

# THE GREAT RESIST

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FISHER SERIES  
BOOK ONE

JC BLOM





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THE GREAT RESIST, by J.C. Blom

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The lid of his laptop provided some counterpoint, and the keyboard lit up like the eyes of a green dragon. He did not get a chance to log in, for in a flash, a picture appeared, filling the entire screen and flickering, calling out that danger was imminent. Drops of sweat appeared on his forehead.

Hacked again! Another photo...

Annoyed, he pushed the laptop away. His glasses clattered to the floor under the desk. He pushed his hands off against the desk, causing his chair to ride backwards hard, and came to a halt with a bang to the bookcase, precisely next to the shelf on which the bottles stood. In an automatic motion, he reached for his name-sakes and two best friends with a swing: John Barr and Johnnie Walker. Using the napkin meant for a damp bottle of champagne, he wiped his forehead and lifted the lid of the silver bucket with the gold logo of Fisher Pharmaceuticals. The ice cubes tinkled pleasantly against the glass. The burning liquid not only numbed his mouth. His head stilled, eyes glancing around nervously as if

the culprit was hidden in one of the bookcases that reached up to the high ceiling adorned with ornamental mouldings, all custom-made to match the style of his stature and character. The picture stuck in his memory like a fly on a sticky fly trap.

That lout! What does he want to achieve with this now? Movies went by in his mind, showing chases by paparazzi and frenzied people bivouacked in front of his house. And on top of that came this daily ritual; being chased by photos that appeared on all his devices.

His inside pocket vibrated. Disoriented by the alcohol, he clumsily reached for his cell phone.

“Hey John, what’s up?”

“Hey Philip boy, how good of you to call. Now that you ask..., it’s terrible.” He looked again at the ice circling in the golden liquid and wondered if it was wise to answer the phone when he was in such a state

“Tell...”

“As I told you before, those pictures popping up on all my devices, you know...?”

“Yes, you told me that the other day.”

“I’ve changed my passwords several times, and it keeps going on. Even an IT company can’t trace the hacker.”

“Boy, that’s a good one, then.”

“Indeed... I would have liked to have employed one of those in the past,” John said, sighing, “I feel trapped in my own house.”

“In that respect, you’re not alone. There are millions of people in quarantine.” It remained silent.

“Sorry, but I can’t feel sorry for you, John. I can only stand behind my clients who are quite damaged. You will have to pull yourself together and put things in order.”

John took another sip. “If only it were that simple.” His voice

cracked. He cleared his throat and coughed a few times as he held the phone high above his head and continued, “Drones are flying over the house here, and I don’t know by God who is watching me, whether they are good or bad. I still can’t get a clear picture of how it happened.”

“It’s about time, John.” Said Philip gruffly and without a shred of sympathy. “We’re three years old, and nothing has progressed. You need to get yourself under control, or I can’t keep doing this business for you.”

John groaned, rubbed his eyes, and then looked through the window where a heron had just perched beside the pool. He squeezed his eyes together to think clearly and heaved another deep sigh.

“Yes, Philip, I need to pull myself together. I know.”

“I’ll visit you soon to discuss some things. Make sure you get it clear, okay?”

“Yeah, man, see you then.”

He looked at the picture on his laptop again. Still reasonably sober, he was confronted with this picture that had jolted him. It was all too much for him. The movies in his head came one after another: images of people suffering from neurological disorders, soccer professionals who suddenly dropped dead, and deformed babies. Empty streets at the time of the first lockdowns, pictures of people on balconies, making music and talking to each other from such a distance, were locked in their homes, angry and sad people who had lost their jobs or their businesses. Large demonstrations and riots broke out after the mandatory QR code was introduced. As if someone was sitting across from him listening to his thoughts, he shrugged as he had learned to let go of worries, but he remained frustrated. They needed a scapegoat, and he had become one of them. His fists came down hard on the desk.

Everything screamed inside. Those idiots! Who would believe the truth out of his mouth when the world condemned him in advance? He regretted his choices and that he had been so naïve. If only he could turn back time thirty years. If I had studied surgery, everything would have turned out differently. Instead, he was told, “No, unfortunately, Mr Fisher, you are out. There is still room in pharmacy,” the lady in the administration had said, “or in business economics, there is room there too.” He felt that the cause was his non-elite background because he only saw the little guys from wealthy parents hopping around at those studies: no brains, but money enough to pay for their studies and even take a few years longer. With the scholarship he received, he had to continue and had no choice but to choose another study; he couldn’t wait another year until he was accepted. Eventually, he realised that he would never be accepted at all.

His strict Christian upbringing had often left him conflicted while studying pharmacy. He still heard his father’s voice condemning and sternly telling him that people should not go to a doctor or take medicine because they were denying the Lord. He had thought about it for four years. Should Christians not consult doctors? He concluded that God created humans as intelligent beings and allowed them to develop medicines and learn how to repair their bodies. There is nothing wrong with applying this knowledge and these skills for physical healing. He concluded that doctors could be seen as a gift from God to people. A way by which God brings healing and restoration. And with that, he had justified it to himself and thus was finally able to end the discussion with his father, who had steered the other way, for he had never before been contradicted in that way by his son.

He reflected on the company he had founded after college, Fisher Pharmaceuticals. It had grown hard in the beginning. He



envisioned Bianca at their first meeting, the love of his life. They were like molasses and pancakes and married within a year. His parents were members of the black church and, to put it mildly, could not appreciate that she was pregnant during their marriage. “You should be ashamed of yourself,” they had said the moment there was a line behind them to congratulate the bride and groom. All the guests had fallen silent and turned to them to watch the scandalous scene. He had looked deeply into his father and mother’s eyes in turn and thanked them for the parents they had been to him. Because of the stable upbringing, they had given him, he could finish his studies, he had said and then kindly requested that they leave their wedding party because this was not the day or the time to be put in the penalty box. He was a grown man, and they just had to respect that. His father could not have failed to finish his argument that it was outrageous that it had not been a church blessing. They found that all the more shameful and refused to shake their hands and congratulate them. He had not seen them since and had learned through word of mouth that his parents had died of corona five years ago during the first outbreak. Looking back on his childhood, the only holy thing he had learned from it was that he felt blessed that he could think for himself, which made him feel liberated. He was disgusted with those pessimists and doom-sayers. He would rather not live like his parents. Not only that, but he didn’t want to be poor and settle for a satisfying sandwich. He was going to do things differently!

Shortly after, their son was born. He had been happy, and yet he wanted more.

Always more, more, more. He hated that feeling now, greed and desire for power and money. That’s why he had devoured success books and attended costly workshops with success gurus. Businesspeople from all over the world came there with the desire

to become even more prosperous. And he wanted that too. He had learned to turn off his emotions by purposefully scolding people. And gradually, he became the dreaded CEO. Tons of money he had subsequently made had grown his company to over five hundred employees with offices in several countries. Until then, he had been turned over to a top executive by a commissioner who had much say in Fisher's management. A short phone call, "That person is coming along, and you should hire him." From the tone, he could tell that no dissent was tolerated. He just had to put up with it.

Own company, my hula. He had had nothing more to say in the period after his company had grown large, and it was required by law to have a board. He had nothing more to say about what was produced in the lab and nothing more to tell about his staff. This so-called top manager kept some brutal sales techniques. He instructed the marketing people to ensure doctors were rewarded with gifts if they prescribed Fisher Pharmaceuticals drugs. In retrospect, it turned out that this was the marketing followed by all pharmaceutical companies worldwide.

What he had expected happened. After a few years, the misery began, his company was fined for fraud, and he had to pay millions in damages due to the severe side effects that certain drugs had caused and made people even sicker than they already were. The company was on the precipice of bankruptcy, and the board was suddenly unavailable.

How particularly striking all that had been. I learned from it, he thought. He was still proud that he had immediately taken back the reins and deregistered all board members from the Chamber of Commerce. Then he found the right people among his staff to serve on the board. The company then flourished again, making good medicine and restoring its reputation. Until the moment a

man entered his office without an appointment. A strange bird. Black sunglasses, and hat, and a musty-smelling black suit. It was right around the time *The Matrix* was coming out. It was as if he had walked into that film. After his monotonous talk about what John had to produce and what he should and shouldn't do in manufacturing drugs, he had signalled to the guy that he could fuck off. With a redhead, John had shown this so-called Agent Smith the door. When the door had closed behind him, he had put a dent in it.

From then on, the threats began. A man from the CDC called, who told him they had heard that he did not want to cooperate but that if he still wanted approval for the new drugs they were developing, he had to do what was asked of him. They were working with foreign authorities who had to approve the drugs for sale in the rest of the world. His back was against the wall, and he had no choice but to follow what was demanded of him. At least, that's what he thought at the time. He knew better by now.

Financially, he was doing well but felt torn between his sense of right and wrong. He was no longer the cheerful man he used to be. He was always on his guard because he was being watched.

That's how it had been in the early years. All outward appearances. A successful business, a big house, in the middle of the woods in Bilthoven. They drove the latest and most excellent cars. He owned a private jet, with which he visited most countries on business. But he was constantly afraid because what if people knew what was happening behind the scenes?

Bianca and Tom regularly travelled with him when it was a school holiday. Bianca had been okay with it if he had to travel alone. She had her pursuits. They had a gardener, a housekeeper, a team of secretaries in the office, and a personal assistant at home at his disposal.

He looked again at the picture on his desk. Now everything he loved was fucked up and gone.

“I’m leaving,” she had said. Her beloved Louis Vuitton suitcases, smelling of new leather, were piled beside her in the hall. Startled, he had begged, “Bianca, please don’t, not now. I need you.” She had looked at him for a minute as if in doubt, but she had turned around, grabbed her suitcases, and pulled the door shut behind her without saying anything further. He had stood there for a long time, like the characters in *The Wizard of Oz*, petrified, unable to move because he feared that he would break. His heart had grown cold like a stone in the following days, and it had taken a long time to thaw. Since then, he had not heard from Bianca and had been too stubborn about chasing her or calling her because she had left him, hadn’t she?

His Bianca, with whom he had shared twenty-five years of joys and sorrows, had just disappeared overnight. Could he still blame her? All those problems had made him pay no attention to her or Tom. He stared at the now-blackened rectangle of his laptop, and the images in his head filled the screen.

What about Tom? After all the trouble three years ago, his son wanted nothing more to do with him. He had accidentally spotted him occasionally sitting in the kitchen, visiting the housekeeper Tom had known since birth. Then it seemed that the house was another colour, brighter. But now he thought Tom had become a tramp with his weird ideas and Rasta hair. And yet, he missed him terribly, his only son.

The ashes fell to the ground. He squeezed the stump with his fingers that had turned yellow and irritably shoved the ashes away with his foot. His nails pressed into his clenched fists.

He had to relax, he told himself and picked up the bottle he held over the glass again until it was half full and knocked it back

swiftly. Is the glass half full or half empty? He thought. It just came to him as if someone was whispering in his ear.

“Well, I prefer a full glass. What good is half a glass,” he said aloud and poured the bottle empty. “Cheers.” And raised the glass to his reflection in the bookcase window beside him. Why should he still care about his company? It wasn’t his company any more. “They’ll figure it out.”

There was a knock at the door. Staring confusedly in that direction, he realised someone must be behind it and said with a thick tongue, “Come in with your servant.”

The housekeeper looked at him around the corner with a tilted head

“Are you alright? I heard you talking and thought there might be visitors I had yet to see coming in?”

“No way, Nellie, it’s just me.” He showed his glass to her.

“This is the culprit of my talking,” he said with a tongue that was hard to contain.

“Aha, all right. We’re about to eat, and I can’t lift you to bed if you can’t walk any more. But are you taking it easy? Last time, you slept here in your chair all night. I hope you remember how that felt the next morning,” she grumbled.

He looked at her with his eyes running red.

“Did I ever tell you’re a juggernaut, Nellie?”

“Yes, you have said that many times. But thanks,” she said gruffly. “Dinner will be ready in half an hour.” She closed the door with a bang, just a little too hard.

No, he had no more business visits. The company he had built with blood, sweat, and tears was no longer his due to a hostile takeover, and he had been bought out.

He looked at the picture on his desk. Everything he loved was on it. He heard his teeth grind but couldn’t control his sadness,

and his eyes moistened. Were they doing well? Could they manage? He had wanted to give everything if only things could return to how they were before when they were happy together. He could never spend the money he had again in his life. He had had enough. Money didn't matter to him any more. He wanted his wife and son back. He wanted his life back as a respected man. Would that ever be possible again? How could he prove that he was a victim? He needed help to prove his innocence, but he had no idea whom to turn to. He needed to get clear, and he grabbed a silver box from the drawer and sniffed the white powder with a silver spoon.

Something creaked at the garden doors. He looked up in surprise and listened, his neck hairs standing up. It was already dark outside. He thought quickly. A gust of wind made the heavy velvet curtains hanging in front of the garden doors bulge like sails in the wind. He had pulled them closed as it was about to shimmer. Never had anyone entered those doors; he only used them himself. Everyone knew that his office was his sanctuary. Only the housekeeper came there to clean, and his assistant, of course. He felt that something was wrong, and quickly, with the glass still in his right hand, he sought a button under his desk with his left hand. The yellow liquid jumped happily over the edge as he tried to rise from the heavy leather chair. In a drunken daze, he saw someone emerge. Damn, where are those glasses?

“Who’s there? Gerard, is that you?” he called toward the curtain

He had seen the gardener working today, but he couldn’t

imagine Gerard coming in through this side now, at this time, for the first time, and at this time.

The vague figure behind the curtain emerged.

“What is that? Who are you? What are you doing here? Are you crazy to just walk in!” John’s voice snapped, and his heart was racing. The intruder emerged from behind the curtain and lingered at the doorway.

“So, there you are,” he said frighteningly calmly. “You terrible man, you devil,” he said hoarsely. “Are you sitting comfortably here in your gaudy house at your gaudy desk?” he said in a way that showed disgust and sarcasm. He took another step closer, allowing John to part his face in the faint light of his desk lamp. Without glasses, he could still see drab skin, stubble, and red run-through eyes and discern clothing too loose.

“You don’t care what happened to us, do you?” Something was threatening in the calmness of his voice.

“When are you going to take responsibility, John Fisher?” he said in a down-bending voice from which the sarcasm dripped and took another step forward so that he was only two feet away from John, who had moved to stand in front of his desk. He felt the liquor flowing in his veins and felt his heart pounding in his throat. Panic crept up his legs. He staggered.

“That will all be taken care of by the lawyers,” John said in his familiar authoritarian tone and continued, “You have no right to just come into my house. I will call the police if you don’t leave immediately.” His head was pounding with tension, and his body was shaking. Was that from the drink or the fright? He wondered.

The air in the room vibrated with tension, and John smelled his sweat. The man pulled something from behind his back. He couldn’t quite see what it was, but the length of the thing gave him an idea of what it could be.



“Don’t you understand our sorrow?” the man said as saliva appeared at the corners of his mouth. “What ails you, man! So many people are suffering. Don’t you care at all?”

The intruder lankily swung the bat from bottom to top, letting it hang there menacingly but wobbling in the air. He took another step closer. Now he raised the bat tightly and straight.

“If the government doesn’t do anything, I’ll teach you your well-deserved lesson.” John felt the splatter on his face. Behind him, he heard the door open but could not look back to see if it was Nellie or warn her because he had to step aside to avoid the bat. The alcohol had upset his balance. He staggered and fell with his head against the tip of a heavy mahogany side table next to the window. He felt his bones crack, and a fierce twinge of pain took his breath away. The room spun before his eyes. Black spots obstructed his vision, and he had to blink a few times. He fought to stay conscious. The bat had missed him, but it had hit something else because he had heard a bang, crackling, and a heavy, dull thud, like when someone fell to the floor. The floor vibrated. He tried to turn around to see where that man was in the room and noticed he couldn’t move from the pain and could only lift his head a few inches. In the corner of his eye, he saw that possessed, lanky man standing with his arms limp along his body and the bat still in his hand. He seemed stiffened and looked open-mouthed at someone lying on the ground. He followed that gaze and could tell from the clothing that it had to be Nellie. Red fluid was running down her head, gushing onto the ground in a circle of an ever-growing pool of blood

John groaned. “What did you do, you son of a bitch!” The pain prevented him from speaking further. He felt panic; an ambulance should come, but he could do nothing. He felt the stabbing pain in

his hip and attempted to crawl in her direction, but he couldn't. It went black before his eyes, and he fell into a dark hole.

"This is not what I wanted," the intruder said in a broken voice, "this cannot be; this cannot be true." But there was no one to hear him.

The curtains bulged again as the garden doors were flung open with a swing. The long velvet fabric was pushed aside with a jerk, and two officers pointed their weapons at the intruder.

"Throw that bat away, now!"

The door to the hall was thrown open, and two more agents appeared and pointed their weapons at the man.

"Surrender! On the floor!" they shouted.

Listless and stunned, the intruder let the bat slip from his hand and dropped to his knees with his hands in the air. The intruder was pressed against the ground and cuffed.

\* \* \*

Over the intercom, there was busy communication back and forth. A siren could be heard in the distance, coming closer and closer. Occasionally, John regained consciousness and felt a pounding headache. He couldn't get his bearings.

What's happening? Where am I? He saw Nellie lying down and remembered again what had occurred.

"How is she?" he asked, groaning to a paramedic concentrating on measuring his blood pressure while something was carefully shoved under him.

Around him, paramedics and police were busily walking back and forth. It took four men to lift him onto the stretcher.

“One..., Two..., Three..., he’s long gone from eight pounds,” the paramedic said.

“Well, that cost a bit,” said the other.

As he lay on the gurney, an officer approached him. His face was severe, and he looked at him with his head bowed.

“I’m sorry about Nellie,” he said gently. “She died instantly. What’s her last name?”

He felt his heart racing against his ribcage. Adrenaline coursed through his body, and a goitre choked his throat. He felt tears running down his cheeks like jets. He realised he hadn’t cried in a long time. What will I do without Nellie? What will her children do without her? He thought how terrible for Bianca and Tom and sank into a deep black hole.

The ambulance seemed to jerk back and forth like a camel, making him regain consciousness. The anaesthesia they had given him didn't work well because of his pain. As much as he wanted to suppress it, a few moans escaped his mouth.

“Why do they make ambulances without good suspensions anyway? My car floats over the road, but this car... unbelievable.”

John tried to remember what had happened. Surprised, the nurse looked at him but said soothingly, “We're almost there, Mr Fisher. Just hang in there.” The brother pricked a needle in his hand and attached a tube to it.

That intruder had targeted me, but he had hit Nellie. He felt dizzy and nauseous. A basin was held out to him just in time. Everything came out; that night's meal and the gallon of Whisky. Another string dripped from his nose.

“It's my fault Nellie's dead,” he said, groaning and spitting out the last remnant.

The ambulance nurse looked at him, and John saw him think-