

HAROLD ARTHUR BARTLETT, III

Bradford Cottage, Polpis Road, Nantucket Island, MA

EXPERIENCE

Chief Financial Officer
Staff Accountant to CFO in 5 years
Worked in Data Identification and Data Security Industries

EDUCATION

Harvard BS and MBA	Full Scholarship, Summa Cum Laude, #1 Rank
Andover Prep	Full Scholarship, Summa Cum Laude, #1 Rank
Boston Orphanage	#1 Rank

PERSONAL

Friend	Ian Bradford
Relative	Uncle Louie
Girlfriend	Yvette Truque'
Estranged Family	Ex-wife and daughter

HOBBIES

Fundraising for Boston Orphanage
Gambling, Investing
Writing Limericks
Shooting Cannons

CHAPTER 1--THE "B" BOYS

Ian Bradford's vacation compound

Saturday evening

"So, Mister Harold Arthur Bartlett the Turd, Mister Almost-Retired Chief Financial Officer, what the hell are you going to do with yourself?" Ian asked from his green Adirondack chair. "You can't live in my cottage forever. Ginny will kick you out for a paying tenant."

They were sitting on the B deck porch, their namesake version of a kids' tree fort that was attached to Ian's house. The green lawn surrounding the house was the perfect backdrop for the colorful showcase below. Nantucket-red shorts matched with pastel sports jackets. Green and blue belts with white whales. Blue pin-striped buttoned-down shirts. Light summer dresses displaying bronzed skin acquired through hours of dedicated sun-bathing.

Servers in brightly-colored parrot head shirts offered tray after tray of hors d'oeuvres while Caribbean songs played over the concealed speakers. A line had formed at the raw bar.

"One hundred and three, without the six servers and us," Harry said from his white Adirondack chair. He'd automatically counted the attendees when he first sat down. It was a job hazard. Insurance people evaluate risk. Doctors diagnose. Beancounters count.

"Abacus head," Ian said. "And don't change the subject."

"I figured you wouldn't notice, being drunk on your personal wine," Harry said.

"It's not my wine, I only distribute it, and you changed the subject again," Ian said. "You owe me a limerick. You've got ten seconds."

Harry inhaled the Cuban cigar, generated a smoke ring, took a sip of Ian's 1990 Meursault Charmes Comtes Lafon Chardonnay, and said,

There once was a man on Nantucket
Who was challenged to write a quick couplet
He sat in his chair
In the warm summer air
And created this cute little nugget."

"Russian judge votes three," Ian said.

They sat quietly for a while, listening to the Beach Boys perform "Kokomo."

"I honestly don't know," Harry said. "I could teach, but that means summer sessions. There's consulting but being nice to idiotic clients sounds like work. People say everyone has a story in them; maybe I should write a book?"

"Right, a beancounter stringing five words together. When was the last time you wrote something longer than a business email, Freshman year English?"

"Sophomore year. English Composition 101. Nora Wilde," Harry said. "Maybe I'll go to fashion school or learn to play an instrument."

"How about more fundraising for the Orphanage? You'd get more of these," Ian said, shaking his red fabric bracelet.

"One a year is enough, thanks," Harry said.

"How about working on a permanent relationship?"

Harry shook his head like he was trying to get water out of his ears. "Where in Fenway Park's Green Monster seats did that come from?"

"Seems to me things are going okay with Yvette. Maybe she'll powder your hairy butt because I'm not changing your diapers. "

"She is pretty special."

"Harry, she's great, but you are the Holy Grail. Not ugly with a few bucks in the bank, able to speak in sentences, and only one failed marriage. You need to be finding your soul mate."

"That's not a full-time gig."

"In your case, it might be."

"Ouch," Harry said.

"Speaking truth to power, my brother. To be continued," Ian said. "Now, let's get this show on the road. How about we let our better halves start things off?" Ian sent out two texts. Their better halves arrived in five minutes.

"How do you look the same as when we were in college?" Harry asked Ginny.

"By staying in shape cleaning up after you two," she said.

Yvette gave her a high-five. "Now, what do you two want? I'm running someone's party, you know, working for a living, not like some people I could name."

"We thought you two would like to shoot the cannons tonight," Ian said.

"You mean it's not just a male sexual thing?" Ginny asked.

"Well, maybe, but the offer still stands," Harry said.

The gala invitation had spelled out the rules for donations. When the cannon booms, everyone reaches for their checkbook and fills in plenty of zeroes.

Ian slid the wooden base holding his miniature Civil War replica cannon over two long bolts and secured it to the railing with wing nuts. Harry did likewise with his U.S.S. Constitution version. Noise-producing shotgun shells were loaded, earplugs inserted, and mallets handed out.

“Commence firing. Fire at will. Fire at will,” Ian said.

“You need to stop watching World War II movies,” Harry said.

“But we always win.”

Ginny and Yvette each grabbed a wooden mallet with both hands, wound up, and smashed the firing knobs at their respective cannons' ends. Simultaneous booms echoed off the nearby houses, and a few foghorns replied from the harbor.

“We French come to America’s aid once again,” Yvette said. “Viva la France.”

Harry and Ian replaced the cannons and their accessories in their wooden, velvet-lined cases. As the white smoke floated away, the servers collected the checks in canvas bags decorated with a map of Nantucket.

Harry raised his bullhorn. “Thank you all for your donations. Please proceed to the tent below. I think you’ll enjoy tonight’s musical guest. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Jimmy Buffet and his Coral Reefer Band!” The crowd bolted down the wooden stairs like kids leaving school for summer break, *oohing* and *aahing* at the news of their “A” list entertainment.

“Yvette, how do you collect the checks?” Ginny asked. “Those servers could be stealing.”

“Watch,” Yvette said. “The parrot head shirts aren’t just to add to the atmosphere.” Sure enough, the shirts stuck out like red foxes on white snow. They moved toward the house, opposite the crowd flow, and entered the house through the front door below the B deck. The

foursome traipsed down from the deck to the dining room, where three people took the bags from the servers.

“Oh, and the bags have GPS trackers,” Yvette said.

“Harry, that must make your beancounter brain explode with endorphins!” Ian said.

“It’s endorphins, you moron, and you keel over at the sight of a number unless it’s your commission check,” Harry said.

“If you two can control yourselves, take a look over there,” Ginny said.

They watched a man in a green, Red Sox cap and two women in pink versions dump the checks out like Halloween candy, arrange them face up, and then feed them into a machine with a telephone wire leading to a wall jack. The machine rejected one or two checks, and one of the pink hats manually input the information.

“Let me introduce you to my most trusted contractor,” Yvette said.

“Just one second, let me finish this batch,” the green hat said. After a moment or two of shuffling a pile of checks and feeding them into the machine, he removed his hat and offered a handshake. He appeared middle-aged and had a big, open smile, wire-rimmed glasses, and the most trusting-looking face you could imagine. “Hi, I’m Mike Hancock,” he said, handing out business cards.

“Any relation to the famous John Hancock?” Harry asked. The modern-day version standing before Harry looked nothing like the famous John Singleton Copley portrait of the bewigged, well-dressed, Revolutionary War hero. Today’s version was pot-bellied, with an ill-fitting brown toupee under which gray strands protruded around his ears.

“Well, if you believe in family lore, yes, but I’d be a lot richer if it were true.”

“And this is your business?” Harry asked.

“Yes, Hancock Contract Help. Mostly we staff parties and basic office positions, but we started processing charity donations after I saw the number of parties each summer.”

“Those check scanners are great,” Harry said. “I’m guessing yours creates a database from the check name and address and mails the donor a tax receipt?”

“Saves a ton of time,” Mike said.

“But how do we know the money is in the bank?” Harry asked.

Mike tapped a few phone keys and showed the screen to the group. It was a bank website for a bank account named “Boston Orphanage.” He tapped more keys. “I just texted you the link with a temporary username and password. Access it whenever you want.”

“Mind if I take a picture of this? It’ll be a great shot for the Orphanage’s newsletter,” Harry asked.

“Glad to,” Mike said. He and his associates posed with the spoils and the machines. Harry sent a copy to the Orphanage’s director.

“Thanks for helping out,” Ian said. “I’ll have the staff bring you folks up a meal.”

“Glad to. Oh, and I’m also a notary if you ever need one,” Mike said.

They finished the scanning in no time and one of the pink hats handed Yvette a slip of paper.

“Our usual bet, Mike?” she asked. She explained their game, similar to guessing a restaurant check. If Mike guessed within \$10,000, he’d win five dollars.

“Big stakes,” Ian said.

Mike closed his eyes and rubbed his forehead, imitating a magician trying to prove to his audience how hard a trick it was. “\$1,075,000.”

“You want to take a stab, mister numbers head?” Yvette asked.

“Absolutely,” Harry said.

Ian yawned. “Oh, good. A numbers game.”

“Last year, we had 53 people who gave \$556,600 or 10.5 thousand per person. This year we’ve got 103. Let’s say each person gave 5% more; that’s 11,025. Rounding up, I’d say \$1,140,000.”

Yvette showed a piece of paper. \$1,130,000. “Freak,” she said and handed over his winnings.

“Add it to the waiters’ tips,” Harry said. “Mike, I hear you invest the donations at a better rate than we’d get?”

“I bundle all the parties’ money together and get half a percent better.”

“That’s an extra \$25,000 for half a year. Pretty good. Well, thanks to all of you.”

Yvette curtsied. “Glad to help a worthy cause.”

“Before you go, I have a request,” Mike said. “I’m a bit of a wine collector and was wondering if I could buy a bottle from Mr. Bradford’s stock?”

“Sure, why not?” Ian said. He led the group to his den and pushed a button; one-half of a glass circle in the floor rotated and slid into the floor to reveal a circular stairway. The walls of the stairway were lined with bottles in wooden slots. Gauges reflected the temperature-53.5 degrees Fahrenheit. “I split the difference between 50 and 57, the perfect temperature for keeping wine unspoiled,” Ian said.

A thirty by twenty room opened up before them. Hundreds of bottles were stored in wooden racks along the wall and the ceiling. Antique bottle openers and glasses of all shapes and sizes were ready for use on a long, wooden table.

“Ian, I’ve got a question. Do you know where each wine is?” Yvette asked.

Ian picked up a small laptop. "My crutch."

"Harry, do you?"

Harry tapped his temple.

"Let's see who's quicker. Man versus machine."

"You up for it, Harry? I'll double the price, and it goes to your charity," Mike said.

"You're on," Harry said.

Mike requested a 1992 Chateau Montelena Cabernet Sauvignon. Ian punched the keys, Harry closed his eyes, and the electronic and human brains raced to find the correct slot.

The bottle was in section C, slot 25. Mike wrote a big check.