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1 AMERICA IS GREAT AGAIN

It is summer 2017 in dear and delightful Chicago. To everyone's surprise, Hillary Clinton won the election, even though Donald Trump and his Vice Presidential candidate, Mike Pence, won the popular vote. America is great again! Very, very, very great! At what is as yet an unanswered question.

Trump had been talking about building a wall between the U.S. and Mexico and having Mexico pay for it which was ridiculous, but popular, so Clinton had come up with her own wall promise. After consulting with her soon to be Vice President, her husband Bill, she realized that a wall between the U.S. and Mexico would hinder our invasion so she promised to build walled off safe communities. The idea was to make them safe from criminals and murderers by building a wall around them, limiting access to those with proper credentials, monitoring all communications and subjecting them to constant electronic surveillance. The basic idea was that for true security we have to lock up the law abiding people so the crooks and terrorists can't get at them. Clinton proposed experimenting with two versions. One was to be in an urban area and one was to be in a secret location. The principle behind the secret location was that if the evil enemies of America can't find us, they can't kill us. Clinton had also started talking against Mexican immigrants because this was so popular for Trump.

After Clinton revealed her plans for walled secure communities during the campaign the rest of the world expressed their approval for the idea and when this was revealed Trump's lead disappeared. What the press did not reveal was that the rest of the world was in favor of some kind of wall all around the U.S. keeping us in, not them out. Mexico and Canada were especially in favor of the idea.

2 THE OPENING ACT

Fenton, Pettigrew & Cohenstein was one of Chicago's most prestigious law firms. It was an amalgam of an old line, snobby, anti-Semitic law firm that was not doing so well anymore and an up and coming firm headed by Zenon Cohenstein. Fenton, Pettigrew was still headed by one of the anti-Semitic snobs, namely Graybourne St. Charles. He had basically inherited his position and kept it because he also inherited the firm's biggest client, The Swifton Bank, one of the largest in the world. The firm occupied floors 40 to 55 in The Bank's building, known as One Swifton Plaza, in the center of Chicago's downtown. The firm's only other U.S. locations were a suburban office in Highland Park, known as the Lake County office, and one in New York. It had offices outside the country in Mexico City, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Singapore and Mumbai. There were 60 equity partners and 200 other partners. Equity partners actually owned the firm and got the profits. The other partners were basically employees who got a share of the profits determined by the equity partners, although their compensation scheme was whatever the equity partners wanted to make it. The other lawyers were the younger ones called associates and were usually paid a set salary and a bonus at the end of the year. In total there were 630 lawyers. The firm basically had big rich clients and did big money deals and litigation. The equity partners had some of the highest lawyer incomes in the country and most people working there were, in their own estimation, quite superior.

One of the equity partners who worked there was not regarded as one of the leading lights of the legal world or even regarded at all since he rarely attracted anyone's notice. He was Bumper Lohman who was perhaps the world's biggest nobody. Hardly anyone knew he existed. He was a simple old guy who talked in nouns and verbs with very little in the way of adjectives and adverbs. As such, hardly anyone could believe that he was a lawyer. On the other hand hardly anyone had to figure out whether he was or was not a lawyer because hardly anyone was aware of his presence, due to the brevity of his statements. He usually said whatever he had to say before everyone else in the place had finished scrapping their chairs around and coughing and trying to hide their farts in the process of getting settled. As a matter of fact, the last time he had addressed a group of the firm's associates there were constant shouts of "Can't hear you!" as he spoke. What he had to say ended quickly so the associates were still shouting at him to speak up. He merely shouted back, "So shut up and listen!" and repeated what he had said whereupon there was a steady, low, murmuring of, "What did he say?" throughout the room. Who can understand something without first being told that they are going to be told something that will elevate them to an ecstatic Heaven on earth and then being told what they are going to be told and then being told and then being told what they have been told?

Sometimes you have to give them a treat first to get their attention and a treat for a reward at the end.

Lohman was the Managing Partner. He was not the Chairman, the big boss. That was St. Charles. He was not the Vice Chairman who was Cohenstein. He was just the guy to take care of things. When something not involving a star role needed doing suddenly everyone knew he existed. A large law firm is a loony bin and not only the basics of running a business, but constant emergencies needed attention. Lohman and his people did that. The big important stuff was handled by the Management Committee consisting of nine equity partners owning over fifty percent of the interests in the firm. Oddly enough, Lohman was one, although he was the one on the Committee who owned the least and earned the least.

Matters of importance involving St. Charles and Cohenstein were usually handled in St. Charles' conference room on the 55th floor. However on this wonderful Thursday, June 8th, it was being worked on so the emergency of the day was going to be held on short notice in Lohman's conference room on the 44th floor. St. Charles and Cohenstein had arrived and Lohman's secretary, who refused to be called a personal assistant, had left the outer office to take something to the Business Office that Lohman wanted explained.

"Bumper," said St. Charles, "there is a matter of great urgency. We must have a meeting of the Management Committee immediately. Matters involving conflicts of interest and the most highly placed persons have arisen."

Lohman said, "What about the Conflicts Committee? Remember that we have a committee to look into conflicts of interest. And the Business Office is supposed to screen them to begin with and refer any questions to me."

Cohenstein said, "We know that, but this is big stuff."

"Like what?" asked Lohman.

"Like Flinton and Hump," said Cohenstein, "and one of our clients."

St. Charles said, "It's that wall business. They want to build some sort of wall here in Chicago and the only concrete contractor who can handle a job like that is our client - - ." He looked at Cohenstein.

Cohenstein said, "Yeah Bumper, that - who is that concrete company?"

"Whiteman Materials," said Lohman. "They are our client."

"Yeah, them," said Cohenstein. "That Hump guy wants to be the concrete contractor for the wall and who would he get it from - our client. So there is a rumor he also wants to build it on

land he owns or controls or can get his hands on and The Bank is talking about financing some of it for him."

"Exactly," said St. Charles. "We have to figure out how to maneuver through all this without representing conflicting interests."

Cohenstein, who could sell heaters in Hell, added, "And we want the business and boy, could we get some good PR out of this!"

Lohman saw nothing new in this. Trying to get nine busy lawyers in one place at one time on short notice is not easy. However, he was called upon to do it quite frequently. In this case though, they added some people to the pot. "Get the Whiteman lawyer here too and get Bungus," said St. Charles. "Who is the Whiteman lawyer anyway?"

"Shannon McClurg," said Lohman.

Bungus was Bungus LaRue who was the firm's "Governmental Affairs" partner. He was formerly a congressman and now operated as a lobbyist and fixer in the ways that are currently legal. What else he did the firm was not too eager to know and he was not usually asked to explain most of the things he was up to. "Don't ask - don't tell" is a useful device in many areas. Remember when Will Flinton was President and he imposed the doctrine on the armed services? He thought as Commander in Chief he should benefit from the rule.

Lohman told St. Charles he would arrange everything and St. Charles and Cohenstein were getting ready to leave. St. Charles never asked anyone he expected to grovel in front of him if they were busy or otherwise occupied or if what he wanted could be done and he never thanked them for their efforts and today was not an exception to the rule. Just as Cohenstein was saying, "Thanks Bumper," a young lawyer in the firm and one of his clients bust in. Lohman had made an appointment with them and he had not been able to call it off or postpone it on the short notice he had from St. Charles and Cohenstein.

The young lawyer was John Sweeney who had a seemingly magical ability to attract show business, entertainment and internet clients. This ability translated into high and rapidly growing billings and he had just been made a partner as a result. Lohman had been the name partner on his matters while he was an associate, but Sweeney did all the work. As a partner he still wanted Lohman consulting on his matters and some of the clients did too and he and one of his clients were coming in for that purpose. The client was Trisha DeLang, the world's hottest pop star. Sweeney was an Oh Wow, Hey Duder. Trisha was the biggest potty mouth in the trade. Since Lohman's secretary was not at her post they just went on in to the conference room when they heard voices coming from there.

Sweeney said, "Hey Bumps!" He saw St. Charles and Cohenstein and waived at them and said, "Dudes!"

Trisha had been humming and bopping about as she came in and suddenly she said to everyone, "My new song - get this--." She broke out in a song and complimentary body movements:

"Humpy Dumpy built a great wall
Humpy Dumpy sat on his wall
Humpy Dumpy fell off his wall
Shit – on the wrong side of his wall.

Humpy Dumpy stranded was he
Not on the U.S. side was he
He had no passport – oh tee hee
Stranded in Mexico was he.

Humpy Dumpy tried to get back
Please he said, give me some slack
I'm a citizen coming back
To my home in the old outback.

The States' guard was taken aback
Thought Humpy was an old wetback
So Humpy had a new, different life
Making cheap for the U.S. fleet.

Humpy – wall
Dumpy – fall
We all do the fall
When we build a wall.

Ew – ew – ew, - oh - oh- oh
Ew - e – ah – building a wall
Down - down – down – de – do – do
Fallin' down oh from the wall."

Trisha finished with throwing her arms up in the air and shouting, "Fuck ass!" Sweeney grabbed her and hugged her.

St. Charles had trouble keeping his undies clean. "What did she say?"

Sweeney said, "Fuk a say."

"What is that?" asked St. Charles.

"It's common Spanish slang," said Sweeney. "It's an expression of ebullient exuberance. It means, 'Hey you! Say!' Her Spanish isn't very good."

St. Charles was too confused to do anything except go into his pause mode. Cohenstein started clapping.

Trisha said, "I was gonna do -," and she broke out in song again:

"Humpy fit the battle of Mexico,
of Mexico, Mexico
Humpy fit the battle of Mexico
and the wall came tumblin' down."

After a pause Cohenstein said, "Oh, I get it. Jericho - that's it. For a moment there it just passed over my head."

"Is that where the term 'Passover' came from," asked Sweeney?

Cohenstein chuckled and then came over to St. Charles and lifted him up from his chair and said, "Let's go, we have work to do and so do they I hope."

"What work?" asked St. Charles. He did not really understand the word as applied to himself. Applied to others he understood it, but himself? Work? He had people to do that for him. He got up and he and Cohenstein left.

Sweeney and Trisha got seated and so did Lohman. Sweeney said to Lohman, "We wanted to run it by you. Maybe the words should be toned down. What do you think, Bumps?"

Lohman said, "Toned down? That's a strange idea coming from you. I'm not the one to ask anyway. Ask Trisha's agent and some of your show business contacts. These days you can get away with anything. And see if you can get ahold of Bungus. See what he says about the obvious reference to Hump."

Trisha said, "Whatever I do, I want to keep the tune - the music." She leaned over and kissed Sweeney.

Now Sweeney was a good looking young guy who would tell you that, "All the girls like Sweeney weeney." But lawyers who get into their clients get into trouble. Lohman decided to get explicit. "Are you two romantically involved?"

Sweeney said, "Not since I've been her lawyer. Anyway she doesn't like the same guy all the time. She even wants to do Sean - or wanted to." Sean was Sean Featherbottom, a rather obviously gay young associate who often worked with Sweeney. "I had to tell her he's gay."

Lohman remarked, "You had to tell her?" He looked at Trisha and asked, "You didn't know?"

Trisha merely said, "He's cute."

Sweeney said, "Remember when he wasn't even dealing with it himself? That's when she wanted to do him."

"What do you mean he wasn't dealing with it?" asked Lohman.

Sweeney said, "He was a closet case - hiding it from himself. That's an old term. It has two meanings. One is hiding it from everyone else and one is hiding it from yourself. Sean was hiding it from himself."

Lohman remembered back to a dramatic scene at a firm party when the cops bust in to arrest Sean for the murder of one of the firm's top partners, which Lohman explained had been done by another partner, and he "Came out." "Oh, I remember," he said. "I think I'd better check my closets when I get home."

3 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

The Management Committee consisted of St. Charles, Cohenstein, Lohman, Alan Allen who specialized in Municipal Securities, John Feepot, head of Corporate, Gooster Fileform, head of Securities, Pincus Ruhlman, with a diversified practice, Jeffrey Wax, head of Tax, and Peer Freebornstein, head of Litigation. It usually met on the first Tuesday of the month, but it was sometimes rescheduled. This time Lohman had managed to get them all present for a rescheduled meeting on June 13th. The meetings were usually held in St. Charles' conference room and by this time the work on it had been completed so that is where it was to be held.

These meetings proceeded in a set way. St. Charles was never there while the others arrived. Only after his secretary told him everyone else was there did he deign to come in. When all the other Committee members were there, as well as Shannon McClurg and Bungus LaRue, St. Charles came in and greeted the group and then turned the script over to Lohman who would lead everyone through the meeting. Lohman told those present that there was a special conflicts of interest matter they had to review and then quickly got them through the other items on the agenda which were few. Then he directed their attention to the conflicts matter.

The firm had a Conflicts Committee to consider conflicts of interest. Law firms are not allowed to represent conflicting interests. For instance they cannot represent both a buyer and seller in the same transaction. Some conflicts can be waived by the clients and some cannot. The Business Office of the firm, headed by Geeley McDade, the Business Manager, usually did a search of the firm's records on any new matter to look for potential conflicts. The lawyers of the firm taking on new matters were also supposed to do a check. All potential new matters were also circulated to all other lawyers in the firm to see if they knew of any conflicts. Any potential conflicts were brought to Lohman's attention and if there were any questions, the Conflicts Committee was called upon to resolve them.

Lohman had asked the Conflicts Committee members to be present at the Management Committee meeting. The members of the Conflicts Committee were Lohman and Ruhlman, Geeley McDade, Joe DiBello, a younger partner, and John Sweeney.

One conflict in the firm, although not one called a conflict of interest between clients, was between St. Charles and Ruhlman. St. Charles kept his cat, Pussy, in his office. Ruhlman brought his rottweiler to the office with him and took it, or it followed him, around. The rottweiler was usually at the Conflicts Committee meetings, which were held in Lohman's conference room, but the dog was not welcome anywhere near the St. Charles offices. So, no rottweiler.

Lohman had done his homework for the meeting. He explained the background of Hump and Flinton running for President and Flinton having taken up some of Hump's popular campaign points, including building a wall. At this point Sweeney said very audibly to the person next to him, "They were running for President? I thought they were running for Turd Of The Year or something like that." It was fortunate that St. Charles, as usual, was not paying too much attention.

Lohman continued. "So, President Flinton wants to build this walled community here to test out her security ideas. Also Hump wants to be the contractor building the wall and the community on top of the fact that he wants it to be built on land he has an option to buy. It's the old U.S. Steel South Works plant that has been sitting there abandoned on the South lakefront for some years. I think it is over 400 acres in size. Everyone has been talking about developing it, but so far nothing has happened. The only concrete contractor big enough to handle the job is one of our clients, Whiteman Materials, Inc. Shannon here represents them." Lohman motioned towards Shannon McClurg.

"Hump is also saying he wants to be the concrete contractor. With what, I don't know. He has no plant. He would have to get the concrete from Whiteman and Whiteman would have to be a subcontractor. Whiteman would do the job, but the paperwork would say Whiteman was selling to Hump who would be selling to the general contractor for the job. And that general contractor would be some company set up by Hump. In effect he would just get a cut of the concrete money without doing anything. Now you should know that Hump owns a cement company in Mexico. It is one of the largest in the world and it is the major supplier of cement to Whiteman. Cement is one of the major components in concrete."

Lohman went on. "Avon Whiteman is the owner of Whiteman Materials. He has lent money to Hump and Flinton for their foundations in the early stages of their campaigns and his company also lent them money which he was trying to collect. However, he has been missing for a few years and the company is being run by his wife and the collection attempts have ceased. Naturally Hump owes a lot of other money. In fact, I hear jokes saying that when we hear he is a billionaire it is his debt that is being referred to. At least I think they are jokes. One holder of his debt is The Bank, another one of our clients. That debt is past due and they are negotiating an extension. These negotiations also involve a new loan. Hump wants to get the money to do the project from The Bank. On top of this Hump wants to exclude those of Mexican ancestry and origin from the labor force on the project. Now, The Bank may want to lend more money to Hump only if it could securitize the loan. That is, sell interests in the loan to investors. That way it could make the loan and then sell it and get rid of it. It would need us as outside counsel for a lot of this."

Lohman then added, "I forgot something. I just learned this morning that Hump has already formed a company to be the contractor and he is trying to get a loan from The Bank for that company too."

At this stage LaRue, the Governmental Affairs guy, injected, "That Hump bills himself as one of the world's multi-billionaires and a big deal real estate developer and owner. A lot of people in Washington think he ran for office just to stave off his creditors and get more bargaining power with them. The word is that his foundation raised more than five hundred million while he was running and then invested it through intermediaries in debt issued by shell companies that then used the money to buy debt from his other companies. In other words the money was contributed to the foundation so it didn't have to be paid back. Then the foundation paid off a lot of Hump's debt with it. Supposedly the foundation shows it as investments in the shell companies on its books and will write it off some day as a loss when the debt isn't paid off. But who cares? The foundation never had the money to begin with. It is the contributors to the foundation who are out the money and they don't expect gifts to be repaid. At least in money if you know what I mean."

LaRue continued. "That stuff about Mexicans not working on the project is hokum. His hotels and other businesses employ a lot of Mexicans and a lot are illegal immigrants, but with him it's all about attention getting - the one thing he's competent at. Anyway, no one knows what is going on in D.C. now. Everything is up for grabs. You should remember that, despite their jabs at each other, Hump and Flinton are old friends and one of the D.C. rumors is that he lost to her on purpose and that he only ran to improve his bargaining position with his creditors. And the Mayor, that Toby Rich guy who left politics for a year and magically made twenty five million dollars. He's in bed with them too. He wants to get the wall here because it's a big boondoggle for everyone and so he can tell the voters how many jobs he created."

St. Charles exclaimed, "Hump's a very astute businessman! How many people do we know who can be a billionaire with someone else's money?"

"Right," added Lohman. "Hump's a business wizard. How many people do we know who can go bankrupt running a gambling casino? That takes real skill. And his debt. Debt is an asset. Most of the money in the world is invested in debt like government and corporate bonds."

"Just so," exclaimed St. Charles. "The more debt we have the richer we are."

"In money, yes," said Lohman. "In seed corn, no. At least when the borrower uses the money to buy seed and eats it instead of planting it."

St. Charles just sat there with a confused look on his face, not understanding how the conversation had turned to agricultural subjects. Lohman just thought to himself that he was

lucky St. Charles did not catch on to his disguised criticism of the expressed wisdom of the great leader.

Lohman then tried to get everyone's attention directed back to the problem at hand. He called on McClurg to explain more about the concrete company. McClurg explained that Whiteman was the biggest concrete company in the Midwest and besides supplying the concrete for construction projects, sold cement to other contractors, both in bulk and bagged cement for smaller jobs. It had plants all over the Midwest, but its major plant was in Chicago on the Calumet River which entered Lake Michigan on the south side of Chicago. He explained how the city had long ago made a decision to transfer all its industrial river traffic to that river instead of the Chicago River, which wrapped around downtown Chicago, because all the traffic on the river required so many bridge openings that it was hard to get to the north and west sides of the city. Even so, Whiteman still had several plants on the Chicago River which, until recently, were supplied by big ships using the River. Now all cement went to the Calumet River site and was distributed to the other locations from there by rail and truck.

McClurg explained that almost all the cement currently came from a cement company called Humpy Cement located on the east coast of Mexico. He explained that he had been told that Hump owns the company. The cement is shipped in bulk and in bags from there. Mostly the bags weigh about 94 pounds, although there are all different sizes. They are mostly used by small contractors who come in to buy them. Most of the cement is the bulk, unpackaged kind. The ships sail from the east coast of Mexico and go east around the U.S. and north up to Canada where they enter the St. Lawrence Seaway. Then they come into the Great Lakes and come to Chicago and down the Calumet River to the plant. He said that he has heard that Hump and Flinton together own the shipping company that delivers the cement and hide their ownership in a Cayman Islands trust company, but he wondered how that could be true. At any rate he said he did not actually know.

McClurg continued on to explain that the cement is actually sold to Whiteman Materials by a U.S. subsidiary of the Mexican company called Humpy Materials, Inc. This was set up by a lawyer named Sam Meacham of Finebaum & Akhbar. When McClurg explained this some of those present made unfavorable remarks. McClurg said, "I know, I know. I have trouble with him too. Whenever we have trouble with the cement supply we have to deal with him. He's, well - , a shyster. By the way, I heard that he set up the contracting company Hump wants to use for the wall project."

At this stage St. Charles asked, "What is a shyster?"

"A low life lawyer," said Cohenstein.

"What's that?" asked St. Charles.

Cohenstein remembered who he was talking to and added, "He's not up to our standards."

St. Charles gave a sigh of recognition and said, "I see, I see."

McClurg then explained that, with regard to business matters, Whiteman dealt with the U.S. manager of Humpy, Jared Bannon, who seemed not to be much of a trouble maker. Whiteman did not deal directly with Hump himself or anyone at the Mexican company.

He then went on to explain that the owner of Whiteman Materials was Avon Whiteman who had been missing since late 2014. One evening everyone was expecting him to show up at the main plant and he never did. He was last seen at his mansion on the North Side in the city's Gold Coast neighborhood. The mansion had been built long ago by a prominent lawyer and then eventually wound up being owned by Nudie Magazine's owner who used it for many publicity events and named it the Nudie Mansion.

Since the whereabouts of Whiteman were unknown and the affairs of the company had to be dealt with his wife, Trulia Whiteman, was appointed by the Probate Court as an administrator to run the company and all his other financial affairs until Whiteman was found or determined to be dead. Whiteman's son from a prior marriage, Eddie Whiteman, also worked at the company and it was he who handled most of the day to day details. "By the way," McClurg remarked, "just so you know - this is a racially mixed situation so keep that in mind when saying anything here. You have to avoid saying things that can be construed the wrong way. Whiteman is a black guy and his wife is white. Then they have a butler named Blackman who happens to be white. I think his first name is Snively."

McClurg explained how Whiteman Materials was the leading concrete contractor in the Midwest and was constantly expanding. It did most of the major public projects and a large share of the large private projects. This requires a lot of what might be called relationship work with government officials and schmoozing of the private contractors and Trulia was good at that. McClurg explained that other than that she was not too brilliant and that is where the kid came in. He knew what he was doing and was competent at running the company, although he took orders from the wife and did not handle the financial matters. McClurg then explained that, like all companies involved in public works, Whiteman Materials used minority contractors. For this purpose the wife had her own company that served as the female owned company. The kid had one for an African-American sub and Whiteman's chef and maid, who were married, owned a Hispanic sub.

There followed some discussion among those present and ultimately it was decided that the Conflicts Committee would have to do a lot more work on the matter and the meeting ended. Cohenstein and St. Charles were conferring further as everyone was leaving. St. Charles said,

"I've never met that Hump fellow. Until recently I thought he was a member of the European nobility. Someone told me he was the Duke of Orange."

"I think they were joking," said Lohman. "Remember seeing him on tv and how he looks a little orange."

"Oh," said St. Charles.

Cohenstein said, "I think somebody should put a 'Baby On Board' sign on his forehead. But maybe not. I think he's got asteroids in his head."

St. Charles asked, "What? What? Asteroids? What is that?"

"That thing you go to the ass doctor for," said Cohenstein.

"A proctologist?" asked St. Charles.

"Yeah," said Cohenstein. "One of them."

"You mean hemorrhoids," said Lohman.

"Yeah," said Cohenstein. "That's it. He's got 'em upstairs."