



**Larry Cashman, the
Unprincipled Bounder**

Chapter 3

Cashman's Dilemma

My dearest wife, Sabrina, has learned to tolerate my many idiosyncrasies and character flaws. She ignores the bullshit, bombast, and bad language. Her vision and perseverance compensate for my lack of ambition and laziness. She has become inured to my timidity and spinelessness, having learned that an occasional smack upside my head will temporarily restore some rigidity to my spinal column. My dissembling falls on deaf ears because she doesn't listen to anything I say. I may be a feckless ne'er do well, but to Sabrina I'm still a lovable loser.

I have one bad habit, however, that tests Sabrina's patience. She abhors chaos, clutter, and disorder; and Larry Cashman personifies all of them. She hates when my clothes are disheveled or don't fit; when I wear my tee shirts backwards; when I wear two different shoes because I'm too lazy to check that they resemble one another. Every day she neatly makes our bed, while I could care less whether or not the bed has any sheets or pillow cases, as long as I can lay down for some bona reposa. When we eat it is Sabrina that sets an elaborate table with ornate china, chiseled silverware, and delicate crystal. In my haste to consume as much food as possible in the shortest amount of time, I tend to scatter small pieces of food on my shirt, on the table, and on the floor. Although at times even I have difficulty understanding why Sabrina loves me, she also recognizes that, for want of a better word, I am a slob.

Thus it should be noted that Sabrina's impression of me improved immensely when we moved to Indonesia. This change of heart had nothing to do with Indonesia's verdant forests, azure seas, majestic mountains, and socio-cultural diversity. Instead it had everything to do with the house staff employed in the Cashman household to cater to our every need and whim. One of the benefits of expatriate life in a developing country in the 1980s was finding, to one's astonishment, that you could employ a variety of household staff to heed your beck and call. In fact most Indonesians living in private homes in Jakarta had a bevy of servants. I must admit that at first I had trouble with the concept of having other people tend to one's basic needs; but after ordering breakfast in bed every day, having cocktails served on the verandah in the evening, and wearing neatly pressed shirts for a change, I adapted pretty quickly to this new way of life.

The Cashman's had three house staff who managed everything in our home. Sulastri, the cook, prepared meals of exquisite Indonesian cuisine for dinner. This included Opor Ayam, Rendang, Gado-Gado, Rijstafel, Sate Ayam, and Nasi Goreng; all presented on an elegantly set table for Sabrina's edification while in extremely large quantities for mine. Sukiam, the maid, made sure that our home was spotlessly cleaned every day, which made Sabrina ecstatic. She ironed all my clothes, even my underwear, and made sure I was wearing matching shoes when I left home for work. Sumira, the nanny, was a built in baby-sitter for Carmencita. She picked up our daughter from school, made sure she ate nutritious and tasty meals and snacks, and even joined us for family vacations.

I adapted to this new normal with alacrity. In addition to breakfast in bed and cocktails on the verandah, I now discharged newspapers and magazines all over the house with a flair and tossed my clothes on the floor with abandon; confident that Sukiam would collect them before Sabrina got home. The mat that Sulastri placed under my plate at dinner assured that errant scraps of food did not soil Sabrina's ornate batik tablecloths. For those tidbits headed toward the floor, Sukiam would sometimes intercept the projectile before it reached its destination. As to personal hygiene I must admit that, when I take a leak in the toilet, my aim is not necessarily always dead on. After all pissing is physiologically the highest priority. Since Sukiam cleaned the bathrooms immaculately every day, now I could urinate guiltlessly and aimlessly. The household staff called me Tuan, an Indonesian term for the head of the household. I liked the sound of that.

Although having house staff was great, the real highlight of this new life style was having our own personal drivers. Sabrina and I each had one. A driver was essential for dealing with Jakarta's traffic. During the epic traffic jams, where vehicles could remain stationary for hours, I could read or even sleep in the back seat. There were never any worries about parking; and when I emerged from a building my driver was right there to fetch me.

But a driver is much more than an operator of a motorized vehicle; a driver really is like one's personal valet. My driver, Tolu, delivered packages, paid bills, shopped for groceries, changed money, filled up the gas tank, had our vehicle repaired, took Carmencita to dance lessons, made restaurant reservations, and picked up friends and colleagues. As crazy as this may sound, on occasion I even had Tolu attend those tedious meetings at the US Embassy for me. When Tolu attended in my stead, after a while most of those imbeciles at the Embassy actually thought he was me. I naturally became disappointed when I heard Embassy staff who attended meetings with my driver say, "...hey that Cashman is starting to make a lot of sense..."

One day, as I arrived at the gated enclosure that surrounded our Embassy residence, Tolu got out of the car to summon Sukiam to open the gate. I suddenly realized that this scene was reminiscent of the one I had experienced in Marrakech in 1972 when, while sitting in an outdoor square recovering from Salmonella food poisoning, I saw an expatriate arrive at his gated mansion in a chauffeured vehicle and summon his maid to open the gate.¹ At that time my first thought was "Someday I want to be just like

¹ See Chapter 4 Volume 1 of the Cashman Chronicles. Cashman was in Marrakech Morocco on his first trip with *Sabrina* as a world traveler when he was stricken with Salmonella food poisoning occasioned by his consumption of snails in a dense black broth from the Marrakech Souk. During his recovery, he noticed an expatriate in a Mercedes with a driver and servants pull up to his gated mansion. Rather than staying in fleabag hotels and getting food poisoning from eating in the souk, Cashman wanted to be just like that guy.

that guy.” Well it took ten years but now, as hard as it was to believe, Larry Cashman was indeed just like him.

When I finished my language training in Bandung and sorted out the shipment of my personal effects, it was time for me to actually do some work. Thinking about work makes me uncomfortable since it requires effort which I despise, and aptitude which I lack. When Chas Janssen summoned me to his office to speak about my assignment, I approached the meeting with great trepidation. To my surprise Dr. P was sitting with Chas, in Jakarta on one of his frequent short term assignments at the US Embassy during semester breaks at the University of Hawaii.

“Well, Cashman old boy, I trust your Indonesian language skills are improving,” Chas began, “because you are going to need them for this assignment.” No worries on that score, I thought. Although I am not too smart, have few redeeming qualities, and even fewer skills, I was born with an affinity for languages. My Indonesian was becoming quite functional. Within months I would be fluent.

Chas continued. “The Embassy has just approved and signed over a \$3 million loan for the Indonesian Government to send Indonesian students to US universities for masters and doctoral degrees. The Indonesian Family Planning Federation (IFPF) wants to use the loan funds to improve human resources in technical and management areas in the Health and Population sectors. Until now IFPF has been unsuccessful at finding qualified candidates. The only candidates who qualify for entry into US universities live in Jakarta and already speak good English. In the rare instances where qualified candidates are found, the Embassy uses a US-based contractor to apply candidates to specific universities and to support them during their studies in the USA. These contractors charge extortionate fees for this service. Under these circumstances IFPF sends only two or three staff per year for graduate degrees in the USA and the costs are exorbitant.”²

It wasn’t clear how I fit into this picture but Chas was about to enlighten me. “IFPF wants to overhaul the system for overseas graduate training under the new loan. Instead of sending two or three students to US universities each year, they want to send 30 per year. More importantly, instead of selecting people living in Jakarta who already speak English, they want to find the smartest and most competent people, primarily from the provinces, regardless of their English language skills. Lastly, they want to train candidates in technical areas identified through a human resource needs assessment. From now on the usurious US contractor is a thing of the past. IFPF wants to manage the entire system themselves — applications to universities and financial support during their studies — so it will be less expensive. The entire process will be implemented by IFPF's Training Department, and they want Larry

² From the US perspective, loaning money to foreign governments to train their staff at the masters and doctoral level in US universities was the ideal form of international development assistance. All of the money was spent in the US, a US-based contractor received a usurious fee to manage it, and the foreign students returned to their countries with a favorable view of the US, its economy, and its people. To top it off, the foreign government repaid the loan. From the foreign government’s perspective, its staff received top notch training at excellent universities and obtained knowledge and skills that they couldn’t get at domestic universities. They also returned fluent in English, a skill they would need *when working* with international agencies. It was a win-win situation. The only downside was the cost.

Cashman to work with the Training Department to design and implement this new system. The IFPF thinks you're the perfect guy for this job. What do you think about that, Cashman?"

As a cold sweat began to appear on my forehead, what I thought was that I wanted to jump out the nearest window. Design and implement a new training management system? Conduct a human resource needs assessment? I knew absolutely nothing about any of this, and this entire scheme insinuated a significant amount of work on my part. Once again I found myself in a position for which I was neither qualified nor competent. It immediately reminded me of the time I was on the Navajo Indian Reservation in New Mexico expecting to skate by at the Crownpoint Indian Hospital with minimal effort; only to be informed of the horrific duties they had in store for me.³ Just like in New Mexico, I couldn't run because there was nowhere to go.

Dr. P could see the blood draining from my face and neck as I prepared to pass out from the horror of finding myself in this new predicament. "Listen Cashman, I know what you're thinking. Your big mouth has once again gotten you into trouble, but Chas and I are fully aware of your limitations, which by the way are myriad. Be assured, however, that there are many technical resources at your disposal as you embark on this assignment; and we will be here to bail you out when you screw up." Dr. P knew me too well.

"However, Cashman, you have two attributes that make you ideal for this assignment. For some inexplicable reason the Indonesians at IFPF like you and trust you, unlike most of the pompous expatriate consultants who have worked there in the past. Your big mouth has done it again. More important they, and we, believe that you will master the Indonesian language; and you will need it because you will soon find yourself travelling to all 27 provinces in Indonesia to help identify 30 Indonesian staff who can apply to US universities each year. You will be interviewing multiple candidates for each position, and you will interview them in Bahasa Indonesia.⁴ You will be speaking with governors, mayors, and high level provincial officials. No one speaks English in the provinces; and you won't have an interpreter. You will be on your own to sink or swim."

This was more to my liking. Bullshitting and speaking foreign languages are my forte, "What about these technical resources at my disposal?" I inquired.

"We can hire short term consultants to help you with specific tasks," Chas replied. "You tell us what you need, and we'll find them. Dr. P will backstop you from Hawaii along the way. This whole scheme was Dr. P's brainchild. He conceptualized the idea to revamp the long term graduate training program, pitched it to IFPF and the Indonesian government, convinced the Embassy to provide the loan, and proposed you as the training advisor to the IFPF. We think this will work."

³ See Volume 1 Chapter 7 The Navajo Reservation. When Cashman went to work at the Crownpoint Indian Hospital in New Mexico, he expected to fade into the background and avoid as much work as possible. Instead, he was informed that the hospital staff expected him to treat all the head and neck injuries sustained from the regular automobile accidents and rodeos, a task for which he was both technically and physiologically disinclined.

⁴ Bahasa Indonesia is the official name for the Indonesian language. The word "Bahasa" literally means "language" in Indonesian.

All of a sudden the funk I had fallen into began to dissipate and some light appeared on the horizon. Let me see if I got this straight, I thought. I would be the principal advisor but I could request as much help as I wanted. If things got tough, I could rely on Dr. P. He could be tough — and extremely frank — and he expected a lot from me; but at the same time he knew my limited skill set better than anyone. All that was expected from me was my usual bonhomie augmented by some soothing palaver; and mastery of the Indonesian language. This job was indeed perfect for me.

With a sigh of relief, I exclaimed, “I think this will work too, Chas. When do we get started?”

At this juncture in our tete-a-tete Dr. P stepped in to say, “Cashman, there’s one more thing.” With Dr. P there always seemed to be one more thing. “Listen to me carefully. You better make sure that you don't fuck this up!!!”

Medan is the capital of North Sumatera province and the largest Indonesian city outside of Java. It is the center of the Batak culture⁵ and gateway to Lake Toba, one of Indonesia’s most remarkable natural attractions. Medan was also the destination for my first provincial field trip to interview young government staff who had been nominated for graduate degree training in the US. In addition to Evie Sumarsono and me, we were accompanied by a specialist from the US Embassy to administer the dreaded Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) exam.

To my surprise the Governor of North Sumatera personally came to greet us as we disembarked from the plane, accompanied by a bevy of young ladies dressed in traditional Batak garb who performed a ceremonial dance to welcome us. We were shortly whisked away to our hotel and then to a sumptuous meal where the Governor was joined by the Vice Governor, the heads of key government departments, and an assortment of mayors from the province. That night I didn’t meet any of the potential candidates for graduate training, but I greatly enjoyed the festivities.



Sunset on Lake Toba

The next morning a van fetched us at the hotel and drove us to Lake Toba, the world’s largest volcanic lake. Lake Toba was spectacular. Its crystal blue water was bordered by lush natural forests dotted with villages containing traditional Batak houses. I did some water skiing on Lake Toba and we all went tubing on one of Toba’s tributaries. The next day we rode horses to the tea plantations in Bukit Lawang before returning to Medan. I still hadn't met any candidates for graduate training, but I didn’t ask any questions.

⁵ The Batak people are a collection of six Austronesian ethnic groups who live in the vicinity of Lake Toba in North Sumatera Province. Although only 3.5% of the population, a number of Batak have risen to positions of prominence in the military, the legal profession and government. The Batak are predominantly Christian and have a reputation as fierce warriors. They are most well-known for the distinct architecture of their homes.

On our fourth day in Medan we were ushered into a room containing 12 individuals nominated for graduate training in the US. They seemed awkward and ungainly, the antithesis of the Jakarta elite who had previously been sent to the US for graduate degrees. Among them, coincidentally, were the Governor's daughter, the son of the Provincial IFPF Director, and the nieces and nephews of several mayors. Evie and I interviewed all of them in Bahasa Indonesia⁶; after which I proceeded to interview them in English. Some of the candidates appeared bright and energetic while others were dullards. All were eager to study abroad. However, after they took their TOEFL exams and we saw their scores, it was inconceivable that any of them would be accepted at a US university.



Hindu temples in the Dieng Plateau

This pattern repeated itself when we went to the provinces of Central Java and South Sulawesi. I got to see and do some amazing things such as attending a cremation ceremony in Tanah Toraja, going trekking in the Dieng Plateau, and climbing Mt. Merapi, but we didn't find many qualified candidates. The recurring theme was that many of the nominees were relatives of important provincial officials. I related these events to Dr. P during one of our phone calls.

"They must really like me," I concluded.

"They're treating me like a king."

Dr. P's take on the situation was quite different from mine. "Don't you see what's happening, you idiot?"

Dr. P didn't mince words. "They're trying to influence you to select their relatives for graduate degrees in the US. Because you're a *bule*, they think that you will be making that decision."

Well, they couldn't be more wrong on that account. I had no role in selecting the final candidates. That would be done at the highest levels of IFPF, the Indonesian Government, and the US Embassy. I would merely indicate the candidates who I thought were best qualified; but all final decisions were way beyond my pay grade.

"Maybe I should let them know that my role is only technical," I concluded. "It will save everyone a lot of time."

Dr. P shut that suggestion down immediately. "That's not how things work in the Indonesian culture. That would be rude and presumptuous. You just continue on your visits as you have previously, and let them think what they want."

And that is exactly what I did. Over the next several months I visited every province in Indonesia. During these visits I was wined, dined, and escorted to the most interesting and beautiful cultural sites and natural attractions that each province had to offer. I did nothing to disabuse my hosts of their false impression of my importance. In fact I acted like even more of a big shot and person of importance. I engaged the governors with light banter and even made jokes in Indonesian. At ceremonies and cultural

⁶ My Indonesian had become quite functional by this time, in no small part due to the total immersion I experienced when I went to my office in the IFPF. No one there spoke to me in English. Some days I wouldn't speak a word of English all day. You can learn a language real fast when you need it to survive.

events, I comported myself with gratuitous swagger and flamboyance. When it came to acting like a big kahuna, Larry Cashman in Indonesia deserved an academy award.

When I contemplated the situation I found myself in — traveling to remote provinces, visiting cultural sites and natural attractions, sampling the local cuisine, meeting indigenous people — it reminded me of the time I worked on the Navajo Indian Reservation and made site visits all over the Reservation.⁷ Each visit was like a cultural exploration of Navajo traditions and beautiful natural landscapes. Now I was doing the same thing in Indonesia. Tourists paid a lot of money to go to the places I visited and do the things I did. Some sites were so remote that tourists never got there. The difference was that somehow I, Larry Cashman, was actually getting paid to do this. This Public Health boondoggle was working out pretty well; actually well beyond my wildest dreams.



Cashman visited every province and experienced Indonesia's amazing diversity

Finding 30 qualified students, submitting applications to various universities, and establishing a financial system to pay tuition, fees, and monthly living stipends was not easy work. All potential students needed intensive preparatory English language training, some lasting as long as ten months. Sorting out and eliminating the relatives of governors and senior provincial officials required delicate diplomatic intervention at the highest levels of the Indonesian and US Governments.⁸ Communicating with as many as 15 US universities from Indonesia in the days before the internet and email was a nightmare. Paying tuitions and sending living allowances to 30 students at 15 universities across the US in 1983 was excruciating. However, it could now be done at half the cost per person, so IFPF and the Indonesian Government were ecstatic with the outcome.

What amazed me was how many people on the US side were pissed off because this new system upset the existing status quo. From their perspective, there was no value in the new setup being less expensive. It was also deemed inconsequential that it transferred initiative, skills, and institutional capacity to the Indonesian government. The key issue was that the flock of vultures, collectively known

⁷ See Volume 1 Chapter 9 of the Cashman Chronicles, "The Journey to Torreón." Against his will Cashman was assigned as the Crownpoint Indian Hospital's Public Health Officer. In this position he made field visits to the most remote corners of the Navajo Indian Reservation, learned about the Navajo culture, and toured distant natural attractions. "Is it possible they're paying me to do this?" Cashman thought. And so began Larry Cashman's interest in Public Health.

⁸ Unfortunately for me the governors and provincial officials also quickly realized that I was a lightweight who had little influence on final decisions. The next year, when I visited the provinces to interview candidates, I wasn't met at the airport by the governors and whisked away for a sumptuous meal. I was lucky if I *could locate* a taxi *at the airport to my hotel and find* a bowl of noodles for dinner.

as the “Beltway Bandits”⁹, were mortified that they were now cut off from a fat contract and hence unable to charge their usurious fees and inflated administrative overhead costs. Equally horrified were the US Embassy officials who toadied up to the “Beltway Bandits” in hopes of landing some fat cat job at the same consulting agencies they previously supervised once they retired from government service. Ah the wonders of US government foreign assistance working hard to win the hearts and minds of people living in other countries.

Most surprising to a novice like myself was the fact that those most pissed off by this new and cost-effective system were a small cabal of nitwits working at the US Embassy Finance Office in Jakarta. In order to send money to the students electronically, we had to establish a Letter of Commitment with a private bank. The geniuses at the US Embassy Finance Office hadn't a clue what a Letter of Commitment was. They were also aghast that we wanted to work with a private bank because this insinuated that their input was entirely superfluous. The head of the Finance Office, Rick Gonzalez, was an oleaginous government bureaucrat par excellence; a mean-spirited scumbag and impediment-in-chief to anything innovative and efficient. I referred to him as Rick *The Prick* Gonzalez. I avoided *The Prick* because, as a matter of principle going back to my formative years growing up on the streets of New York City, I don't deal with pricks. As such Chas Janssen had to deal with Mr. Sunshine. *The Prick* found every reason to delay and obfuscate. When negotiations on the Letter of Commitment reached an impasse, Chas demanded that I join him for a faceoff with the creep.



Rick *The Prick* resembled a snake in the grass

After being formally introduced, I noticed that *The Prick* bore a marked resemblance to a snake in the grass whose head I had stepped on the previous day. This resemblance was so striking that I finally asked *The Prick* if I could examine his skull to look for heel marks. Upon closer inspection, there were two welts at the base of his skull which, on further questioning, turned out to be bruises *The Prick* sustained after two janitors tripped over his head while he was groveling on his office floor, which he apparently liked to do before his morning coffee.

Our meeting with Rick *The Prick* Gonzalez didn't disappoint. He started off by claiming in a loud and whining voice that “setting up a Letter of Commitment with a private bank using US government loan funds is illegal, immoral, not in the State Department Handbook, and against government regulations.” Then he implied that the proposed fiduciary mechanism was also contrary to the Ten Commandments, unconstitutional, and a system that would undermine democracy in America.

His intransigence triggered immediate revulsion from every cell in my body. It seemed that the ballgame was over. I scoured my brain for something I may have learned on the mean streets of New York City to navigate this impasse. Then it struck me. Before Chas could say or do anything, I stood up, lunged forward, grabbed *The Prick* by the neck, and tried to strangle him while shouting at the top of my lungs,

⁹ The “Beltway Bandits” were consulting firms (a term used loosely when referring to the Beltway Bandits) that fed at the trough of the US foreign assistance budget. US foreign assistance projects to host country governments frequently mandated that sub-contracts be awarded to the Beltway Bandits, who accordingly charged outrageous overheads and fees on these contracts, and then turned around and hired former US Embassy officials after they retired. The Revolving Door swings ever so freely.

"...I hope you have made peace with Your Maker because I am going to beat the shit out of you. YOUR TIME HAS COME, YOU PRICK....!"

Chas pulled me off when *The Prick* started to turn blue; but *The Prick* was clearly chastised. He now chose his words more carefully, but he was still inflexible. In his best bureaucratese he continued his litany, "You cannot commit funds which have never been earmarked from an obligation made on a questionable authorization which has still not been appropriated."

Even though he said this in English, I had no idea what this meant, but that didn't matter. I was no longer involved in the proceedings, having been placed in temporary restraints after trying to strangle *The Prick*. However it was clear that *The Prick* was not willing to compromise. So Chas Janssen — that easygoing, mild-mannered, church-going Midwesterner — got up from his chair, calmly walked over to *The Prick*, and kicked him in the balls. Never have I seen such an immediate behavioral transformation, with *The Prick's* intransigence immediately becoming compliance; and the scumbag suddenly transformed into a picture of cooperation, as long as Chas promised not to kick him in the balls again. As a result the Embassy Finance Office agreed to everything that was requested and the Letter of Commitment was set up in a matter of days.

After the meeting Chas pulled me aside, saying with a sly smile on his face, "I hope you learned something today, Cashman. Those gangster methods you learned in the slums of New York City are too heavy handed in an official setting like this. Sometimes you have to handle things with a velvet glove. Take it from me...a swift kick in the balls always works."

I went to the airport to see our students as they departed for the US. One year ago these 30 students were living in places like Irian Jaya, Ambon, Sulawesi, Borneo, Makassar and Lombok and could hardly speak English. Now they would be living in large metropolitan areas such as New York, Los Angeles, Seattle, Honolulu, and Baltimore; and attending universities like UCLA, USC, Columbia, Michigan, Hawaii, North Carolina, and Johns Hopkins. They each had an air ticket and \$800 in their pockets in cash, which Chas Janssen had extracted from Rick *The Prick* Gonzalez under threat of kicking him in the balls again. The students wanted to learn two things from me; namely "When will our next check arrive?" and "What should we do if we run out of money?" Not one of them thanked me, because not one of them trusted me. Perhaps my strategic disappearances at critical junctures when money had to be paid had shaken their faith in me.



The Indonesian students attended 15 universities, among them UCLA in Los Angeles

Well the complaining didn't stop upon their departure from Jakarta. Once they got settled at their respective universities, the babies [oops, I mean the students], not only complained about money, but they also wanted to know if they could bring their wives or husbands over during their studies. Several even requested that their kids, their mothers, their mothers-in-laws, their great uncles, and even their servants come and live with them as well! Money was not their only complaint. Soon I was receiving missives because it was too hot or too cold or they were lonely, they were horny, they were homesick.

No matter the university or locale, nearly all of them found something to be dissatisfied with. One guy at the University of Michigan almost froze to death in the winter and requested that we immediately make arrangements for him to transfer to the University of Hawaii. I proposed that, for the next batch of students, we send babysitters to each university to take care of the infants. Rick *The Prick* Gonzalez was apoplectic when he heard my proposal. Too bad Chas Janssen wasn't here to kick him in the balls.¹⁰

When I got back to my office at IFPF after the students left, it was eerily quiet. After the hassle and drama of getting the first group of students off to their universities, everyone at the IFPF Training Department was physically and mentally exhausted. When I walked into my office, I noticed a big, fat, sealed, white envelope sitting on my desk addressed to "Pak Cashman." I slowly opened it to find that it contained a huge stack of Indonesian Rupiah, the Indonesian currency, equivalent to \$2,500; a tidy sum in Indonesia in 1983. I had no idea where the money came from. I sought out someone from the Training Department's Finance Office to find out why a stack of money was sitting on my desk in an envelope. I eventually found a man named Zainuddin. Our conversation went more or less as follows:

"I found this stack of money on my desk addressed to Pak Cashman? Do you know where this came from?"

"That's your cut." Zainuddin replied nonchalantly, as if to say "Why is this guy asking such a stupid question?"

"My cut of what?" I played dumb, seeing where this was going but not quite believing it.

"It's your cut of the money we made on the 30 students that just left for universities in the US."

I was a bit perplexed. Corruption is rife in developing countries and Indonesia is no exception. But I tracked all the money paid out from the loan, and all of it went to the designated payees with receipts. There was no way my colleagues at the IFPF could have made money on the students.

From the look of astonishment on my face, Zainuddin could see that I was sincere. "You really don't know, do you? Let me explain." And I received my first lesson in how petty corruption works in Indonesia.

When the US Government negotiated the loan with the Indonesian Government, it was agreed that the loan would pay for all costs related to their training — in-country English language training, tuition, fees, books, living expenses at the universities etc. As a counterpart contribution, the Indonesian Government agreed to pay roundtrip airfares to and from the US. Accordingly, the Indonesian Government paid for full-fare, roundtrip tickets for 30 people. The Training Department at IFPF purchased the cheapest tickets they could find on sketchy airlines, charged the Indonesian Government for full-fare tickets using phony receipts, and turned a profit of \$2,000 per person. In addition each student who received a scholarship to study in the US paid a one-time "acceptance fee" for the privilege. Finally each student tithed 10% of their monthly living allowance to the IFPF Training Department to guarantee that the checks kept on coming. This was how things worked in Indonesia.

Once the expropriated funds were aggregated in the Training Department's Finance Office, they were doled out to everyone in the Training Department based upon their position, their effort, and their

¹⁰ Chas Janssen had completed his assignment in Indonesia and returned to Washington DC by the time the next batch of students departed in 1984.

involvement in the entire scheme. That I was an expatriate working for the US Embassy made no difference. I still received a cut. That's how the system worked. If nothing else, it was fair.

I pondered this situation for a minute. That money in my pocket felt awfully good. There were a number of items I could buy with an extra \$2,500. Since I had no intention of reporting this windfall to the IRS, it was also tax free. No one at the US Embassy knew I received this bonanza, and the folks at the IFPF Training Department were not about to tell anyone. But wasn't it illegal for US Government officials to take bribes? Could this really be considered a bribe? It was more like remuneration for services rendered. It was appreciation for my effort. I started feeling pretty good about the recognition my Indonesian colleagues had bestowed upon me, but most of all, I felt great about receiving some extra money.

Then my conscience started bothering me. The reader may know by now that Larry Cashman does not really have a conscience. Nor have I ever been described as principled. I will make up any story, tell any lie, and concoct any stratagem as long as it benefits me. But I was feeling some pangs of guilt. Maybe I could get into serious trouble. So I addressed Zainuddin sympathetically.

"I'm not sure I should take this money. Maybe I should give it back."

"You can't give it back," he responded. "We don't have a system for taking money back. No one has ever given money back before."

And that was that. My conscience, what little I have, was assuaged. I tried to be an honorable guy and return the money. I failed. I had no choice now. It was my duty to take the money so graciously awarded by my colleagues at IFPF.

I was feeling pretty good about this new development on my way home. The money in my pocket was a visible symbol of my colleagues' gratitude for my efforts. Equally important, I imagined all the things I was going to buy with the money. A new basketball and tennis racket were first on my list. Those new Air Jordan's would look good on me. Some Bose speakers would complement my stereo system. It also would be nice to have one of those new Apple computers. And now I could afford to splurge on some Single Malt Scotch whiskey and Cuban cigars. I decided not to mention this incident to Sabrina. Her moral compass was much more sensitive to norms and appropriate behavior than mine.

The new tennis racket I bought had a large head with a huge sweet spot so I could smash forehands. With my new Air Jordan's I could run the basketball court with players who were ten years younger than me. When Sabrina saw those new Bose speakers blasting music from my stereo, she became suspicious since it was Sabrina who managed the cash in our family. As such my darling wife made several inquiries as to the source of my new largesse.

"Where did those new speakers come from? I also noticed some new basketball sneakers in your closet. Where did you get the money for these things?"¹¹ Sabrina's curiosity was aroused. This was bad news for me.

¹¹ Very few vendors would accept credit cards in Indonesia in the early 1980s because scams and rip-offs were common. Most purchases had to be made in cash. Sabrina controlled the cash in our family, and she doled it out sparingly to me. The less money I had, she reasoned, the less trouble I could find.

Larry Cashman is an exceptional liar. I can fabricate a plausible retort in a matter of nanoseconds or even sooner, but one of my manifold weaknesses is not being able to lie to Sabrina. She sees right through my lies. But I gave it a try.

“Oh, did I forget to mention that I recently received a small inheritance from my grandmother? I want to use some of it to replace the antiques that were stolen from our shipment of personal effects. I intended to surprise you.” I threw in this last bit of gratuitous dishonesty as a blandishment.

“So you received a small inheritance from your grandmother. Cashman, your grandmother died five years ago! Plus she had no money. Now cut the bullshit. Where did you get the money to buy all of these things?”

The jig was up. I had to come clean. I related the entire episode to Sabrina. When I told her that I decided to take the money, she was incredulous.

“You’ve decided to do WHAT!! Have you lost your mind? Return that money right now.”

“I tried to give it back. They won’t take it. I have no choice.”

“Cashman, your stupidity and lack of judgment never cease to astound me. Do you know what will happen if you are caught? You’ll lose your job and we’ll be thrown out of the country. We’ll lose this house and Carmencita will be tossed out of the International School. Take it back right now!” Sabrina left no doubt about how she felt.

I tried one more time to convince her. “Sabrina, don’t look at this money as a bribe. It’s more like an award for my contribution to the new training system. They must have really appreciated my contribution to give me \$2,500. It would be rude to return it. Plus how could I be caught? I don’t remember signing a receipt.”

Sabrina didn’t appreciate my casuistry. “I’ve had enough of your rationalizations, Cashman. Give the money back!”

“I already bought some things, but if it will make you feel better then I’ll just return the money that’s left over.”

“Cashman, not only is your brain malfunctioning lately but it appears that you are experiencing auditory problems as well. No. You will return all of it. Now!!! And when you need money for whiskey and cigars, just look at those Bose speakers and imagine they’re a bottle of Macallan and some Cohibas, because that’s where your money went.”

I was despondent the next day when I arrived at the office. Sabrina, however, had made it abundantly clear what I had to do. There would be no new Apple computer. I wouldn’t be drinking single malt whiskey and smoking Cubans for a while. I went to Zainuddin’s office.

“Pak Zainuddin, I’m very sorry but I can’t take this money.” I passed the envelope to him.

“I told you that I can’t take the money back. We have no system for that.”

“What can I do with it?”

“Well if you insist, you can give it away. You can give it to anyone you want. As a matter of fact you can give it to me if you want.”

Once again the adage, “there is honor among thieves,” seemed to be true. I couldn’t return the money to Zainuddin, but I could give it to him. Then it would become his. However, I wasn’t about to give it to Zainuddin. I’m sure he had already received a hefty cut by virtue of his position. In the end I gave \$200 to each of the lowest level staff in the Training Department — the secretaries and drivers, the janitors and cleaners. Since their salaries were about \$50 per month in 1983, this was a huge bonus for them.

So, dear readers, it will probably come as no surprise to learn that Larry Cashman became the most popular guy in the IFPF Training Department. Senior staff members were impressed by my generosity towards the lowest level staff. Indonesians are into social equity. My office was spotless every day — the cleaners and janitors made sure of that — that is, until I spilled food on the floor. My secretary had coffee waiting for me when I arrived at the office. When I needed a vehicle the drivers lined up to transport me. Once again, like the proverbial Phoenix rising from the ashes, Larry Cashman emerged from this entire affair smelling like roses, although \$2,500 poorer.

I was on a roll in Indonesia. Rarely do my affairs proceed so auspiciously. First, the US Embassy thought I was a superstar for vanquishing Linus Carey. Now my Indonesian colleagues thought I was Robin Hood. Larry Cashman is seldom held in such esteem. Everything was going great. And then Pedro Franklin showed up in Indonesia.