

(Conflict of Interest II)

by
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(fiction)

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FADE IN:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

BILL, 59, bald and spindly and in business casual, talks to BERT, 40, outside a classroom.

BERT

I'm sorry. But the student felt she wasn't comfortable without a regular teacher in the room to protect her.

BILL

I don't protect people like a man.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

BERT is looking at Bill's website and watches a lecture video by Bill on Internet pornography. He then enters into Google "Bill (lastname)" "sex offender"). Bill's writings come up. He picks up the phone.

BERT

All that personal stuff.
Something's not a problem until we decide it looks like a problem.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Bill is writing a resignation letter as a substitute teacher. Bill works on his resume.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE - DAY

Bert is looking at a news story accusing him of impropriety and is writing a resignation letter. He is also sending out his resume.

SIX MONTHS LATER (Summer)

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

Bill is taking a computer skills test. TOM, 26, in a suit, beckons him in.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING TOM'S OFFICE -LATER

Tom's office is moderately cluttered but has some outdoors pictures of him.

TOM

You did good on the COBOL. Top 80th percentile. So we can present you to the client.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING TOM'S OFFICE -LATER

BILL is on an office phone, and logged in on a laptop, Bert is on the other end in a split screen.

BERT

You have access to a computer while I ask the questions?

BILL

That's a problem.

Tom shakes his head.

BERT

Not really. We all use the Internet now for everything, don't we. Let me ask you some technical questions. Can you tell me what an indexable predicate is? ... When would you use an outer join instead of an inner join?

INT. OFFICE BUILDING TOM'S OFFICE -LATER

TOM

Good job.

BILL

So I can start Monday.

TOM

Probably. I think he'll bring you on. Did he sound familiar to you, Bill?

BILL

The voice, yes. You didn't want him to see me.

TOM

Not really. A lot of tentative hires are done in this business on phone screenings. Tell me something, you don't sound real loyal to your blood family, do you.

BILL

You can tell.

TOM

You don't sound offended that I'm prying. That's because you publish with a controversial nature.

BILL

Pressify. It sounds ballsy.

TOM

Ain't it cool?

If I didn't, debate would just be this stupid sending prewritten letters to congressmen.

TOM

What's wrong with that? That's democracy.

BILL

It's immature. It's not what I learned in school. In history class, we had exams that were all essay, and we were marked off if we left anything out.

TOM

Look. You'll hear from me.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT

Bill finds pictures of Tom on the Internet in a gay site, apparently at a circuit party. His cell phone rings.

BILL

Tom?

Bill smiles and smirks.

ONE MONTH LATER - LATE SUMMER

INT. SUBURBAN OFFICE - DAY

BILL, 60, balder, mushy, spindly looking, is talking on the telephone and debugging a mainframe computer program on a typical green-and-white character screen. He even goes into TSO/ISPF, FileAid, and similar mainframe products.

The office is already a bit cluttered but plain, without family pictures.

Suddenly a client-server display comes up telling him

YOUR ACCOUNT IS DISABLED. PLEASE LOG OFF NOW

He fumbles and finishes the phone call. He logs off and tries to log back on, and gets

ACCESS FORBIDDEN

He walks to a corner office and knocks. Inside, BERT, 40, adjusts a toupee, checks his garters, stands up, well dressed in a formal suit.

BERT
Don't come in.

Bill comes in anyway.

BILL
It made me log off.

BERT
I know. We're sending you back.
Your boss is going to say you're on
the bench.

BILL
What do you mean? You had to make
the decision to hire me, not Axiom
of Choice Consulting.

BERT
It's up to them.

BILL
What's the problem. I was going to do the first promotion to your QA region this afternoon.

BERT
The green boss will explain it to you.

INT. BILL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Bill's apartment is cluttered with papers and three computers. He is logged on to the Dell in XP Pro. He looks at a couple of his online essays and screenplays. He logs on to AOL and deletes some spoofed spam sent back to him from a virus. He watches some of his home movies about gay parades. He looks at some of his Power Point slides on individual rights. Then he goes back to essays and pulls up his essay on the blogging policy.

EXT. INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - DAY

Bill is driving down the Interstate. He pulls over at a rest stop. He walks into the building and notices the warning signs.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

The sign reads "UNDER THE TABLE SOLUTIONS, LLC." Bill walks into a small office of TOM, 26, who looks quite informal, though dressed in Irish greens. The office is neat but filled with techie stuff.

There is a small table with a chess position set up and a five minute Benko clock.

Tom offers his hand. Bill shakes it.

TOM
Well, Bill, I call you that, it seems that we have a big problem.

BILL
Oh really.

TOM

It looks like you've played quite a gambit. How do I put it? MMIS found your website on line and they aren't comfortable with your being around.

BILL

These are all adults. Grownups.

Tom pulls out a copy of Bill's authored book "Do Ask Do Tell" from a drawer beneath a small cradanza.

TOM

I took the liberty of buying your book online.

BILL

It's mine.

TOM

That's the problem. It will make us look unprofessional. You care more about your personal stuff than your professionalism.

BILL

It's all how you perceive it. I'm an individual contributor. I don't have direct reports. I don't make decisions about people. I don't speak for the company.

TOM

Yes you do. Every time you report to the client you speak for the company.

BILL

You never published a blogging policy.

Tom pulls up Bill's blogging policy.

BILL

I've obeyed my own rules.

TOM

You see, Bill, if we published a policy, we could be breaking the law.

(MORE)

TOM(cont'd)

So what we do is check employee profiles, their blogs, their social networking site profiles, online, and we just don't tell them. Then there is no violation of law.

Bill stands.

TOM

Look, let's play a couple games.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING TOM'S OFFICE - LATER

Bill and Tom play five minute chess in a cramped space. Tom keeps winning.

TOM

Time for your swimming lesson.

Bill looks at Tom and smiles.

INT. HEALTH SPA SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Tom is standing in the pool and Bill is trying to float.

TOM

Arch your back!

EXT. OUTDOOR RESTAURANT - EVENING

Bill and Tom are eating shepherd's pies.

TOM

I'll save your job. Or give you a new one. First, you check for the profiles of all of our other consultants.

BILL

So I Google hack. How do I know I'm finding the right one.

TOM

That's just your responsibility. Your due diligence. Then, you're going to be our salesman. And it ain't hucksterism, because you invented this. You exposed this "myspace.com problem", the dangers of blogs and social networking sites.

(MORE)

TOM(cont'd)

You're going to go out and sell a service to check profiles of job applicants. You'll even develop the report format. You know, where we are, there's no telling where this can go. We have a property management company as one client. We could screen perspective tenants. People who might attract an attack on a building. You even wrote about that in your essay.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING TOM'S OFFICE - EVENING

Tom pulls up Bill's terrorism essay. Then he pulls up Bill's reviews on the Dateline series on Internet predators.

TOM

Um, yeah.

BILL

We're gonna wind up with a world where everybody has to conform online to get hired.

TOM

Everybody except us.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING RENTAL OFFICE - DAY

(Show it is some months later -- snow on the ground.)

Bill walks into the apartment building. BERT greets him in the rental office.

BILL

How do you like your new line of work.

BERT

They set me up.

BILL

Your jobs went to India.

BERT

That's what you said you wanted. That's how you got into all this. We've got the first five tenants for you to screen. You wouldn't get accepted.

Bill pulls out a letter from his jacket, and it is an apartment rejection letter.

BILL
My building went condo. I've got to find something.

BERT
You wound up on your own watch list.

BILL
There's only one solution. A local hacker.

INT. TOM'S CONDO - DAY

Bill watches, while Tom, in lounging clothes, hacks onto his own company's list to remove Bill from it. Bill walks back and lies on the sofa. Tom goes to the bathroom and finds the shaving accoutrements.

TOM
Okay, Bill. Wish fulfilled.

FADE OUT