



**Larry Cashman, The
Shameless Opportunist**

Chapter 5

The Special Arrangement

Larry Cashman's tenure as the golden boy at the US Embassy in Jakarta ended soon after Chas Janssen's departure. Without Chas running interference between the Embassy bureaucracy and me, the conflict between those sanctimonious, white Anglo-Saxon Protestants from flyover country and the swarthy, foul-mouthed scoundrel from New York City was inevitable.

Although I hate to admit it, I deserved some blame for this clash of cultures. Rick "*The Prick*" Gonzalez could not overlook the fact that I tried to strangle him, and proceeded to make my life as miserable as possible (see Chapter 3). Linus Carey, the Administrative Officer I duped, and Bob Durham, the Contract Officer I scammed (see Chapter 2 for both incidents), had their respective daggers out for me, eager to have my head on a platter. Making derogatory remarks about the colossal derriere of the old crone in the Finance Office because she refused to cut checks for the students going abroad did not endear her or any of her colleagues to me. Similarly, vomiting at the Embassy's weekly Country Team meeting after a long night of drinking whiskey and tequila did nothing to burnish my reputation as an upstanding member of this distinguished community.

All of these transgressions were insignificant, however, compared with the misery I precipitated when I almost got caught buying marijuana.

Indonesia in the 1980s was an authoritarian police state under the Suharto dictatorship. The sale and possession of marijuana was a capital offense. When my family and I first arrived, I didn't even think about smoking pot. I was too preoccupied with getting it out of my household shipment so I wouldn't spend time in a jail in Thailand or Indonesia (See Chapter 2). As time passed, however, and the memory of that frightening episode receded, I began to miss the occasional doobie. So I started looking around for a source. One had to be extremely careful making these inquiries. Getting caught with marijuana in Suharto's Indonesia in 1982 was a bust. If you weren't sent to jail for an exceedingly long period of time, you were thrown out of the country the very next day.

Following some discreet inquiries, I found what I was looking for via the Director of the Center for the Institutionalization of Regional Commerce in Underdeveloped Societies (CIRCUS). I have dealt with some sketchy non-government organizations (NGOs) in my day, but CIRCUS was run by a bunch of clowns,

with the director as their ringleader. In brief he turned me onto some excellent weed and without hesitation I asked him to share his source.



The Ancol Outdoor Art Market in Jakarta

After vacillating for a moment, he agreed. “I know a batik artist at the Ancol Outdoor Art Market¹ named Sumarno. He deals in high quality marijuana on the side. I can arrange for you to meet him. The rest is up to you.” Such a venture was indeed risky in the extreme. I had no idea whether this was a scam, or if the batik artist was reliable. I did know that the CIRCUS director had a reputation in the expatriate community as an imbecile, so I needed to cautiously navigate these potentially murky waters. On the other

hand I needed to score some weed. The CIRCUS director agreed to arrange a meeting.

Thus several days later I set off for Ancol to meet Sumarno on a weekday night. I reasoned that Ancol would be less crowded on a weekday night hence less chance for things to go awry. I was scared shitless on the drive down to Ancol and instructed my driver to turn around twice. But each time I changed my mind, saying to myself, "Hey why are you so worried? Sumarno must have some innocuous procedure to make these deals. Otherwise he'd be out of business or in some dank prison cell." The need to score some good herb, as usual, clearly outweighed any apprehension or good judgment on my part, and I proceeded on my precarious expedition to Ancol.

When I arrived at the appointed kiosk and met Sumarno, my discomfort level sky-rocketed off the charts. He was in his mid-thirties, average height for an Indonesian; he was wearing baggy pants, a batik tie-dyed shirt, and had long stringy hair that fell to his shoulders. This guy appeared to be right out of a street scene from Haight Ashbury, only 20 years later. It was just my luck to meet Jakarta's only hippie on my first marijuana deal.

I immediately went into secret agent mode. I started speaking in a whisper, using code words for “weed” and “payment.” I self-conscientiously covered my mouth when speaking so no onlooker could possibly read my lips. I then made sure that Sumarno understood the risk I was taking and the importance of discretion. I repeated it so many times that Sumarno got tired of listening to me. For his part, Sumarno acted like we were discussing the sale of a pound or two of shrimp. He made no effort to conceal what was about to go down.

Sumarno directed me to the back of his kiosk where he produced a small bag containing aromatic ganja. “Smoke some of this and tell me if you like it. And stop muttering about the risks and the high stakes of this transaction. You're making me nervous.” We then proceeded to smoke his weed, which literally ‘knocked my socks off.’”

¹ The Ancol Outdoor Art Market adjacent to the seaport in North Jakarta was a rarity in 1980s Suharto Indonesia. It was populated by dissident counter-culture Indonesian artists who did not fit the mold of the traditional Indonesian artisan. It was, however, popular with tourists and expatriates looking for wood carvings, sculptures, paintings, gems, batik, and weavings. The generous payoffs the police received from its proprietors accounted for its continued existence.

"I have a pound of this, if you want it. The price is 140,000 rupiah (\$200)." I told him I wanted it for sure.

"OK. Wait in front of my kiosk while I fetch it." And with that Sumarno scampered away.

I was flying high while sitting in front of Sumarno's kiosk waiting for him to return. The bright lights of Ancol, the multi-colored batiks and paintings, the intricate ikat² weavings, and the hustle and bustle in the night market were mesmerizing. I could see the outlines of the Bugis fishing boats³ moored in the harbor, next to the giant oil tankers taking Indonesian crude oil to distant markets around the globe. Fifteen minutes later Sumarno returned with a pound of marijuana loosely wrapped in newspaper, the pungent buds bursting from the sides and spilling onto the floor, and plopped the newspaper package onto my lap.



A Bugis fishing boat in the Indonesian Archipelago

"That will be 140,000 Rupiah." That was it? That was the secret deal? A pound of marijuana packaged in newspaper and dumped in my lap? There was no secrecy. There was no discretion. There was just a pound of marijuana.

I wanted nothing more than to gather up my new acquisition post haste and beat it. But at that exact moment, with Sumarno standing beside me, the Deputy Chief of Mission⁴ (DCM) at the US Embassy walked by and noticed me sitting at Sumarno's kiosk with a bundle of newspaper perched on my lap.

"Hello Cashman." He knew me from my previous exploits, both good and bad. "I see you have already learned about the wonderful items available in Ancol." He was staring directly at the newspaper package on my lap, and the peculiar buds sticking out the side. "Well it looks like you just picked up something to take back home." The DCM was one of those straight-laced, uptight, Midwesterners who had little use for a rascal like me.

I was paralyzed with fear, unable to concoct a witty rejoinder or some Cashman mendacity. I was speechless. So there I was, high as a kite with an Indonesian hippie standing at my side, while the DCM from the US Embassy was making vague inquiries about the pound of marijuana wrapped in newspaper lying on my lap. It looked like the end of the road for Larry Cashman. I resigned myself to my fate.

² *Ikat* is a dyeing technique used to pattern textiles prior to dyeing and weaving the fabric. The word *ikat* literally means to tie or to bind in Indonesian. When the dyeing is finished, all the bindings are removed and the yarns are woven into cloth. Ikat weavings are most prevalent in the eastern islands of Indonesia from Bali to Timor.

³ The Bugis people originate from the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. They were maritime traders whose uniquely constructed vessels plied their wares throughout the Indonesian archipelago in their ships with the characteristic hull, mast, and sail design. Bugis vessels are still seen throughout the Indonesian islands as cargo, transport, and tourist vessels.

⁴ The Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) at US Embassies is second in command to the Ambassador. The Ambassador is analogous to the Chief Executive Officer and the DCM is his/her Chief Operating Officer.

To my surprise, Sumarno stepped forward, waving his long thin arms while smiling and saying, “Those are the herbal ingredients for a special ‘*jamu*’ that I’m teaching Cashman to prepare. It will help him to keep his big mouth shut....like it is right now. ”



Bottles of *Jamu* prepared from herbal ingredients and sold by Javanese women

“*Jamu*” is a genre of herbal Indonesian traditional medicine made from natural materials like bark, roots, flowers, seeds, herbs, spices, and even leaves. It can be found everywhere in Indonesia, generally prepared and sold by Javanese women carrying bamboo baskets on their heads filled with bottles of *jamu* that they peddle in villages, alleyways, and markets. Demand for *jamu* was so high in Indonesia that large companies like Djamu Djago and Air Mancur produced it in sachets that, when mixed in water or fruit juices, was consumed by young and old as an energy drink. Everyone knew what *jamu* was. The DCM certainly did.

Sumarno had fabricated the perfect excuse, and his story about making *jamu* was convincing. The DCM not only fell for it, he was a student of *jamu* and wanted to know more about it, information that Sumarno was more than happy to provide. With Sumarno and the DCM engaged in a friendly discussion on the preparation of *jamu*, it looked like I was off the hook without opening my mouth.

Now it was Sumarno who couldn’t keep his trap shut. Addressing the DCM, Sumarno said, “If you want, I can get you a pound for \$200.” The creep was trying to sell weed to the DCM, and the latter, not realizing what he was bargaining for, was interested.

This tete-a-tete shocked me out of my reverie. If I didn’t do something very quickly, the DCM was about to buy a pound of marijuana. As such I asked the DCM if we could have a word in private. “I really don’t think it’s a good idea for you to buy this, since I don’t know this guy well and I can’t vouch for the quality and safety of his product. Why not let me try it first and if it’s any good, I’ll let you know and you can buy some later. If you like, I can even pick it up for you.”

The DCM was determined, however. “Don’t be such a wuss, Cashman. It looks fresh and has such a fragrant aroma. This is a great opportunity to learn more about *jamu*.” The DCM motioned toward Sumarno. “I’ll take a pound of your finest *jamu*.”

Well this worked out well — for Sumarno. He suddenly had \$400 more in his pocket than he had about an hour ago, but it was rapidly turning into a disaster for Larry Cashman. Because of me the Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Jakarta had just purchased a pound of weed from an Indonesian hippy. As such I proceeded to do what I do best in any time of crisis — I cut and ran as fast as my legs would carry me. I didn’t want to be around when the DCM’s weed arrived.

As expected, I received a frantic call from the DCM the next day. “Cashman, come to my house tonight after work. It’s urgent.” What was urgent was finding an excuse to get me off the hook.

When I arrived at the DCM’s house, he was livid. “Did you know that the *jamu* I purchased last night was marijuana? When I reached my car and showed my driver, he started laughing and said, ‘That’s not *jamu* sir, that’s marijuana, and from the aroma, I’d say it’s good weed.’ I was flabbergasted, of course,

and brought it right back to Sumarno to get my money back. He not only refused to reimburse me, he charged me an additional \$400 to take it off my hands.” What a chump this guy was. I wished I could get him into a poker game.

“Cashman, what do you know about this?” he demanded. “I should have known better than to deal with anybody that you know.”

Fortunately I had warned him about purchasing anything from Sumarno the previous evening. I knew exactly how I would play this. I feigned disbelief at the DCM’s misfortune, but retorted, “Well, if you recall, that is exactly what I suggested to you last night. But you refused to listen. You even called me a wuss for warning you. I can only tell you that the *jamu* I purchased was first class herb. My maid ground it into a powder, mixed in a little beet root and parsnip, and steamed it, as Sumarno directed. It relaxes you and loosens you up. Would you like to try some? In your present condition, I think you could use something to mellow you out right now.”

The DCM didn’t want to hear anything more from me. “Cashman, I don’t care what you think. You’re a troublemaker and a nuisance. That’s what everyone at the Embassy says about you. I should have walked right past you last night in Ancol.” Personally I couldn’t have agreed more with that sentiment.

The DCM was just warming up. “This entire incident is your fault. And it cost me \$600. It will do neither of us any good if anyone finds out about this affair, so you better be discreet.” I couldn’t have agreed more with that sentiment either. “As for myself, I will be watching your every move Cashman. If I find out that you were responsible for this fiasco, or if you make any more trouble for this Embassy, I will have you expelled from the country, and that’s a promise!”

As the reader can imagine, I was extremely happy and relieved to have survived this ordeal intact. But it should be remembered that I had made many enemies at the US Embassy in Jakarta. Now it appeared that the DCM would be on my case too. To make matters worse my new boss, the guy who replaced Chas Janssen, was a card-carrying, religious fundamentalist who had no use for a blasphemous atheist like me. If my antagonists had their way, they would cleanse the embassy compound of the blight that had stricken their cozy little existence. This attitude did not bode well for me.

On the brighter side I still had some friends in Jakarta. IFPF and the Indonesian government were firmly in my corner. They loved the system we had established to send their staff to universities in the USA, and they wanted me to continue to work with them. Most important of all the Ambassador was still on my side. If the Indonesian government wanted to keep me around, he was happy to accommodate. You see, the loan that the Indonesian Government had taken to send Indonesian students to universities in America was the kind of development assistance that all US ambassadors love.⁵ If this loan went well, there would be another, and perhaps another. The Ambassador didn’t want the DCM, Rick *The Prick* Gonzalez, or any of the countless toadies at the Embassy upsetting this prospect.

⁵ When ambassadors can take credit for a loan where all of the money was spent in the USA; the Indonesian students returned to their countries with a favorable view of the USA; and as icing on the cake, the Indonesian government repaid the loan, these high level diplomats will even protect the likes of Larry Cashman to sustain it.

To avoid further problems I had to maintain a low profile and stay out of trouble. I developed the perfect strategy to do this. I had always maintained two offices — one at the US Embassy and one at IFPF. To the extent possible I steered clear of the Embassy and the inhospitable environment there, and holed up in my office at IFPF. To shield myself from unpleasant stimuli, I erected a protective layer of bureaucracy around myself. My secretary had standing orders that, in the event that someone called when I was actually in my office, she would inform them that I was not in the office. If someone called when I was not in my office, she informed them that I was in a meeting. In short order nobody from the Embassy could reach me unless I returned their call. And I wasn't returning any calls.

Unfortunately, I still had to attend those pesky weekly Country Team meetings at the US Embassy. I handled this challenge in phases. During the first phase I never spoke or even moved a muscle at the meetings. I sat there like an inanimate object showing no signs of life other than occasionally munching on some snacks offered to the participants. During the second phase I sent my driver Tolu to attend the meetings in my place. With a fake beard and lifts in his shoes, those numbskulls thought Tolu was me. This strategy was very successful, until Tolu got so bored with these gatherings that he threatened to quit if I sent him to any more meetings.

As a last resort I was forced to move to phase three. I had a life-size mannequin made that looked exactly like me, and had the mannequin attend all Embassy meetings in my stead. A confederate brought the mannequin to the meeting, removed it when it adjourned, and even chatted with it a bit to enhance the effect. The mannequin sat at the end of a long conference table far from most participants, and was positioned with his head looking down at a notebook studiously taking notes. This arrangement worked nicely for a while. The irksome DCM was even heard to comment that "Cashman seems to be taking things more seriously. He even takes notes at our meetings." He apparently had been smoking some of Sumarno's weed. But the shit hit the proverbial fan when one of the Embassy secretaries developed a crush on the mannequin, and while making a move on him, the mannequin's head fell off and the secretary had a heart attack. She eventually recovered but the Embassy doctor advised that, for health reasons, she should avoid mannequins in the future.

As the reader knows by now, Larry Cashman has few redeeming qualities and even fewer skills. What I do have, in spades, is monumental good luck. And I needed some of it now. Most of the obsequious flunkies at the American Embassy in Jakarta wanted to get rid of me. After the mannequin incident, even the Ambassador had trouble defending me. My biggest challenge was about to begin.

The Ambassador had decided to combine the Embassy's Population Dynamics Office, which Chas Janssen had previously directed and where I worked, and the Embassy's Health Office into a large, super-office called the Office of Population and Health. He wanted to bring in an internationally recognized leader in the field of population and health with experience in Indonesia to head this new office. This was bad news for me. The Director of the new super-office would be a big shot with a mandate to clean house. Heads would roll, and I had no doubt that mine would be first on the chopping block. I was in trouble.

After an extensive search, interviewing experts from around the world, the Ambassador chose the new director. And who do you think he selected? None other than Dr. Martinus Papadopoulos from the University of Hawaii. That's right, Dr. P, my former faculty advisor at the University of Hawaii; the guy who sent me to Thailand for my fieldwork; the guy who recruited me for my current position and

backstopped me to make sure I didn't screw things up; the guy who knew me and my myriad character flaws, personal idiosyncrasies, and intellectual shortcomings better than anyone. As I have stated previously in this narrative, "If Larry Cashman has to choose between being good at something or being lucky, he will opt for the latter every time."

Thus through sheer serendipity I had managed to escape another brush with impending disaster. When Dr. P arrived to begin his assignment, he asked me to pick him up at the airport. I was so relieved to see him. When he saw me, he flashed an avuncular smile and said, "Cashman, as I expected, you have fucked things up royally since Chas Janssen left. We need to talk."

Several days later, after he had consultations with people at the US Embassy and the Indonesian government, Dr. P called me to have lunch. "Well Cashman, your juvenile pranks and gangster-like behavior have definitely pissed off everyone at the Embassy. As a group they are unified in their conviction that getting rid of you should be a high priority. Even the Ambassador, who likes what you are doing, told me to rein you in. On the other hand, IFPF and the Indonesian government love you. They consider you one of their most effective consultants who is kind and generous with their staff.⁶ They said your Indonesian language skills are nearly fluent. They want you as a consultant and will oppose any efforts to remove you. After listening to both sides, I felt like I was speaking with people living on two different planets."

The opinion of the Embassy staff didn't surprise me, but at least the Indonesians were still on my side. Dr. P continued, "We both know that most of the jerks at the Embassy are self-righteous stooges who view a rascal like you as a threat to the status quo. Personally I couldn't give a rat's ass what they think. What I care about is the opinion of the Indonesian government. We need to find a way to minimize your mischief at the Embassy, and maximize your effectiveness with the Indonesian government. To do that I have a special deal to propose."

I didn't think that Dr. P would care about what those uptight imbeciles with their congenitally constricted anal sphincters at the Embassy thought. I was relieved, however, to hear that Dr. P had a deal to propose. Hopefully, it would improve my situation. I couldn't wait to hear it.

"From now on I will be your interlocutor at the Embassy. If you have a problem with the Front Office, the Finance Office, Administration, Contracts, whatever it is, I will deal with it. You, on the other hand, will cease and desist with your usual shenanigans. That means no more strangling people, no more mannequins, no more snide remarks about fat asses, no more surreptitious marijuana deals." Yes, Dr. P knew about that too. "You will avoid the Embassy wherever possible, but when you do visit its premises, you will be an exemplar of good behavior."

This sounded like an arrangement I could live with. Dr. P continued, "In return you will work directly with me from now on to develop new projects. I have many ideas to improve our foreign assistance programs with the Indonesian government. When I meet senior government officials, I want

⁶ Returning that \$200 I received as remuneration for my contribution to the overseas training system to the staff at IFPF was still paying dividends (See Chapter 3).

you to be there as well. When further actions are necessary, I want you to follow-up with their staff. And I want you to conduct all of these discussions in the Indonesian language.

Dr. P was on a roll now. “When you were a student in Hawaii, I realized that despite your many imperfections and your big mouth, you can write reasonably well. I need you to do some writing now, Cashman. When I need briefing documents prepared, you will prepare them. When I need concept papers written, you will write them. When I need letters drafted, in English or in Indonesian, you will draft them. What do you think about this deal?”

Compared to the alternative before Dr. P arrived, which was to get fired and thrown out of the country, this new proposition sounded pretty good.... no more hassles from those supercilious creeps at the Embassy; and I'd be working directly with Dr. P as well as spending more time with our Indonesian counterparts. Now this was right up my alley

“What about IFPF?” I inquired. “You said they still wanted me to work with them.”

“Yes they do. I've already spoken with them. You will remain in your current position, but I will hire an assistant who will take care of all your routine tasks. This will free up your time, which you will spend working with me.”

This deal was beginning to sound better and better. Then the neural connection between my brain and my mouth misfired again. “This sounds like I'll be doing important work. Should I assume that there will be a generous salary increase to accompany this new arrangement?”

Dr. P had heard it all from me before – hubris, insolence, ignorance, arrogance. I had seen his reaction on previous occasions when I said something stupid; And once again, his face turned a bright crimson red, as the veins in his neck wildly pulsated, and then he let loose with an impressive string of epithets and insults that rained forth from across the table. “Cashman, you are a piece of work. Your balls are in a wringer at the Embassy, you are about to get shit-canned out of the country; and I offer you a deal that can save your sorry ass. And what, in your infinite wisdom, is your response? You want a fucking raise! I don't know why I waste my time with you. Finish your soup. We're done here. Meet me at my office tomorrow and we'll work out the details of our new arrangement.”

And that is how Marty Papadopoulos and Larry Cashman began a working relationship that endured for the next 11 years in two countries. It was a highly productive one but always combative. I understood and respected him, and to his great credit Dr. P understood and tolerated me.

Dr. P wasted no time launching our new arrangement. At our first meeting he laid out his plan to develop four new schools of public health in Indonesia.

“During my short term assignments in Indonesia over the past several years, I have had discussions with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health about developing new schools of

public health in Indonesia. Right now there is only one school of public health, at the University of Indonesia⁷, and it cannot meet the demand for public health education from the Ministry of Health.”

“I met both ministers yesterday, and they are interested in developing four more schools of public health in Semarang, Surabaya, Ujung Pandang, and Medan.⁸ I want to support their efforts with a large grant, but there is nothing but skepticism for such a project among our *esteemed* colleagues at the Embassy. I will meet the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health on Friday to discuss the development of these four new



North Sumatera University in Medan

schools. If they agree to proceed, I will take this idea to the Ambassador. I need a concept paper that explains the reasons why we want to do this, exactly what we want to do, where we want to do it, who will implement the project, and approximately how much it will cost to do so. The concept paper must be concise, no more than five pages, and I need copies in both English and Indonesian by Friday to distribute to the Ministers.”

Dr. P was impressive. He had already held consultations and laid the groundwork for a project to develop four new schools of public health in Indonesia. Talk about hitting the ground running.

“That seems like a great idea,” I responded innocently. “But who will prepare the concept paper? Then getting a good Indonesian translation for the Ministers will take time. I assume you’ve assembled a sizable team to do this.”

Dr. P looked straight at me and smiled his most mischievous smile. As the realization hit me, I almost collapsed in horror.

“Wait a minute! You want me to prepare the concept paper? Today is Wednesday and you want me to prepare a concept paper on a project I know nothing about by Friday? Have you lost your mind? There’s no way I can do that.”

“Cashman you are not listening. I need the first draft by tomorrow morning, not Friday!” Dr. P exclaimed brusquely. “We’ll spend Thursday refining it so that you can translate it into Indonesian Thursday night and it can be distributed to all relevant parties on Friday. And by the way, the more time you spend with your histrionics and lame excuses, the less time you actually have to start working and complete this assignment.”

“I have no idea what this project is about. I’ll be up all night writing this concept paper.”

⁷ The University of Indonesia, referred to as UI, was the premier academic institution in Indonesia.

⁸ Semarang was the capitol of Central Java Province and the home of Diponegoro University. Surabaya was the capitol of East Java Province and the home of Airlangga University. Ujung Pandang was the capitol of South Sulawesi Province and the home of Hasanuddin University. And Medan was the capital of North Sumatera Province and the home of North Sumatera University.

“Calm down, Cashman! If you refrain from your customary marijuana intake tonight,” he chided, “maybe you’ll be able to stay awake long enough to prepare a draft. Now stop blabbering and I’ll explain the concept to you.”

Dr. P pulled out his yellow legal pad and proceeded to sketch the who, what, where, why, and how much of the Schools of Public Health Project in a confused, complicated diagram with boxes, arrows, linkages, feedback loops, red ink, blue ink, circles, and sketches. When he was finished, it looked like the plan for Ronald Reagan’s Star Wars missile defense system. I had no idea what he was talking about. Now it was my turn to smile impishly and say, "Thanks Dr. P. That sure was concise and clear. I think I’ll jump out the window right now!"

Dr. P didn’t appreciate the sarcasm, as he continued, “Bring me the draft tomorrow at 10 AM. Prepare a schematic that explains the whole thing in one image. We’ll refine everything tomorrow, and then go meet the Ministers on Friday. Both Ministers don’t speak much English. I’ll begin the discussion, and then I want you to take over and explain everything in Indonesian.”⁹

I left that meeting with a schematic that looked like an electrical circuit diagram and a pounding headache that threatened to explode my cranium. I had 18 hours to make sense out of what Dr. P just said, then prepare a five page concept paper as well as create a conceptual diagram that explained the whole thing. I didn’t know where to start. Maybe if I twirled around like a dervish in a mystical trance for a while, it would give me the inspiration and insight I needed. Things like this seemed to work in Indonesia.

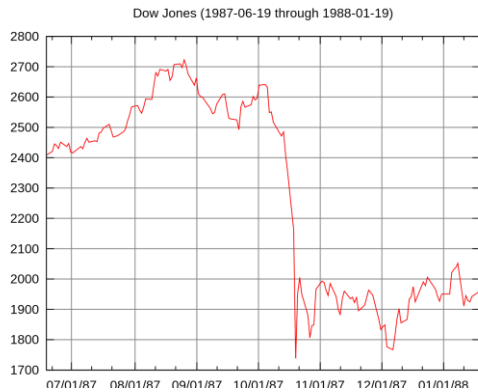
Instead, and contrary to Dr. P’s advice, I smoked a doobie from Sumarno’s best weed as soon as I got home. I stared at his diagram and tried to remember what Dr. P had explained to me. Then I smoked more weed. Much to my amazement, it all began to make sense after a while. I started writing furiously on my computer and, lo and behold, I had a rough draft for Dr. P at our 10 AM meeting. Do wonders ever cease?

“Well Cashman, this is bit rough, but we can use it as a shitty first draft.” Not exactly the resounding vote of confidence I had imagined last night when I exhaustedly completed the first part of this assignment. We revised and reformulated the draft throughout the day, only stopping for about 15 minutes every two hours so I could check the stock market. I was obsessed with the stock market. By 6 PM we had a workable concept paper and a coherent schematic.

Dr. P was pleased with the product. “All right Cashman, the first part is more or less finished for the time being. Now you need to translate the concept paper into Indonesian using that technical jargon and high-falutin bureaucratic language you spew so effortlessly at seminars and workshops.” This was the easy part. I did so many translations from English to Indonesian, and vice versa, that I started dreaming in Indonesian.

⁹ Dr. P could speak Indonesian, as he had been in the country on and off for the past 15 years. However, when he first arrived, he was not fluent enough to carry on a lengthy technical conversation. He would eventually become fluent.

The next day we met with both Ministers and their staff. Dr. P began by summarizing the approach set forth in our concept paper and then I provided a detailed technical explanation in Indonesian. Both Ministers gave us the green light to proceed.



On Black Monday 1987 the stock market fell 20%, and Cashman jumped out a window and blew his knee out

From this point onward Dr. P worked the Embassy side to allay skepticism and obtain approval for a large grant; while I worked the Indonesian side to etch out all the excruciating details required for a large technical assistance project. There were, not surprisingly, several setbacks along the way, like when the stock market dropped by 20% in one day and I actually jumped out the window this time and tore the cartilage in my knee. I had to be medically-evacuated to Singapore for knee surgery and afterwards I was on crutches for three weeks. In spite of these unforeseen mini-catastrophes, within four months of Dr. P's arrival we had a signed grant agreement for \$15 million to develop four new schools of public health in Indonesia that had been approved by both the Indonesian and US governments.

"Our arrangement worked pretty well Cashman. Now let's move on to the next project."

And that was how Dr. P and I rolled for the next three years. After the new schools of public health project, we developed a program to expand immunizations for women and children, followed by a program to control infectious diseases among the same "target groups." There was a malaria control project in Indonesia's eastern islands and family planning for the islands of Sumatera, Borneo, Sulawesi, the Malukus, and Irian Jaya.¹⁰ We even developed a condom social marketing program. We became quite the team. I did the writing and Dr. P handled the Indonesian and US Embassy bureaucracies. Eventually I learned to intuit what Dr. P wanted in his concept papers, strategic plans and project documents, and to comprehend his convoluted diagrams. For his part Dr. P made sure that the jerks in the Embassy Finance, Management, Contracts, and Budget Offices left me alone. I was even able to reoccupy my Embassy office without precipitating a clamor. Dr. P and I became a project development juggernaut.

In our eagerness to develop new projects, we unfortunately overlooked one essential issue. Once these projects were developed and funded they had to be implemented and supervised. Dr. P had several staff to do this, but they were lamebrains. One was an alcoholic, another was a sex offender who couldn't be trusted around women and children, and the last one was a religious fundamentalist who peppered his conversations with Bible quotations. They were all useless. As a result we had all these fine new projects, but they were languishing and going nowhere because there were three nitwits trying to manage

¹⁰ These islands were universally called the Outer Islands of Indonesia, as opposed to Java and Bali, where the majority of the population lived. They were remote, less densely populated, and were the domicile of colorful ethnic groups. I had visited all of the Outer Islands while recruiting candidates for IFPP's overseas graduate training program and knew the governors of those provinces well.

them. With no other choice Dr. P and I resorted to managing some of the projects ourselves. We shortly became overwhelmed and needed help.

One day I met Dr. P at the Embassy, and he had a smile from ear to ear. "I have solved our staffing problems. I'm getting rid of the three cretins. And I just recruited two highly competent new staff to work with us. They are experienced and have a track record of success. They will not only manage our existing projects. They will join our team to develop new ones."

This was the best news. If Dr. P, who was skeptical in the extreme about government bureaucrats, was excited about the new staff, they must be hotshots. But would the new staff be able to adapt to my unorthodox behavior and myriad personality flaws?

"The new staff members are accomplished foreign service officers, Cashman," Dr. P explained. "They're not used to the crude comportment, coarse language, and unsavory conduct you frequently display. You'll have to clean up your act a bit...starting today!" This would be a challenge.

"There's one more thing Cashman." I nervously flinched when I heard Dr. P say that. There was always one more thing. "I have served as a buffer between you and the US Embassy bureaucracy for the past three years as per our bargain. It's time for a change. I'm tired of mediating your blunders. From now on the new staff will play that role. Both are competent, experienced, and highly respected professionals. I'm confident they can handle it. The question is whether they can tolerate you. If you can keep your big mouth shut and control your boorish impulses, this new arrangement may actually work."

I wasn't happy to hear this, but I knew it was bound to happen one day. Besides things had cooled off in the past three years and most of the sanctimonious assholes that were at the Embassy when I arrived had already left Indonesia.

The two new staff that Dr. P recruited surpassed all expectations. Clara Miller had worked in US Embassy foreign assistance programs in the population sector for ten years. Her most recent assignment was in Bangladesh. Joyce Diamond was a health sector specialist who had an exemplary record from her assignments in Swaziland and the Philippines. Both of them were superstars. They were technical experts in their fields and bureaucratic wizards. They were also two of the nicest, most congenial people I ever met. Everyone liked and respected them. They immediately took over the management of all existing projects, and joined Dr. P and me on the development of new projects. Most importantly, both were oblivious to my many idiosyncrasies. We were a seamless team.

This arrangement proceeded smoothly for about six months. One day Dr. P, grim-faced, called Clara, Joyce and me into his office. "Sooner or later I knew this was coming; namely that you, Cashman, would do something stupid and create trouble for all of us. Well that time has apparently arrived."

Obviously something I did had pissed off Dr. P and I was about to find out. Dr. P informed us that "the Contracts Office has received a letter from the law firm of Nasution, Bakrie, and Siswopurwanto that they would be representing Cashman in his upcoming contract negotiations. The Embassy Contract Officer, Declan O'Malley, went ballistic when he read the letter, shouting that Embassy employees have no right to seek legal counsel for contract negotiations, and decided he would refuse to deal with Cashman

on his new contract. The Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM),¹¹ who has little fondness for Cashman from his previous escapades, called Cashman's conduct unprofessional and then notified me that our office should start looking for someone to replace him."

After summarizing my latest blunder, Dr. P. looked up to the ceiling, and asked in a very low voice, "Cashman, what on earth possessed you to hire a lawyer and why didn't you let me know what you were planning to do in the first place?"

During my tenure at the US Embassy in Jakarta I had negotiated several contracts. I found the process dehumanizing, demeaning, crude, and unprincipled. In my mind the Embassy Contract Officers were a bunch of winos, swine, bumbling bureaucrats, and mean-spirited scumbags and I did not want to go through another ordeal with any of them.

Declan O'Malley, the current contract officer, was a rotund, leprechaun-like life form who suffered from a psychiatric deviation of manic depression called psychothymia, characterized by rapid mood changes, overeating, and flatulence....not exactly traits that would endear him to human beings but quite popular among leprechauns. Since my first negotiation with that whiskey-drinking slob Bob Durham in Bangkok,¹² I had been swindled, cheated, deceived, conned, and misled by US Embassy Contract Officers. In my previous interaction with His Fatness, Declan O'Malley, he cheated me out of thousands of dollars. As this negotiation approached, I decided to hire a lawyer and remove myself from the entire unsavory process. Although I'm not a constitutional scholar, I didn't think seeking legal counsel was unconstitutional. I'll admit that not mentioning my plan to Dr. P was a mistake, but who could have imagined that such a small issue would create such a ruckus.



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"This situation is a mess," Dr. P continued. "If we want to keep Cashman around,¹³ it will require some gentle maneuvering to soothe the ruffled feathers. Cashman, you will have to ditch the lawyer. It is a non-starter." Turning to Clara he continued, "I want you to tell O'Malley that Cashman has come to his senses and abandoned the notion of using a lawyer. Joyce, I want you to discuss this matter with the

¹¹ This was the same DCM who had purchased marijuana at Ancol Night Market because of me. He was not one of my biggest fans.

¹² See Chapter 2 "*The Road to Indonesia*" for a descriptive account of Cashman's negotiation with Bob Durham.

¹³ By this time Dr. P and I were working together so effortlessly that he hardly had to explain things to me. I could decipher his scribbled schematics and convert them into comprehensible prose. I could listen to his ideas once and transcribe them into coherent concept papers. He definitely wanted to keep me around.

Ambassador. For the time being, he remains a Cashman booster for reasons I cannot comprehend. For my part I will make sure Cashman does not commit another ridiculous faux pas.”

Joyce and Clara went to work immediately. Clara convinced O’Malley that this was all a misunderstanding and, although not ecstatic about having me around any longer, he agreed to proceed with the negotiation. Joyce lobbied the Ambassador, who agreed to neutralize the DCM. When Joyce and Clara worked the system, they could perform miracles.

The three of us met O’Malley to negotiate my new contract. To my amazement everything went smoothly and we agreed on all issues. O’Malley just had to prepare a draft of the contract.

We met two days later to review the draft contract. Much to my chagrin, the salary figures were less than those previously agreed upon. Unscrupulous to a fault, O’Malley said he was renegeing on our previous agreement and if I didn’t like it, it was "tough shit."

Clara and Joyce motioned for me to leave the room so they could speak with O’Malley privately. I’m not sure how they convinced him to change his mind. I seriously doubt they tried to strangle him or kick him in the balls, like I would have done if I was left to deal with this brute. Both were too genteel for such behavior. Whatever they did, they persuaded O’Malley to re-insert the originally agreed salary figures, and left O’Malley to prepare another more acceptable (at least to me) draft.

Unbeknownst to everyone, I had my lawyer review the draft contract from O’Malley. He made four suggestions, all benign language changes to remove ambiguities. Clara and Joyce reviewed the changes and agreed that they were negligible. We all went to see O’Malley.

As we entered O’Malley’s office, the beast was belching and farting, side effects from the tacos and frijoles he devoured every day at the Embassy Cafeteria and the six pack of beer he consumed for lunch. This boded poorly for us, as the creature was obviously in bad humor, not to mention the noxious odor that permeated his office. I told O’Malley that I had some minor modifications to his draft to improve its clarity. He grunted then farted, which I interpreted as an invitation to proceed with explanations of the modifications. He received the first three with equanimity. On the fourth, a minor semantic point, O’Malley went berserk and threw all of us out of his office.

Following our rude and abrupt ejection, I tried to assess what had just happened. In less than one minute, we observed a calm man suddenly transform into a wild man. What could have possibly caused such an abrupt behavioral change? My first guess was that O’Malley might be having his period, accounting for the sudden mood swing. But I wasn’t sure if 48 year old male leprechauns still had monthly menstrual cycles. Then I thought that maybe he was menopausal and had missed his estrogen supplements. I offered O’Malley some Eugynon oral contraceptive pills in case he needed an estrogen boost. This suggestion incensed him even further, since he usually takes Noriday and how dare I offer him a contraceptive product that wasn’t “made in America.” Then it dawned on me. O’Malley was having a psychothymic episode of manic depression, and there’s no reasoning with a psychothyme. Thwarted by O’Malley’s rotundity, his flatulence, and his mercurial personality, we made a tactical retreat.

We finally decided on a simple strategy to circumvent His Portliness. Clara and Joyce would consult with the Ambassador and ask him to amicably resolve this issue. Once they settled the matter with the Ambassador, this affair would be over. I would cease and desist from further involvement with O'Malley and remain on the sidelines.

As the avid reader may have come to realize at this point in the narrative, Larry Cashman is not very good at "ceasing and desisting" so I decided to take matters into my own hands. I placed an ad in the local Indonesian newspaper to recruit a suicidal Shiite Muslim or an unemployed Al Fatah PLO guerilla to drive a car bomb into O'Malley's 7th floor apartment complex. Surprisingly, not a single Shiite Muslim or Al Fatah guerilla applied for the job, but three Embassy contract employees showed extreme interest in exploring this opportunity. Finally, a guy named Abdullah agreed to take the job. Abdullah didn't seem very bright though. He agreed with the fee but haggled with me over health insurance. I hired him anyway. You don't need a brain surgeon to drive a car bomb.

Just then, Clara and Joyce called to tell me that the Ambassador had agreed to sign my contract and we didn't need O'Malley anymore. Since O'Malley was now expendable, I gave Abdullah the go ahead for his original assignment. It was only thwarted because Abdullah had trouble getting his car into the elevator of O'Malley's apartment building on his way up to the 7th floor. Maybe I should have hired a brain surgeon.

Dr. P, Joyce, Clara, and I continued working as a team for the next three years. With Dr. P calling the shots, with Joyce and Clara working their magic in the Embassy, with douchebags like the DCM and Declan O'Malley neutralized, and with me staying out of trouble, the juggernaut kept on rolling. Joyce and Clara were like machines. They could prepare documents that took me days to write in a matter of hours. When they eventually became fluent in Indonesian, they worked the Indonesian government side better than I ever could. With my contribution to the team becoming less important, I increasingly turned my attention to my new avocation – scuba diving. Now you are probably wondering where could the best scuba diving be found in Indonesia? Yup...Bali and the eastern islands of Indonesia!¹⁴ And that's where I headed next.

¹⁴ The eastern islands of Indonesia — Lombok, Sumbawa, Sumba, Komodo, Flores, Alor and West Timor — have some of the best scuba diving in the world.