

RECTIFYING OVERSIGHT

by George Sapio

Copr 2010

Major Walter Foster.....Male

Beth Grant.....Female

Setting: Office at Guantanomo

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An office at a military base. Maj. Foster sits behind a desk, talking on a phone.

FOSTER

She says she's from who? The Lions? You gotta be kidding. The community organization? What the hell is she doing here? Official transport? Nobody travels on official transport unless they're official. Are you sure she said lions? That's like, what? The elks. They sell mints or something. Wear stupid hats. What's her clearance? Level three? Classified? Look, I'm supposed to play golf in half an hour...okay, okay! Send her in. [*Hangs up*] Shit.

Beth Grant enters. She is dressed neatly and asexually and carries herself with complete surety. She is used to getting what she wants.

FOSTER

Good afternoon, Ms. Grant. How can I help you?

GRANT

The easiest way would be to sign these papers and authorize a check for the amount written on the bottom right. [*She hands him a thick stack of papers*]

FOSTER

I don't...understand...

GRANT

May I sit? [*FOSTER nods, reading*] Thank you.

FOSTER

What is this?

GRANT

The first page is a summary.

FOSTER

"Notice of pending litigation...party of the first part"... settlement amount...is this a typo?

GRANT

No.

FOSTER

Are you trying to sue the US army?

GRANT

This is only a goodwill notice of intent.

FOSTER

You can't sue the US Army. It's not legal.

GRANT

Actually it is. Technically.

FOSTER

Well, then it's impossible. Especially for this amount. Are you with the Lions Club?

GRANT

This is a notice of pending litigation between the United States Army, its representatives and affiliates, and my client, Lyons Partnership.

FOSTER

I'm sorry? Who the hell is Lyons Partnership?

GRANT

Lyons Partnership represents various artists in the entertainment industry.

FOSTER

May I suggest that you are a few miles from where you should be? This is Guantanamo Bay. Not Hollywood.

GRANT

The US Army owes Lyons Partnership the amount indicated for unauthorized and illegal use of various products owned by Lyons and its affiliates. The certificates of ownership are on pages one hundred and thirty-seven through two hundred and sixteen.

FOSTER

Who gave you clearance to come here?

[She hands him a pass. FOSTER examines it, looks at her, then back again at the pass. Then at her again.]

FOSTER

How did you get this? I know *[indicating the signature on the pass]* General Stanley and he wouldn't *[just give a pass to...]*

GRANT

Please address yourself to the summary page. It explains everything.

FOSTER

"Through various testimonies Lyons Partnership and its affiliates have determined that the United States Army has employed numerous products registered and held by Lyons Partnership without seeking permissions. Repeated and unauthorized use of the products listed on pages forty-one through seventy-six constitutes copyright infringement on the part of the United States Army and its affiliates." What the hell are we talking about?

GRANT

It's very clear if you read the notice.

FOSTER

Copyright infringement? Lady, I could have you arrested for this. This is a US Army base in a hostile territory. We are at war, too, if you haven't noticed. I don't give a rat's ass about copyright infringement.

GRANT

You are Major Walter Foster?

[FOSTER holds up his name plaque]

And you are *[she reads from a paper]* in charge of the security and interrogation wing?

FOSTER

Look, if you're here to bitch about the US Army using "torture" techniques, forget it. You'll spend more in lawyer's fees than you'll ever get in compensation, if that were to happen, which I sincerely doubt. No one sues the US Army. Well, they do, but they never win. Now why don't you just turn right around and hop right back on that plane [and go find something else to do...]

GRANT

You may want to look at the declaration at the top. Where it says "Litigants."

FOSTER

"US Army...affiliates... Major Walt--" You gotta be kidding.

GRANT

You have admitted yourself you are in charge of the detention and interrogation facility.

FOSTER

You can't sue me!

GRANT

You are responsible for the practices of this interrogation wing. Therefore you are culpable.

FOSTER

Look lady—

GRANT

And as such, must answer to a legal summons.

FOSTER

I'm in the army! I don't answer summonses. What summons?

GRANT

It's in the envelope tucked inside.

[FOSTER looks, holds up envelope]

FOSTER

Wait, this is a...did you just serve me with a subpoena?

GRANT

You are required to present yourself and your lawyer if you so chose, at the New York City Central District Court on the date specified.

FOSTER

Is this a joke? Did Harper put you up to this because I beat his ass in golf last month?

GRANT

I would suggest getting a very good lawyer. You'll need it. Am I to understand you will not be accepting our generous pre-litigation settlement offer?

FOSTER

This amount is ridiculous! How can anybody pay that? This is what it costs to run this place for a year...!!

GRANT

That amount has been arrived at from the number of properties determined to have been inappropriately used in your interrogations and by testimony of former inmates and interrogation staff culled from direct interviews or quotes from reputable news sources.

FOSTER

What “properties”?

GRANT

Properties in question are, as I stated before, listed on pages forty-one through seventy-six.

FOSTER

[*Shuffling through the papers*] Wait...hold on...these are...are these songs?

GRANT

Artistic property.

FOSTER

Songs.

GRANT

They are legally classified as musical compositions.

FOSTER

And you want to...what? Sue us...me...for what? Using these?

GRANT

Look at page forty-seven.

FOSTER

You gotta be kidding.

GRANT

The properties are listed [on pages...]

FOSTER

Yeah, yeah, yeah...Babylon, by David Gray...Yellow Submarine, the Beatles... Girls Just Wanna Have Fun, Cyndi Lauper... Yeah, we use these, so what? These people oughta be glad someone's playing them!

GRANT

They probably are. But they were employed without seeking permission from the copyright owner. That [constitutes copyright infringement.]

FOSTER

Lady, we are trying to win a war here! We use whatever tactics we deem necessary in the fight against evil. I got two hundred terrorists out there, fifty yards away, all of them planning to blow us all to kingdom come! I am an American, a patriot and I will use whatever I need, whenever I need it and if you and the Lions Club don't like it you can...

GRANT

Sue you?

FOSTER

Don't you realize how serious this is? I mean none of these songs are even all that good. Look...“Ricki” by Toni Basil...that's annoying, right? “I Will Survive.” “Achy Breaky Heart.” Come on. I mean who cares about...wait...no. No. This is ridiculous...you can't be serious...you're suing me over a freakin' kid song?

GRANT

That song is the trademark of one of the most well-known and respected children's shows in the entertainment industry.

FOSTER

Barney???

GRANT

And as such, takes its reputation very seriously.

FOSTER

It's fucking Barney!!

GRANT

Various news sources and former interrogators and interogatees have reported that you have used the Barney theme song repeatedly, probably over several thousand times, in your efforts to procure information from alleged enemy combatants.

FOSTER

Are you telling me I'm getting sued by a purple dinosaur?

GRANT

Am I correct in assuming that if you needed to, for advertising purposes, you would seek permissions to use the likeness or the words of the commander-in-chief?

FOSTER

It's not the same thing!

GRANT

Would you?

FOSTER

Yeah...probably. Jeez.

GRANT

Legally and practically it's the same thing. Like the commander-in-chief, Barney is a character beloved by millions of people, in this case children who have not yet developed critical thinking skills. A symbol of great magnitude and influence. A timeless icon in children's development produced in every major developed country and forty-three languages. And therefore its image and reputation must be protected. Don't you realize how serious this could be?

FOSTER

Are you telling me that a stupid kid's song is more important than stopping terror?

GRANT

Are you suggesting that associating Barney the Purple Dinosaur with ruthless terrorists will be beneficial for millions of children the world over? What do you

think the children will think of when they see Barney and are encouraged to sing along?

FOSTER

How should I know? I don't care! Lady, I just run the place, okay? I sign the goddamn bills. I don't do the...interrogation stuff. I don't even know the song!

*[She produces a small tape player and hits the play button.
The Barney theme begins to play.]*

GRANT

Do you recognize this?

FOSTER

Yeah, I do. Now turn it off.

GRANT

Are you positive?

FOSTER

I said yes, now shut it off, will ya?

GRANT

Can you state for the record that you have used this song as part of your interrogation techniques?

FOSTER

No, I cannot.

GRANT

Are you contradicting yourself?

FOSTER

No. You asked if I recognized it. I do. Now turn it off!

GRANT

Can you tell me whether you have personal knowledge of this song being used as an aid to interrogation?

FOSTER

Turn it off! It's driving me nuts! *[He picks up phone, dials]*. Get me a squad of MPs up here immediately. You're going in the can, lady. Now turn that off!

GRANT

I need to determine...

FOSTER

Look...I'm just a middle manager. I got the big brass over me and the people who do the real work underneath. Okay? This is not my problem! I don't do torture. I mean interrogation. Look, turn it off, willya? Just turn it off! Okay...I was never there when they did it. I mean allegedly did it. I had no idea they were doing... with it. I just thought they liked to play loud music! I'm innocent! TURN IT OFF!! *[Reaches for phone again]* Where the hell are those MPs?? Hello? Hello? What the...

[Foster walks to doorway, looks out]

FOSTER

Where the hell did Sergeant Kincaid go?

[GRANT looks at him, turns off tape player.]

FOSTER

Thank god.

GRANT

Sergeant Kincaid has been reassigned.

FOSTER

Reassigned? How can he be reassigned without my knowledge? And how would you know?

GRANT

Under the new regulations all posts and duties are now under the control of the human resource department.

FOSTER

The what?

GRANT

The new owners have decided to restructure the existing framework and have started [streamlining and reassigning--]

FOSTER

New owners? New owners of what?

GRANT

You didn't get the memo?

FOSTER

What memo?

GRANT

The US Army has been brought under new management.

FOSTER

What the hell are you talking about?

GRANT

As of 12:01am this morning, the organization known as the United States Army has been sold. The new [owners are now engaged...]

FOSTER

You can't sell the US Army!! It's...it's...an army, ferchrissakes!!

GRANT

You are aware of the global depression? And the fact that unemployment in the United States has reached a record 18 percent?

[FOSTER just stares]

GRANT

In order to reinvigorate the world economy, the United States government has agreed to sell its largest asset, the Army for 35 trillion. Krona, if you're interested.

FOSTER

What the hell is a krona?

GRANT

The currency of Sweden. The only stable currency left, actually. In the face of everything that's happened in the last few years, only Sweden had the sense to divest itself of everything before the crash. It was easy, actually. No one pays attention to them anyway.

[She hands him a copy of the New York Times]

FOSTER

I'm no longer in the United States army...?

GRANT

The new owners have agreed to keep the mission of the company known as the US Army as it has always been. You are still protecting the United States. The only difference is that now you're working for Japan.

FOSTER

Japan?

GRANT

So, in fact, by signing that voucher, you greatly please your new bosses. It should do you well when review time comes around. Which will happen in about fifteen minutes. The new owners have sent a delegation to inspect the base. They like it when people can be convinced to see things their way.

[FOSTER signs voucher. GRANT takes it back.]

GRANT

Well done, major. I wish you the best of luck. You'll need it. *[She turns to go, then stops]* Did you mention earlier that you play golf?

FOSTER

Yeah... I play...golf...

GRANT

Are you any good at it?

FOSTER

I'm the base champion. Two years in a row...

GRANT

The new owners, as I'm sure you would guess, are avid golfers, so you should have plenty of company on the course. I do suggest, however, that you learn to lose gracefully.

[GRANT exits. Lights fade.]