

The Lovable Rogue

THE ROGUE SAVES A TREE

BY
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If you remember Nick Arthur you'll remember his house. And if you remember his house you'll remember its views. The homes in San Francisco's Marina District have the finest views in the world - and Nick's house has them all. The San Francisco Bay, the Golden Gate Bridge, the yacht club. What more could one want? All right, so there may be a few things, but not many.

Now, back to Nick Arthur. If you know Nick you know he's never satisfied. That's why he wanted Spectrum Pharmaceuticals. But he didn't get it and you may recall how he lost it. Some folks claim I was behind it. They are entitled to their opinion. What I will admit to being behind was his field trial victory. A fine bit of work that was. And that was why I felt justified in staying in his house while he was overseas. Well, someone had to take advantage of those views.



"Style, you either have it or you don't, and if you have it you have it all the time."

* * *

The sky was overcast and a blustery wind kicked up the waves and punched them back into the sea. The boats returning to the harbor bobbed on the water like giant corks. Occasionally, a blast of rain splattered against the window. It may not have been good sailing weather but it was, all in all, good weather for contemplation.

I sipped a Bass Ale in front of a crackling fire and contemplated my invitation to a fund-raiser sponsored by an environmental group I had never heard of. Now I'm as concerned about the environment as the next chap but I have never shown a penchant for supporting any group of any kind. Still, a party is a party, and I suppose there was a chance that it would be as good as a post-opera bash. But not much of a chance.

James had my Rolls ready at precisely 7:30 PM and we rolled off into the San Francisco night. The streets sparkled with rain and automobile taillights reflected off the pavement like neon signs. The blustery wind that had shaken the waves now shook the traffic signals and blew bits of paper against the curb.

Our destination was the Portman Hotel, a ritzy hotel if one could call such sterility ritzy. It was all brilliant metal and sparkling glass, trendy furniture and snooty staff. James glided my Rolls up to the hotel's covered entrance. A doorman reached for my door but James beat him to it. The doorman retreated. Good chauffeur, that James.

Over-dressed, out-of-town guests huddled like mannequins in the lobby while they waited for transportation to take them to long awaited engagements that could not possibly meet their expectations and would undoubtedly require



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embellishment when related to the folks back home. I shrugged and looked for a place to check my top hat, coat and scarf. Yes, top hat. Fund-raisers at expensive hotels demand top hat, white tie and tails. Anything less would be positively uncivilized.

"Winston!" someone called from behind me.

I turned and was delighted to find not one of the mannequins but Greta Hutchins. Her formal attire was quite stunning, fitting for a fund-raiser at an expensive hotel. I must say that she looked much younger than her fifty-plus years.

"Greta," I took her hand and kissed her on the cheek. Have you ever noticed how a slinky, black Versace dress accented with elegantly simple gold jewelry can make any woman look as if she had just stepped out of a Jordan Playboy? If you have then you obviously move in the same circles as I do. If you have not, don't fret, I'll keep you informed.

There was no doubt that Greta looked as if she had just stepped out of an elegant and sporty speedster. She had been a good friend of mine many years ago before she abruptly gave up a successful law practice and moved to the country. I recall her saying something about peace of mind and wanting to be alone.

"My dear Winston," she said. "It's been such a long, long time."

"It certainly has." We then experienced that pause that long-separated friends experience when they attempt to reconstruct that something special that had made them friends in the first place. Don't worry, I'm not going to psychoanalyze it.



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"You look as if you're going to this fund raiser," I said.

"Going to it? My dear Winston, I'm throwing it!"

"Throwing it?" I'm not easily startled but I will admit that this was one of those rare occasions.

"Yes. Follow me." She took me by the arm and led me toward her party. She stopped after a few steps, took a step back and looked at me.

"My dear Winston, how have you been?"

"I've been fine." I stepped back and looked at her Versace gown again.

"You look terrific and you look as if you've been doing well."

"It's rented," she laughed. "Hideous thing. You know this kind of costume is no longer me."

"Then you haven't given up the solitary country life?"

"No. Sorry to disappoint you."

"It's a relief, not a disappointment."

She then studied my tux.

"And I see you haven't changed. You always were the kind of man who dressed for the occasion."

I smiled. There was a time when that would have been the supreme compliment. These days I'm no so sure.

"Tell me about your fund-raiser," I said.

"I will." She retook my arm and we walked on.

"I of course hope to raise a lot of money."

"That is typically what fund-raisers are for. Who or what are you raising funds for?"



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"Have you ever heard of a company called California Logging?"

"It sounds familiar but it's not an institution I track on a daily basis."

"Someday I'll ask you what institutions you do track on a daily basis."

Anyway, they are the largest logging company in California. The business press refers to them as Cal Log. They're based in Mendocino County where I've been living for the past ten years. Cal Log used to be one of the most responsible logging companies in the business, harvesting only as much timber as the forest could grow back. They treated their employees well, did not go into debt, and had lots of cash. They were true friends of their environment and community."

"What happened?"

"Because of their conservative logging policies, Wall Street felt they were not reaching their full profit potential. Naturally, their stock was undervalued. And with all of that cash sitting around they were a perfect takeover target."

"Let me guess, they've been taken over."

"Yes, by a San Francisco man named Harold Buster. He's what the magazines refer to as a 'veteran takeover artist'. How would you like to be called that? Anyway, his purchase of Cal Log was typical of his style. He borrowed heavily through his holding company to finance the acquisition and now he is selling Cal Log assets to pay off his debt. In this case the assets are trees. Buster has accelerated the pace of logging to alarming proportions. He's mortgaging Mendocino County's future to pay off his debt, not to mention what he's doing to the environment. That is unacceptable, Winston, and he must be



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stopped. I've formed an organization to stop him and I'm throwing this party to raise money to save the trees."

"A worthy endeavor," I said.

"I knew you would think so. We have filed lawsuits against Cal Log but of course lawsuits take time. Too much time I'm afraid. And money, way too much money."

"There must be other ways."

"Yes, there are other ways, but they would require a man of extraordinary ability." She gave me that film screen femme fatale look. "It would require a man like you."

"Cut the ticker tape parade, baby." I said.

"All right, I'll get to the point. I've known all along that unorthodox methods would have to be employed to stop Harold Buster. Of course, I thought of you immediately. I've heard about your business dealings in Latin America and a few other escapades here in the Bay Area. You never could turn down a good cause. Now I'm asking you to join another one. Will you help me?"

"I was wondering how I had gotten invited to this affair," I smiled.

"You're not the only clever person in this world, Winston Churchill. Will you help?"

In case you don't know, I'm a hopeless romantic, always compelled to come to the aid of a damsel in distress.

"Of course I will," I sighed.

She smiled like a cat that had just eaten the family parakeet.



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"Good, I knew I could count on you."

"Now tell me about this Harold Buster fellow."

"He's an ass."

That was Greta all right, direct and to the point.

"I'm sorry, Winston, but he is."

"No apology necessary. I would, however, like to know more about his business affairs."

"Yes, of course. I have a file in my car. You can have it after the party. Now I must mingle and raise some cash – you may need it." Greta kissed me on the cheek and went to work her guests.

I roamed the room in search of someone I knew but all of the guests were strangers to me. This wasn't the kind of party that acquaintances of mine would attend. Pity. I could lecture you on the importance of supporting worthy causes but I'll spare you. The next time you may not be so lucky. When the crowd thinned Greta reappeared at my side.

"How did you do?" I asked.

"About as well as could be expected. Everyone claims they want to protect the environment, but when it comes to putting their money where their mouth is, well..."

"Yes, I can imagine. And I'm sure Buster has a few friends in this town that would like to see you fail and would discourage attendance at this event."

"He also has a few enemies who would like to see me succeed. A few of them wrote checks on the spot. Others committed to sending their money. We'll see about that."



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I smiled.

"Come on, I'll give you my file on Harold Buster." She took me by the arm and led me out of the hotel to a beat up VW bus. That was more her style. The vehicle's two-tone white on dark orange paint scheme reminded me of an ice cream cone.

"Excuse the mess," she said, opening the side door. "This is a work vehicle."

A work vehicle, indeed! It was filthy! Imagine if the seats had been covered with Connolly hides. In my opinion, the soiling of Connolly hides is a tragedy and one that should be dealt with severely. But you didn't ask for my opinion, did you?

Greta shuffled through a pile of boxes and removed a thickly stuffed file folder. She considerately wiped the dust off of it before handing it to me. A classy gesture.

"Here is everything I know about Harold Buster," she said. "You can probably find out more if you happen to know a good stock analyst. Public information will not be hard to find. Private information will, of course, be harder."

"And more useful," I winked.

"Call me if you come up with anything," she said.

"Where are you staying?"

"At some flea bag hotel down the road. I'll give you the number."

"Flea bag hotel?" I said. "We can't have that. I'm staying in a large house on the Marina. There's enough room for both of us."



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"I should have suspected," she said. She gave me a sly grin.

"Leave your bus here. James will take us."

On cue, James drove up to the curb in my Rolls. Greta looked at it and grinned.

"You always did have class," she said.

* * *

Greta woke late the next morning. I had already spent several hours studying her Harold Buster file.

"You get up early," she said, dragging herself across the room to my desk. Then she looked out the window. "My God, what a view!"

"Yes, I rather like it. A good view is not to be wasted."

"Don't you find it distracting? I think it would take my mind off work."

"Not my mind. I find it peaceful. Helps me think. James can get you some coffee if you'd like."

"Yes, I'd like that." She pulled up a chair and sat down. She had that dreamy kind of look on her face.

"Tell me," I said. "Isn't it lonely up there in Mendocino?"

My words ignited a fireworks display of surprise in her face.

"What do you mean?"

I looked at her the way a trainer looks at a young thoroughbred who's first training session was quick enough to win the Derby.

"Well, a little," she frowned. "But I do a lot of fishing. I've always loved fishing. Now I have the time to do it. And I've got my books. And there's always something to do around the house."



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I continued to look at her.

"My dear Winston," she shook her head. "You always could see right through me. Yes, at times I am lonely. But I choose to be. Now what do you think of Harold Buster?"

"Changing the subject won't help," I said. "But I'll let you off the hook." I turned my attention to the papers scattered on the desk. "The name of his holding company is a bit pretentious."

"Top Group," she giggled. "You don't get to Harold Buster's position without being a little pretentious."

"I suppose not."

"What else is interesting?" she asked.

"Everything appears to be fairly typical. At the time Buster made his offer of \$32 a share, he, through Top Group, already owned 26% of Cal Log's total stock. Lucky for him. Thirty percent ownership would have triggered an anti-takeover provision. Owning less than 30% gave him time to arrange his financing without anyone knowing of his intentions. As it was, he had to pay \$39 a share. He financed the purchase through junk bonds underwritten by the investment banking firm of Hamler Brothers. That gave him \$900 million in additional debt. He's paying off that debt by cutting down and selling trees at a staggering pace. That, I presume, is where you come in."

"Precisely. We must stop him before he destroys all the forests in Northern California."

"He won't be easy to stop. He hasn't done anything illegal that I can see."



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"On the surface it looks kosher, but there are always skeletons in the closet when something like this happens. Even if his deal is legitimate we must stop him." She turned away and stared out the window. Her gaze crossed the bay and went all the way to the forests of Mendocino.

"Have you talked to him about this?" I asked.

"I tried to, but he sent his lawyers after me. I didn't even get a foot in the door."

"Not very hospitable."

"I told you he's an ass."

"Yes, well, I need to know a little more about him other than his being an ass." I turned my attention back to the file. "If you're going to topple someone like Buster you have to know what makes him tick."

"He collects books," Greta said.

"What?"

"That was my reaction, too. It doesn't seem like the kind of hobby he would have, does it?"

"It does if you think about it."

She thought about it.

"Yes, you're right," she flashed me a knowing grin.

"So Harold Buster collects books," I said after a short pause. "You were quite a bookworm once, too, if I recall."

"I've always had an appreciation for fine books, if that's what you mean." Her words bit like an immature whiskey.

"Well, well, you and Harold Buster have something in common," I teased.



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"We have nothing in common," she snapped. "The man is an ass. We must stop him!" She turned her back to the window.

"Don't worry, I'll dispatch James. If there are any skeletons in Harold Buster's closet, he will find them."

"Who is this James?" she asked.

"He's my chauffeur."

* * *

"Jenkins McCoy?" I asked. "Who is Jenkins McCoy?"

James stood before me with an open notebook.

"A shady character. No one seems to know him well. I am told is a close friend of Sid Hamler," he said.

"Of Hamler Brothers?"

"Yes, sir. Actually, Sid Hamler is the only Hamler at Hamler Brothers. I am told Mr. Hamler thinks Hamler Brothers sounds more important than simply Hamler."

"I suppose it does. And two days before Buster made his offer, Jenkins McCoy purchased 250,000 shares of Cal Log?"

"Correct."

I looked at Greta. "Looks as if someone gave him a hot tip," I said to her.

"It sure does," she said. "Of course it's all circumstantial."

"You're right. We have no evidence that a crime has been committed."

"And we need hard evidence," Greta said. She rose and paced across the room.



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"Still, it gives me enough of a reason to continue investigating the Hamler-Buster connection," I said. "Sid Hamler's records might be interesting."

"Yes, they might prove insider trading or something like that," Greta said.

"Quite possibly. James, any ideas?"

"Yes, sir." He closed his notebook. "I think we should obtain Mr. Hamler's records. **All** of his records."

"Excellent idea!" I said.

"Thank you, sir."

"Well, then. Have at it."

James nodded and departed.

"If there is anything to be found, James will find it."

"Who is this James?" Greta asked.

* * *

We waited for James at the Petit Cafe, a nice little neighborhood restaurant away from the more bustling parts of the City. We settled down at a cozy little table in front of a large window and enjoyed a fine dinner.

"What will you do if James finds something?" Greta asked.

I shrugged. A slice of French bread topped with brie, roasted peppers, olive oil and garlic occupied my attention.

"You know, once one tastes seventy percent brie one never settles for sixty," I said.

"What does that have to do with Harold Buster?"

"Nothing."

"I see," she said but she didn't.



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"One must always maintain one's civility even when one is pursuing a formidable villain."

"Winston Churchill, you are the most singular man I have ever known," Greta laughed.

"Is that a compliment?"

"Sometimes." That femme fatale look returned.

"I suppose this means you want to return to talking business."

"I'm sorry, but do you really think there is something we can do to stop Buster?"

"If a crime has been committed then justice must be served," I said.

"What if a crime has not been committed?"

"That's harder. Now eat your brie and enjoy the wine."

Greta smiled and did as I suggested. We had just ordered desert when James floated my beautiful Rolls to a rest in front of the restaurant.

"Here's James now," Greta said, jumping up from the table. The girl was a bit excited.

James emerged from the Rolls with a large file folder under his arm.

"Looks like he's found something," she ran to the door.

"You can always count on James."

"Who is he?" she looked back at me.

James entered the restaurant and she escorted him to our table.

"James, have a seat," I said.

"Thank you, sir." He sat down and placed the folder in front of me.

"What have we here?"



"Style, you either have it or you don't, and if you have it you have it all the time."

"Information, sir."

I smiled and opened the folder. I had no need to go beyond the first page. A nearly invisible grin crossed James' face.

"What is it?" Greta asked.

"At the time of Buster's offer to purchase Cal Log, Hamler Brothers, Buster's investment banker, secretly owned 25% of Cal Log stock. Hamler had masked his purchase of the stock through several holding companies controlled by Jenkins McCoy."

"So?"

I quickly put 26 and 25 together.

"That means between them Buster and Hamler owned 51% of Cal Log."

"So?"

"Thirty percent ownership would have triggered the anti-takeover provision that would have virtually prevented anyone from acquiring Cal Log."

"How so?" Greta asked.

"Before any single investor could acquire over 30% of Cal Log stock, the purchase had to be approved by a majority of Cal Log shareholders. Buster was Hamler's client. Together they owned 51% of Cal Log stock, a majority and enough to guarantee approval of Buster's purchase of more stock, enough stock to control the company. Buster and Hamler must have been secretly working together. That's how they engineered the takeover of Cal Log. This smacks of collusion. And the 250,000 shares Jenkins McCoy purchased must have been his payoff for running the holding companies Hamler used to shield his holdings."



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"Winston, what are you going to do?" Greta asked.

"Throw the book at him."

* * *

George Thomason, a London bookseller, collected 23,000 books and pamphlets published in England during the troubled years of conflict from 1640 to 1661 in order to preserve them for posterity. I know this because I researched the subject. Book collecting, that is. A man's passion can also be his weakness.

"Oh, you're a book collector?" the secretarial voice at the other end of the phone said. "Then I'm sure Mr. Buster will have time for you. What was it you said you had?" As I had suspected, the way to Harold Buster's heart was through his books.

"A collection of Shakespeare once owned by Henry Clay Folger," I said.

"Just a minute." She put me on hold. A minute and fifty-three seconds later she was back on the line. "Yes, Mr. Buster will be glad to meet you. Shall we say two o'clock this afternoon?"

"Let's say two-thirty." An extra half-hour of anticipation never hurt anyone.

"Two-thirty it is, Mr., ah, what did you say your name was?"

"My name is Winston Churchill."

"Is it really?" There was a smile in her voice.

"Yes, but no relation."

"Oh."



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At two-thirty I was in the heart of the financial district. Even in San Francisco's money mecca a 1963 Rolls Royce Silver Cloud III attracts attention, particularly one as well-maintained as mine. I must say I was well-maintained, as well, snappily attired in a gray, double-breasted suit, an azure tie and pocket square, and impeccably polished, black business shoes. No broguing. Today, I meant business.

James eased the Rolls to a halt in front of 460 Montgomery Street. Buster's office was on the twenty-fifth floor. The elevator took me there in silence. Not even the doors made a sound as they opened. The hallway was hushed, like an empty church at two o'clock on a Tuesday afternoon. Have you ever wondered how they can make modern office buildings absorb so much sound? Maybe you haven't. Well, I have, and I find it almost unsettling.

I located the Top Group offices and found Buster's secretary sitting behind an expansive, dark desk.

"Hello, I'm Jenny McCoy-Barrett, Mr. Buster's personal secretary. She was dressed, well-dressed I might add, in a solid black, Ralph Lauren dress that made her look more like a CEO than a secretary.

"Ralph Lauren?" I asked her.

"Why, yes. How did you know?"

"I know these things."

She studied my attire and her face lightened with mild admiration.

"Yes, you look as if you would."

She led me into an office with a panoramic view of the city. Pictures of fishermen up to their hips in water adorned the walls.



"Style, you either have it or you don't, and if you have it you have it all the time."

"Mr. Churchill, I presume." A delicate man stood behind a sturdy desk and held out his hand.

"Yes." I shook his hand.

"I am Harold Buster." His face radiated enthusiasm. He did not look at all like I had expected him to. I had expected a slightly overweight torso, balding egg-shaped head, and the demeanor of a piranha. What stood before me was a man with a thin long face and black curly hair cut short and firmly in place. Eyeglasses with perfectly round lenses clung to the bridge of a small, sharply defined nose. He must have been in his early fifties although at first glance he looked much younger. And, he wore a bespoke suit – a nice charcoal pinhead from Henry Poole of London. Quite impeccable. A man with such fine sartorial taste deserves some respect even if he is playing loose with financial rules.

"I always enjoy meeting fellow book collectors," he said. "Please sit down."

I did. The leather chair was comfortably stuffed.

"Are you a fisherman?" I asked, nodding at the pictures on the wall.

"Why, yes," he smiled. "Next to book collecting fishing is my greatest passion. But please tell me about these books. I've been thinking about them all day and haven't been able to get any work done."

"I have a collection of Shakespeare once owned by Henry Clay Folger. The books are filled with his annotations."

His eyes brightened. A book annotated or marked by a prominent owner is particularly desirable to some collectors.



"Style, you either have it or you don't, and if you have it you have it all the time."

"Really?" he said. "My collection is modest, but I specialize in books once owned by the great financial tycoons. Henry Huntington, J. Pierpont Morgan, those people. Most of their books are either in museums or in the libraries they founded. It is rare that one encounters one that isn't."

"That's why this Shakespeare collection is so valuable."

"Yes, Mr. Churchill, it is indeed valuable. You must be interested in selling the collection otherwise you wouldn't have come to see me."

"That is correct. The books have actually fallen into the hands of an acquaintance of mine. She is not a collector and therefore wants to sell them. Myself, I collect the works of Fitzgerald. Since they do not fit into my collection I agreed to help find a buyer. I have no interest in them apart from having an appreciation of their value as rare books."

"I see. Well, I am interested. When can I see them?"

"We could show them to you tonight."

"Excellent. Why don't you come to my home? Then I can also show you my collection."

"Very good."

"Here's the address." He scribbled on a piece of paper and handed it to me.

I rose to leave.

"Your wife?" I asked, looking at the picture of a woman on his desk.

"My late wife," I said.

"Oh, I'm sorry."



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"That's all right. She was a good woman. I've never remarried. Books and fishing fill my time now."

I turned to leave, then stopped. "Oh, there is something I'm curious about," I said.

"What is it?"

"Didn't your company recently purchase California Logging?"

"Yes, why?" His face soured.

"I read about it in the papers."

"Don't believe everything you read in the papers. I'm getting a bum rap. They say I'm depleting the forests. Nonsense. There's enough timber up there to last us in perpetuity. I've also put in \$12 million of my own money to build a new power plant up there. I'm in it for the long haul, contrary to what the press says."

"It has been a messy fight, though, hasn't it?"

"Messy? I'll tell you about messy. Those environmentalists are putting large metal spikes into the trees. The spikes are meant to destroy saw blades, but they injure saw operators. I like a good fight as much as the next man, but fair is fair."

"I didn't know about the spikes."

"No, no one does. The press doesn't print that sort of thing."

"There is one more thing I'm curious about," I said.

"What's that?"

"Jenkins McCoy purchased 250,000 shares of Cal Log just before you made an offer for it."



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"Who's Jenkins McCoy?" Buster asked.

"You are asking me to believe you don't know who he is?"

"Yes, because I don't know who he is."

"You do know Hamler Brothers, don't you?"

"Yes. They're my investment bankers."

"At the time you made your offer for Cal Log, Hamler Brothers owned 25% of Cal Log stock. You owned 26%. Together you owned enough to the control the company but not enough individually to trigger the poison pill."

"What do you mean Hamler Brothers owned 25% of Cal Log?" I almost believed his surprise.

"I suppose you didn't know that, either?"

"No, I didn't."

"I find that surprising," I said.

"So do I." Buster lost himself in his thoughts. I must say he had a way of oozing sincerity. Perhaps it was the bespoke suit. But I've been around enough of these high-finance types to be wary of any outward display of emotion no matter how convincing. Acting must be part of every major business school's curriculum.

"I suppose you read that in the newspapers, too," Buster said.

I shrugged and decided to drop my pursuit of the truth for now. I knew I could count on James to dig up the real dirt.

"Well, Mr. Buster, fortunately for book collectors such as ourselves, printing presses have been used to print things other than newspapers."

Buster regained his smile.



"Style, you either have it or you don't, and if you have it you have it all the time."

"You're right, Mr. Churchill," he said.

"No hard feelings?" I asked?

"No, no hard feelings." He rose from his desk. "I look forward to seeing you this evening."

"It will be my pleasure," I said. We shook hands and I left.

* * *

"James," I said. "I think we may have to change our approach to Harold Buster."

"Sir?"

"There are always two sides to every story. I have just heard an interesting other side to the Cal Log story. I believe further research is in order."

"Yes, sir."

* * *

"These are fabulous," Greta said, carefully browsing through the Shakespeare editions. "Where did you get them?"

"Never mind," I said.

She gave me the kind of glance an experienced investor gives to a neophyte with a hot stock tip.

"All right, I don't want to know."

"Harold Buster will pay a lot of money for those books," I said. "You can sell them to him and use the money in your efforts to defeat him."

"Wonderfully ironic," she smiled.



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"I knew you would appreciate it. By the way, we're going to his home tonight to show him the books."

"What?" Her smile dissolved.

"We're taking the books to him. I told him they belonged to a friend of mine. You are that friend."

"But Winston, I despise that man!"

"You've been trying to see him. Here's your chance."

She frowned.

"You can pull it off," I said. "You like books."

"I used to like books. Now I like fishing."

"So does Harold Buster."

"He does?"

"Yes," I said. "Next to book collecting fishing is his greatest passion. You see, you two have a lot in common."

She gave me a nasty look.

"We have nothing in common," she growled. "The man is an ass."

* * *

Harold Buster's home was in San Francisco's Cow Hollow district, an area full of finely manicured manors. His house was a splendid structure neighboring a foreign embassy. James glided the Rolls to a halt in the driveway. We were high above the bay, above the trees and buildings, closer to the stars than to the ocean. The lights of Marin County glittered across the bay.

James rang the doorbell.



"Style, you either have it or you don't, and if you have it you have it all the time."

"We shall soon see how much you and Buster really have in common," I said to Greta.

"Winston! Don't tease me."

"Relax," I said. "You're about to slay your enemy with his own sword."

Buster opened the door himself. He held it open and motioned us inside.

"Mr. Churchill, I'm glad to see you again," he said. He shook my hand.

I glanced at Greta. She too was surprised by Buster's physical appearance.

"This is my friend, Greta," I said.

"Pleased to meet you," Buster said. He looked at her and smiled.

Greta nodded demurely.

"Are those the books?" Buster pointed at the bundle under James' arms.

"Yes," Greta said. She took a book from James and handed it to Buster. He opened it and flipped through the pages.

"This is fantastic!" he said. The words took him to a different world and we followed him into it. We arrived at his library, a spacious room larger than many bookstores. All of the walls were covered with dark wood bookcases filled with real books. A fire blazed in a Victorian fireplace surrounded by two sumptuous leather wing back chairs. A large antique wood table occupied the center of the library. All in all, the room was stunning enough to be the subject of a feature article in an architectural magazine. James put the remaining volumes of Shakespeare on the table and quietly left the room.

"Please, sit down," Buster said to Greta.



"Style, you either have it or you don't, and if you have it you have it all the time."

She sat in one of the chairs by the fire; Buster sat in the other. I stood by the table. Buster could not take his nose out of the Shakespeare. He sifted through the pages for several minutes before speaking again.

"Greta, this book is exquisite," he said. He pulled his chair closer to hers.

"Yes it is," she said. She successfully overcame the urge to pull away.

"Look at the condition of the pages," he held the book up for her to see.

"They're almost in original condition."

"How can you tell?" she asked.

"Feel how smooth they are."

She ran her fingers over the page.

"Very little discoloration," Buster said. "Only a little around the edges."

Greta looked closer.

"Yes, I see," she said.

"You say these once belonged to Henry Clay Folger?" Buster asked.

"Yes," I answered.

"They're filled with his inscriptions," Greta said. "I was reading them before we arrived."

"Really?"

"Yes," Greta said. "Look." She took the book from Buster and turned through the pages until she found writing in the margins.

"Marvelous," Buster said.

"Read it," Greta suggested.

Buster read it and laughed.



"Style, you either have it or you don't, and if you have it you have it all the time."

"Incredible!" he said. "That's why I love annotated books. Not only are they more valued by collectors, but they also reveal things about their previous owners."

"That does make them more interesting." Greta caught herself smiling but she could not prevent it.

Have you ever noticed how lusciously mellow a Chateau Certan de May becomes as it breathes? No, you probably haven't. Trust me, it does. And that's exactly what was happening to Greta. Buster's infectious enthusiasm had uncorked her softer nature and she was doing a fine job of forgetting that he was the ogre who owned Cal Log.

"Winston may not have told you," he said. "But I only collect books that have been previously owned by famous financial tycoons. Few of the books I have are annotated. I don't think many of those old tycoons actually read anything but ticker tapes. That's why I find this collection so exciting."

"They are magnificent volumes," Greta agreed.

They browsed through the other books for quite some time and shared their opinions on the annotations.

"Mr. Churchill told me you enjoy fishing," Buster said after they had exhausted the topic of books.

"He did?" Greta turned and looked at me.

I smiled.

"Yes," Buster said. "I also enjoy fishing."

"You do?"



"Style, you either have it or you don't, and if you have it you have it all the time."

"Yes. I go whenever I can. I'm almost as fanatical about fishing as I am about books. Mr. Churchill may have told you about all of the fishing pictures I have hanging on my office walls." He kind of blushed.

"No, he didn't," Greta said. She turned and looked at me again.

"I find that fishing cleanses the mind, don't you?" Buster said.

"Yes, yes I do," Greta agreed.

"Where do you fish?" Buster asked.

"Streams and rivers," Greta answered. "I prefer them to ocean fishing."

"You do? That's wonderful! So do I."

"Really?" Greta asked.

"Yes!"

They exchanged fish stories for half-hour and acted like old chums. I wasn't too surprised, really.

"Where do you do your fishing?" Buster asked.

"In Mendocino County."

"That's terrific! I have business interests up there. Perhaps we could fish together sometime."

Greta suddenly tightened.

"Cal Log," she said grimly.

"Yes, how did you know?"

"I know all about you and what you're doing. You're destroying the forests."

Buster reacted the way a horse reacts to a rattlesnake. His skin turned red.



"Style, you either have it or you don't, and if you have it you have it all the time."

"Don't believe what you read in the papers," he said. "I am not destroying the forests."

"Yes you are, and I'm going to stop you!" Greta rose and stared at her adversary.

"What?" Poor Buster was stunned and confused. Greta's words socked him like a prize-fighter's left jab.

"I tried to see you once, but your lawyers ran me off. Now I'm taking action."

"Who are you?" Buster asked.

"Greta Hutchins."

"Oh." Buster deflated.

"You're destroying Mendocino County to pay off your company's debt."

"Listen here, you people are no angels. Don't you know that those spikes you put into the trees hurt the loggers? I may hurt trees but I don't hurt people."

Greta blushed.

"You're mortgaging the future of Mendocino County," she countered. "You'll take the trees and run." She took a piece of paper from her pocket. "Look at this proxy statement," she shook the statement in front of his face. "It says Cal Log could consider selling additional timber lands in the future if it provides greater returns than holding and harvesting them, or if Cal Log is required to raise cash. All of that debt you've piled onto Cal Log makes it very likely that you'll have to raise cash to make the loan payments. Then there go the forests, there go the jobs, and there goes Mendocino County."



"Style, you either have it or you don't, and if you have it you have it all the time."

"Listen, I'm building a new power plant up there with my own money,"
Buster countered. "I wouldn't be doing that if I wasn't in it for the long haul."

"Until it's more economical to be in it for the short haul. And what about
the way you acquired Cal Log?"

"I acquired it fair and square!"

"Ha! You and Sid Hamler conspired to avoid the anti-takeover provision."

"I did not!"

They fell silent and stared at each other.

"Ahem," I interrupted. "I believe this may be the appropriate time to
inform you that James has discovered some information that may expedite
your reconciliation."

Buster and Greta looked at me, then each other, then at James who had
quietly re-entered the room.

"It's all yours, James."

"Yes, sir. Mr. Buster, did you ever wonder why your takeover of Cal Log
went so smoothly?"

"I assumed it was because I had good investment bankers." He turned to
Greta, then to me, then back to James.

"It went so smoothly because an anti-takeover provision was cleverly
circumvented."

The glare returned to Greta's eyes. Her initial distrust of Buster
reappeared like wild weeds after a summer rain.

"How did that happen?" Buster asked.

"Yes, how did that happen," Greta asked in a somewhat sarcastic tone.



"Style, you either have it or you don't, and if you have it you have it all the time."

"Your investment banker, Hamler Brothers, colluded with a certain Jenkins McCoy to secretly accumulate enough stock to control the company but fly under the radar of the anti-takeover provisions."

"Who's Jenkins McCoy?" Buster asked.

Greta was on the verge of igniting him with torrents of flaming anger.

"That was our question, too," James continued.

Buster turned to Greta hoping to find a morsel of support. He found none.

"Well, what did you find?" Buster asked.

"I discovered that Jenkins McCoy does not exist."

Greta nearly exploded. All of this was evidence enough to justify her original perception of Buster.

"What?"

"Jenkins McCoy is actually Jenny McCoy-Barrett."

"Jenny McCoy-Barrett? That's my admin!" Buster jumped.

"Yes, sir."

Buster's eyes widened until they became the size of his open mouth.

"She was using information stolen from your office to work some very lucrative deals with Sid Hamler," I said.

"Very illegal lucrative deals," James added.

"What? I can't believe this." Buster shook his head like a dog shaking off water.

"Winston, is this true?" Greta asked.

"All of it. We have indisputable proof."



"Style, you either have it or you don't, and if you have it you have it all the time."

Buster sat down. The poor boy was a bit stunned.

"And Harold knew nothing of this?" Greta asked.

"Nothing," I said.

"I shall have to make amends," Buster whispered.

Greta was genuinely moved. Tiny tears may have formed in the corners of her eyes or it may have simply been the light. Before I could determine which, Buster pulled himself together and sat upright.

"Look," Buster said to Greta. "Before the subject of Cal Log came up we were having a grand time talking about books and fishing. I felt as if I had known you for years. We really do have a lot in common. We may have some misunderstandings about Cal Log..."

"We most certainly do." Greta buttoned her lips and crossed her arms.

"But I think we can resolve those differences," Buster continued. "I have a better understanding of the situation now, don't you?"

Greta stared at him for a long time.

"Maybe I do," she finally said.

"See, understanding is the first step. I'm sure we can come to some agreements."

"I don't know," Greta said. "Perhaps we can." She uncrossed her arms.

"You were having fun, too, weren't you?" Buster asked.

"Yes, yes I was." She tried to hold back the words but they cascaded out of her mouth like water over Niagra Falls.

"There! Let's keep our minds open and work out our differences. After all, we're both fishermen."



"Style, you either have it or you don't, and if you have it you have it all the time."

"You have a point," Greta said. She spoke again after a long pause.

"Maybe we can come to some agreement."

"Let's start by agreeing to dinner together."

Greta hesitated, but I knew her well enough to know she would agree.

"I suppose it wouldn't hurt," she said.

"Good!" Buster smiled.

James entered the library.

"The Rolls is ready, sir," he announced.

"Thank you, James."

Greta turned to me.

"You knew this would happen, didn't you?" she said.

I raised my eyebrows.

"You arranged the whole thing," she said. "You somehow knew Harold and I would hit it off."

"Haven't I been telling you that you two have a lot in common?" I said.

"Now I will gracefully withdraw and leave you to deal with Harold Buster. You no longer require my assistance."

"My dear, Winston." She came to me, looked me in the eyes, smiled, and kissed me on the lips. "You are a sly one."

I smiled and followed James to the Rolls.

"I trust that the trees have been saved, sir?" James asked.

"Yes. All's well that ends well. Home, James."



"Style, you either have it or you don't, and if you have it you have it all the time."

