer and dryer and hotter and hotter. Finally they approach a tall chain link fence with barbed wire on top and a sign that reads "Corn Islander Internment Camp". The armed guard salutes and opens the gate. In they drive deeper and deeper into the canyon. Finally he sees people, Corn Islanders. They are skin and bone and poorly clothed. Their eyes are hollow and faces have no expression. As the President Looks ahead he sees a small shanty town with a large grave yard stretching to the saltin lake. He can see that there are many people in the grave yard digging. Some are digging new graves. Some are robbing old ones. The caravan final stops at a platform nestled between the town and the grave yard. The President climbs out and helps his family out, they are all crying. The Governor General tells the President that here is where he will make his opening speech for his campaign. The Governor General speaks to the President's wife and she smiles and nods her head. He tells the President that he will allow his wife and kids to sit in the limousine since it hot outside and they will be cooler inside the car. They place his suitcases by the platform and the people immediately start tearing them apart looking for anything they can use or trade. One of the escorting soldiers announced to the crowd that President Cornfield would like to speak to them and then exits the stage. The crowd now gathers around the platform hollering and screaming at him, blaming him for all their woes. He looks for the guards but they are leaving with the caravan along with his wife and kids. As he watched, he sees his wife pull off her ring and lets the Governor General slide his ring onto her finger. He now stands alone, only with his silver tongue, golden words and idealized dream to defend himself. It proved to be a poor defense. It was the last time any saw or heard of him.

Many years have passed and the camp is long gone as are the native Corn Islanders, at least most of them.

Today the corn is high; the Island is green and beautiful. Food and fuel are is plentiful and the islanders are happen, except for a very few native Corn Islanders that still beg on the street, live under the bridge on the edge town and try to hide from the police.

Every year the graduating seniors take a trip to the old internment camp. They are told it is so they will learn a valuable lesson. The fence is gone and there now is stone arch across the entrance. On outfacing surface is carved the following words.

**LESSONS LEARNED THE HARD WAY ARE NEVER FORGOTTEN  
BUT LESSONS LEARNED FROM OTHERS MAY BE MORE VALUABLE**

Inside the camp at the site of the old platform stands a monument. On this monument there is a carved inscription which all the students are required to read. It says:

**ON THIS SPOT  
PRESIDENT M. T. CORNFIELD'S  
DREAM MET REALITY,  
REALITY WON!**

It never fails that one student will ask, "Does reality always win?" The teacher without fail responds "Reality is like Mother Nature. If you treat her nicely and learn her lessons well, she will be kind and generous. If you ignore her and mistreat her, she can be cruel and vindictive. Either way, sooner or later she always wins."

Another student will ask, "What about dreaming, is life worth living without having a dream?. The teacher will answer, "Everyone must have a dream. A dream can lead you to great things, if you keep your feet firmly planted in the truth, your dreams will come true and you will keep your island."

As they leave the site and approach the stone arch at the entrance of the camp, there is another inscription written upon it facing inward toward the camp for all to read as they leave. The Other Islanders consider this so important that each student is required to read this inscription aloud one at a time.

**A PEOPLE WHO CONSUME THEIR PLANTING CORN WILL LOSE THEIR WORLD  
A PEOPLE WHO PLANT THEIR PLANTING CORN WILL GAIN THE WORLD AND ALL THAT IS IN IT**

So far every student remembers these words and takes them to heart. They know as long as they see the truth, understand it and live it, they will keep their island and their dreams. If they fail to heed the lesson, leaving reality behind, they know they too will follow the path of the native Corn Islanders.

# THE END

## IT MAY BE CLOSER THAN YOU THINK