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The Lobbyist

A Short Satire
by
Ross Peter Nelson

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The Lobbyist

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CHARACTERS

JESSICA SHARPE: *Lobbyist. Dresses in upscale business wear.*

NATHAN SMITH: *An assassin for hire. Dressed neatly but anonymously. Dark glasses.*

SETTING

A brightly-lit modern office.

TIME

Now.

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By Ross Peter Nelson

SCENE 1

AT RISE: *JESSICA is at her desk, busy on her computer. Her phone rings. She picks up.*

Send him in.
JESSICA

As she hangs up, NATHAN enters. She offers her hand. They shake.

JESSICA (*Cont'd*)
Good afternoon. Jessica Sharpe, Freedom Unlimited – A Foundation for a Better America.

NATHAN
Ms. Sharpe. Nathan, uh, Smith.

JESSICA
How can I be of assistance?

NATHAN
Everything we say here is confidential?

JESSICA
Of course.

He looks around, uncomfortable.

NATHAN
There's a lot of light in this place.

JESSICA
Are you photo-sensitive? We can go into a conference room where there's more control.

NATHAN
It's all right, as long as we're the only ones here in the office.

JESSICA
You're sure?

NATHAN nods, then proceeds.

NATHAN

I've been doing some research into your organization. I'm very impressed.

JESSICA

Thank you, Mr. Smith. As you can see, we pride ourselves on professionalism.

NATHAN

I mean, with what you really do.

JESSICA

What do you mean? We're a lobbying group. That *is* what we really do.

NATHAN

But it's more than that, isn't it? You don't just support legislation; you actually write the bills.

JESSICA

Oh well, it's true that we sometimes obsess about wording. Many citizen legislators aren't lawyers and it's important to get the details right.

NATHAN

I saw the "policy document" you sent to the state legislature. At least half of the text in the new "Make Voting Safe and Secure" and "Only For People We Like Act" came directly from that document.

JESSICA

Of course, we want to help —

NATHAN

And the bill allowing the governor to override the health department? A senator told me that the bill was drafted in its entirety by Freedom Unlimited – A Foundation—

JESSICA

F.U.

NATHAN

Excuse me?

JESSICA

Saves time. Freedom Unlimited – A Foundation for a Better America is kind of a mouthful.

NATHAN

I see.

JESSICA

On occasion, we do *suggest* the wording of legislation. However, our primary purpose is to make sure that the bills we support make it through state and federal legislatures.

NATHAN

Perhaps you misunderstand me. I'm not opposed to what you do, I'm impressed.

JESSICA

Oh. Thank you! But why exactly are you here?

NATHAN

I'm hoping you'll do something similar for me.

JESSICA

I see. I have to warn you, Mr. Smith, our services are quite expensive. We typically represent corporations not individuals, unless of course, you're an individual like Charles Koch or Jeff Bezos.

NATHAN

You could say I represent a ... a sort of union of like-minded people.

JESSICA

(Horried)

A union!

NATHAN

Is there a problem?

JESSICA

Do you realize that the median wage of a union worker is 28% higher than that of a non-union worker? Those extra salaries eat into profits that could be going to shareholders!

NATHAN

Not that kind of a union. More of an association. A guild.

JESSICA

An industry trade organization?

NATHAN

You could call it that.

JESSICA

What a relief. What's your cause?

NATHAN

Assassination.

JESSICA

You mean like the CIA in third world countries?

NATHAN

No. A more vulgar term might be hit man. There are hit women, too, I should add. We don't discriminate.

JESSICA

Let me get this straight, you want us to sponsor legislation supporting the legalization of mob killing.

NATHAN

The Mafia? That's a hurtful stereotype, Jessica.

JESSICA

My apologies, but —

NATHAN

We've been misunderstood for such a long time. Do you know the history of the word "assassin"?

JESSICA

Do tell.

NATHAN

The first assassins were the Nizari Isma'ili, a group devoted to the Persian philosopher Hassan-I Sabbah. A small group of them were so devoted to his truth, they would kill to preserve it. They were known as the "men of principle" or Asāsiyyūn. Then Marco Polo showed up around 1300 and confused them with Hashshāshīn, the smokers of hashish.

JESSICA

They do sound somewhat similar.

NATHAN

Ever since, we've been associated with drugged-out killer zombies. That's cancel culture from 800 years back.

JESSICA

But you do actually kill people, don't you?

NATHAN

That's not the point.

JESSICA picks up the phone and begins to dial.

NATHAN

Who are you calling?

When she doesn't respond, NATHAN jumps up and pulls a gun from inside his jacket.

NATHAN (*Cont'd*)

Put the phone down! Now!

JESSICA

(She does)

You came to my office with a gun!?

NATHAN

Thanks to your lobbying for open-carry. (*Beat*) I mean, I've always carried, but now I have one less thing to worry about.

JESSICA

I wasn't calling the police. I was just going to remind my secretary of something.

NATHAN

Really.

JESSICA

Your hashish story reminded me that the Koch brothers wanted a bill creating a more free market approach to marijuana. (*Beat*) It was rude of me to interrupt our business meeting with a phone call. I apologize. (*Motions for him to sit*) Please.

NATHAN relaxes somewhat and sits back down.

NATHAN

I couldn't take a chance, I didn't know how you'd react when I said I was an assassin.

JESSICA

I understand, but I'm not sure how you expect me to support murder.

NATHAN

It hasn't been a problem for F.U. in the past. You've lobbied for the Sackler family, and their OxyContin accounts for the deaths of over a thousand people every week. You've provided legislation for the big oil allowing them to poison the atmosphere with CO₂, you've also—

JESSICA

CO₂ is a naturally occurring substance.

NATHAN

So is arsenic, Ms. Sharpe. Should I be allowed to use it?

JESSICA

Do you?

NATHAN

It's considered somewhat old-fashioned nowadays.

JESSICA

Fascinating. However, Mr. Smith –

NATHAN

Nathan, please.

JESSICA

– you're quite mistaken in comparing legitimate businesses, albeit ones with certain unfortunate side-effects, with murder for hire.

NATHAN

We think of ourselves as entrepreneurs.

JESSICA

Really, Mr. ... Nathan, I don't think –

NATHAN

We provide a service for a fee. There is a customer and an economic transaction. Isn't that the essence of capitalism?

JESSICA

Well, yes, but –

NATHAN

And there are trickle-down benefits as well.

The phrase "trickle-down" acts on JESSICA like a bell to one of Pavlov's dogs. She's suddenly much more suggestible.

JESSICA

Trickle down? How so?

NATHAN

The funeral industry, for instance. There's ten to twenty grand added to the economy right there. The floral business gets a boost. And with one fewer person around, a job opens up, stimulating new employment.

JESSICA

It's an interesting argument, Nathan, but I don't see how you can get around the fact that murder is illegal.

NATHAN

I consider that "excess regulations that impede small business."

Another Pavlovian hit.

JESSICA

Excess regulation! That *is* right up our wheelhouse.

NATHAN

And that's why I'm here. With your help in crafting legislation, we can change the rules. Didn't you just get water pollution laws changed? No more limits on pesticides and industrial chemicals in wetlands and streams?

JESSICA

Yes, but your agenda is, shall we say, a bit more radical.

NATHAN

Think of it as a challenge.

JESSICA

I like the business case, but I still foresee complications. Our lobbying often requires the support of evangelicals and there may be religious objections.

NATHAN

Shouldn't be an issue. They've already been convinced that getting rich is a spiritual value when Jesus said the exact opposite. They divorce right and left despite his command about that. And their support for Donald Trump –

JESSICA

Please, Nathan, let's stick to legislation, and not get bogged down in politics.

NATHAN

All right, but I'll also note that the entire Southern Baptist denomination was founded in order to support slavery.

JESSICA

I believe they apologized a few years ago.

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes