

COUNTER INTELLIGENCE

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

- SAM An optimistic young lady with way more intelligence than anyone knew, and a major streak of karma of a completely unknown nature.
- PENNY Sam's wife. Intelligent, practical, and with a much more traditional type of intelligence.

SETTING

A dining room.

SCENE

(Samantha (Sam) is sitting at a dining room table. She is flipping through a diary with one hand while tapping a pen on a blank form. A nearly empty bottle of wine is nearby, as well as an unopened bottle, but no glass. Penny enters.)

PENNY

What are you doing?

SAM

Going through my diary. I need to get some information for this form. Did you know that in order to get a security clearance you have to list out every single place you've lived, and who you have talked to for... basically forever?

PENNY

Uhhh, no. And why do *you* know this?

SAM

You remember that website I told you about?

PENNY

Can you be little more specific?

SAM

The one where they're looking for people to serve as political appointees for all kinds of different positions.

PENNY

You applied for that? I thought you said you weren't going to.

SAM

Yeah, well... I decided to after all. It's not like my current job at Handi-Mart is taking me places.

PENNY

Which did you apply for?

SAM

All of them.

PENNY

Hon, there were like 400 positions listed.

SAM

I know. 427. I counted as I was checking them off.

PENNY

That doesn't look a little desperate at all. Or suspicious.

SAM

I just didn't want to miss one that would be a good fit. I figure better safe than sorry, right? Anyway, they asked me to interview for this one, but they said I needed to fill out this SF-86 form.

PENNY

What's the job?

SAM

Director of something or other.

PENNY

Wow. I didn't even know we had a Department of Something-or-Other.

SAM

Wait. Let me... *(She check on her phone.)* Here it is. Director of Natural Intelligence and Security.

(Penny just stares at her.)

What?

PENNY

Director of... what?

SAM

Natural Intelligence. And Security.

PENNY

They asked you to interview for that...

SAM

I guess they figured that I have a lot of natural intelligence. You know, basic smarts. And you know I've always been very confident, so I think I'm kind of a natural for matters of security.

PENNY

Let me see that.

(She takes the phone.)

Sam, this says it's for the Director of *National* Intelligence and Security.

SAM

What?

PENNY

National, not natural.

SAM

Oh. Well, whatever. Still has to be better than Handi-Mart. I mean, last week they scheduled me for two back-to-back shifts. Definitely no natural intelligence happening there.

PENNY

Hon, I really don't think...

SAM

What? You don't think I could do this?

PENNY

It's just that... *(She looks at the phone again.)* It says here that you have to have a college degree. You don't even qualify.

SAM

Ummm, actually...

PENNY

You don't have a college degree, Sam.

SAM

Well, actually...

PENNY

You don't have—

SAM

I do.

PENNY

No you don't.

SAM

I do.

PENNY

No. You don't. We talked about you going back to get one, but...

SAM

I did. After we talked, I decided not to, but then I changed my mind and applied.

PENNY

You went back and got a degree without telling me??

SAM

I was going to, but remember you saying that it was stupid. But I really wanted to do it, so I just...

PENNY

You said you decided not to. Why did you lie me?

SAM

I didn't want you to stress out about it. Besides, it was just in biochemistry, so, you know, no big deal or anything.

PENNY

You... What?

SAM

Biochemistry. It was kinda fun. Anyway—

PENNY

No. No no no. You got a degree in biochemistry and kept it a total secret??

SAM

I did my homework while I was at the store. It's not like they care what you read when you're behind the counter. Besides, you have a degree, so I wanted to be as educated as you.

PENNY

Technically I have two degrees, but that's not the po— *(Notices a look in Sam's face. Stops and stares at her.)*

SAM

Okay, fine. I also got one in political science. It was just supposed to be a minor, but then I saw that if I took only a few more courses that—

PENNY

Whoa whoa whoa. You got two degrees without ever mentioning... I can't believe this. I'm so proud of you! To think that you have the same number of deg— Oh no.

SAM

Well...

PENNY

Did you...

SAM

Sorry. I've got one more. But it's no big deal. Really. It's just architecture.

PENNY

Architecture?

SAM

With a minor in German.

PENNY

German??

SAM

It's just that I really like that Guggenheim museum we went to in New York, and I figured if architects from Germany were making really cool buildings like that then—

PENNY

Guggenheim's the name of the building, not the architect. The architect was Frank Lloyd Wright.

SAM

Oh no. Is he Spanish? Because I was torn between German and Spanish, and—

PENNY

No. He's American.

SAM

Whew. That was close.

PENNY

I just can't believe you kept all this a secret.

(Penny picks up the open bottle of wine and finishes it.)

SAM

See? That's why I think I'd probably be a good fit as the Director of Natural Intelligence and Security. I can keep a secret.

PENNY

So it seems.

SAM

Besides, people always said I wasn't the brainy type, but I think I could handle it. Oh, hey. Do you think I'd get my own office?

(Penny gives her a blank stare with a disbelieving blink.)

I'd hate working in one of those big cubicle farms, where everyone's just packed in.

PENNY

Cubical farms. Yeah, Sam. I think you'd get your own office.

SAM

That I could decorate any way that I want?

PENNY

As the Director of National Intelligence and Security, I bet they have people who will decorate your office for you.

SAM

But if I wanted to do it, do you think they'd let me?

PENNY

Yeah. Sure. I suspect they would.

SAM

That would be so wicked. I was thinking I would do something involving those frond baskets, and maybe with different stuffed animals I would change with the seasons.

PENNY

Did you... even look up what the Office of National Intelligence and Security does?

SAM

Not really. I went to the website and looked at some of the pictures. They have a really slick logo, and it looks like they might fly around in planes or go on safaris or something.

PENNY

Sam, honey, they do espionage.

SAM

Espionage?

PENNY

Uh huh. Well, technically counter espionage.

SAM

That's awesome!

PENNY

It is? How so?

SAM

Because my experience at Handi-Mart will help me get the job.

PENNY

How do you figure?

SAM

I've been working at the counter there for over a year.

PENNY

I don't think—

SAM

This is so exciting! I feel like I really have a shot here.

PENNY

I don't think—

SAM

We should celebrate!

(She picks up the empty bottle, notices it is empty, reaches for the other one, then looks around for something.)

SAM (CONT)

Where did I put the corkscrew...

(Penny hands it to her.)

PENNY

Here.

SAM

Thanks.

(She opens the bottle, then offers it to Penny. Penny gives a weak smile, then takes a sip. Sam takes a bigger swallow.)

How much do you think it pays?

PENNY

Sam, sweetheart, I think you shouldn't get your hopes—

SAM

Because if it pays more than \$20 per hour, I'm thinking we might want be able to save up for a trip. We've been talking about that forever—

PENNY

I really think you shouldn't—

SAM

What do you think of Cleveland. I bet Ohio is super exciting.

PENNY

Sam?

SAM

Yeah?

PENNY

Look. I just think...

(Sam looks at Penny, waiting. Her face is a portrait of optimism and excitement, and it makes Penny stop.)

What? SAM

I just think... PENNY

Yeah? SAM

PENNY
Maybe we should go to Cincinnati instead of Cleveland.

Sure. That's okay. SAM

Great. PENNY

SAM
But can we plan it later? I need to fill this out.

PENNY
Sure.

Great. SAM

(Lights go out, and a moment later come back up on the same room, but now they are eating dinner. Sam is very sad.)

PENNY
Oh, hon. I really wish you hadn't gotten your hopes up like that. I told you it wasn't likely.

SAM
I know. It's just that...

PENNY
You really weren't qualified. Positions like that... they take a certain kind of—

SAM
But I got all those degrees. I just thought...

PENNY

I know, but they're looking for people who have a very specific type of knowledge, you know? Experience in...

SAM

But they didn't even write back. The least they could do is write back.

PENNY

I'm sorry. Let's just... Maybe we can take a trip and get your mind off of it.

SAM

Like we can afford to take a trip.

PENNY

Maybe we can go to that new restaurant in Falls Valley. I read that they have really great subs.

SAM

I guess.

(There is a silence, and they sigh simultaneously. Just then, there is a ding. Sam checks her cell phone. Her eyes grow wide.)

PENNY

What is it?

SAM

We... We... We are going to Cincinnati, baby!

(Lights out.)