

Business Management 213

(The Fly and the Blonde)

Flash Fiction for Guests of the WordFeeder

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"Mis-ter Conner?" It was the always skeptical, deliberate voice of Professor Weinberg, looking up from the class chart – with pictures, no less – he kept as the blotter on his lectern. If you were late for his Tuesday 8 AM class or, heaven forbid, missing, he knew it. If you were the least bit unprepared, he would sense it, and pounce. Unlike many of the other faculty in the business management program, Jacob Weinberg was no career academic, having built and made a fortune in his own business before retiring to write and teach. His students both respected and feared him, wanting to be in his class just slightly more than they didn't. It was always a gut-wrenching, but nonetheless intellectually stimulating experience.

Eighteen rows up, just left of center from Weinberg's point of view, Bobby Conner rolled his pen repeatedly through and over the fingers of his right hand. It was something he did automatically when he was fighting the prospect of a losing battle with the attention and focus a Socratic method lecturer like Weinberg demanded. It wasn't a lack of interest, but a lack of sleep that was the problem.

Sitting next to him, on his right, was Shelly, the girl from Bobby's dorm he seldom seemed to notice, or so it seemed to her. No makeup, because she didn't need any and wouldn't have troubled to put it on if she did. Two different color t-shirts and jeans so comfortable she may have slept in them, her light blonde shoulder length hair going this way and that, held recklessly behind her with an oversized hair clip she grabbed on the way out the door, rushing to get to class on time. Glancing at the door next to her, she considered knocking, which would have been the friendly thing to do, but shied away, deciding instead to look forward to seeing him in class.

She was gorgeous, in a completely unpretentious way, if only Bobby were paying attention. His mind, more often than not, was somewhere else.

Dressed in a perfectly cut business suit and just the right tie – so he was thinking at daydream speed that moment – a small, soft leather portfolio under his arm, Bobby's alter ego of the future careened around the floor to ceiling marble to the bank of elevators just off the lobby of the building where he worked. Mr. Conner was on his way up, physically and otherwise, to the senior executive conference room where he was about to make a company- and career-changing presentation.

It was crowded, but not so much that he missed seeing the knockout blonde from "Acquisitions" in the navy blue silk blouse that wouldn't quit. She was the company babe that every male, and some of the women, in the office wanted, but who was somehow saving herself for him. A

couple of polite “Excuse me”s and he was standing in front of her, she with her back to the corner of the polished mahogany paneled elevator, he facing her, his back to the door and everyone else. They had flirted around the idea of going out, but had never actually done it.

“Big meeting?” she asked him, so close he could feel her breath on his face.

“Huge,” he responded without the least hint of nervousness.

“Yeh,” she said softly, taking a step, if that was possible, even closer toward him to whisper in his ear, “well your fly’s down.”

“No it’s not.” He was surprised, but didn’t look down, unwilling and unable to stop staring at her face for even a moment, not the least bit shaken by what she said. “How was it possible,” he thought to himself, “that every luminescent hair landed just right no matter how quickly or slowly she turned her head? Could lipstick be any more red? A mouth any more inviting?”

“Wanna bet?” Smiling, her eyes glued to his, she reached down, one hand on and around his belt, the other reaching for the metal tag which was now at the bottom of his zipper, pulling it up way too slowly for any normal, soon-to-be-promoted Vice President to handle.

Her business done, it took all the concentration he had to say, “Thanks. ...Maybe I can return the favor,” when his daydream was abruptly interrupted.

“Bobby!” It was Shelly.

Turning his head slowly toward her, he was struck by how familiar she looked. “A little makeup, different clothes maybe...,” he thought to himself. “She’d have to do something with her hair...”

“Bobby!,” she rubbed his arm gently, whispering his name again, this time as loud as she could get away with.

“Mis-ter Conner?!”

“What? ..Yes, Sir.” Bobby was startled, but quickly got himself under control, the drowsiness in his eyes and demeanor pushed instantly aside by the intensity of his mind bringing itself on-line.

“Mr. Conner, do you or do you not have an opinion about the case study we’re currently discussing?”

Instinctively, Bobby began to rise to his feet. It wasn’t the college rule, but Professor Weinberg insisted on it, very “old school” and proud of it, even while Shelly was pulling on his shirt as if to hold him down.

Still whispering, she did her best to warn him, “Your fly’sssss ..down.” Too, late. He was up, and it was obvious.

Unfazed, Bobby, his voice confident and unshaken, said, “Excuse me,” reaching down, casually, to pull up his zipper as if it were absolutely no big deal. “Sorry. I was up late last night reviewing this study and two others that were similar, and obviously dressed a bit too quickly rather than risk being late.”

“Ahhh, bullshit!” one of his friends fake sneezed from the back of the lecture hall.

Bobby then spent the next two minutes going right to the heart of the case study with impressive detail and insight.

“Sur-pris-ing-ly astute, Mr. Conner,” Professor Weinberg congratulated him reluctantly. “Try to get dressed more carefully next time, *before* you get to class.”

“Yes, sir,” Bobby responded almost inaudibly as he sat back down.

Shelly looked up at him, mostly with her eyes, with wonder at what he’d just managed to pull off. Moving her left hand in front of her mouth, she waited a few seconds to talk until another student was busy raising some obscure and irrelevant point. “Nice save.” She couldn’t help but smile. “You guys didn’t finish playing poker last night until after midnight. ... You do know I live next door, don’t you?”

“Right next door?” he whispered back, playing with her. There are, he was just beginning to realize, some people you get to meet for the first time more than once. “Nah, I checked out some stuff over the weekend.” Turning her way, about to follow up with some smart, maybe snide remark, he changed his mind – something about her eyes he hadn’t noticed before, feeling the touch of her breath on his face.

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