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"Gay couple" unsuitable for CIA

A year ago, law students at UC-Berkeley solicited Stanford law student support for a picket protesting CIA recruiting at the two schools. While the Berkeley protest forced the CIA to conduct its interviews under federal protective custody in Oakland, we Stanfordites chose a different method. We figured that an effective way to register our distaste for CIA practices and to expose their unstated policy of refusing to hire homosexual citizens was to interview with them ourselves — posing as a gay couple seeking undercover assignments.

After securing the last available interview slots, we asked the interviewer, the chief of the CIA's litigation department (we'll just call him the Shadow), if we could interview together since we had mutual questions and concerns. He agreed, reluctantly, and ushered us in.

"What Agency legal work interests you?" the Shadow asked.

"Well, we are only interested in covert operations — if we handled Freedom of Information requests we'd be blacklisted from undercover work and we want to be spies."

"What kind of covert work?" he inquired.

"Domestic intelligence," we enthused. "We'd be very good at infiltrating leftist political groups and disrupting them from the inside."

The Shadow cleared his throat. "You know, our charter no longer permits us to conduct domestic intelligence operations, so uh . . . that might not be possible."

"We know you say that *publicly*," we said with a wink, "but that will change soon." The Shadow smiled and indicated he shared our optimism that President Reagan will succeed in his attempt to once again open the domestic market to the cloak and dagger crowd.

The Shadow slowly scrutinized our resumes. "You two *have* worked for a number of liberal political groups."

"Oh, yes sir," we said. "For years we have been infiltrating various left-wing, subversive organizations from the NAACP Legal Defense Fund to Ralph Nader's organizations and other groups which threaten national security."

The Shadow now appeared puzzled. "You mean you didn't believe in what these people were doing? Why did you do it?"

"You can't just walk into one of those kooky anti-nuke groups and expect them to trust you. Most of your agents probably were presidents of Young Republicans for Nixon in college, a worthy cause, but we've been planning ahead."

At this point we worried that our patriotism sounded a bit intense even for a Company man. But we had to be enthusiastic recruits because our "dirty little secret" would soon be revealed.

"The Agency often makes use of well-placed international lawyers and professors. You two could get well-established and contact us later," The Shadow advised.

"I think on the international front we are more interested in paramilitary activities than paralegal ones," we replied.

"What did you have in mind?" The Shadow asked.

"You know, the usual things you guys do — counter-insurgency, destabilizing leftist governments . . . we'd be great."

"I'm sure we do very little of that," The Shadow insisted instead urging that we might find the Agency's legal work intriguing. Undeterred, we asked him if the legal staff ever set up fictional companies to function as covers for agents overseas.

"Well, yes," he replied reluctantly, "lawyers have to set those up." But a business that didn't exist could not have a CIA lawyer sign its legal documents, we observed. "Wouldn't you need a fictional law firm?" He nodded, so we pushed our line of questioning a step further.

"Let me get you straight. We'd be working for a law firm that didn't exist, filing fictional legal documents for a corporation that didn't exist. Do your attorneys ever suffer a certain identify crisis?" The Shadow barely smiled now.

Earlier in the interview, we had casually dropped the possibility that we could pose as gay-rights activists to gather information about left-wing political activity in San Francisco. That bait made the Shadow suspicious, and he followed it up.

"Mike, your resume says you grew up in the Midwest and went to college back East. Why did you come out to San Francisco for law school?" The Shadow inquired.

"Well, my friend and I were tempted to go to Yale, but you know, people out East are just *so uptight*."

Our "little secret" slowly dawned on him as he compared the address and phone number on our resumes. (Since we were housemates, they were the same.)

"You two *live* together?" The Shadow said with unconceded disdain, actually backing his chair up a few feet. By now we were both bursting with laughter inside, but we kept on our serious interview masks.

"I think you'll find it nearly impossible to gain employment with the Agency given those, uh, that lifestyle," the Shadow told us quite seriously.

"Why would the government purposely discriminate against gays?" we asked, incredulous.

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"Don't get me wrong. We don't discriminate against homosexuals, we just don't hire them. They are a security risk. Homosexuals could easily be compromised or blackmailed to reveal secrets."

"But wait, what if we are totally out of the closet and not even our mothers care," we indignantly countered.

The Shadow became very flustered and soon brought what had become a 40-minute interview to an end. Although we were unaware of it at the time, the CIA is currently defending against federal litigation challenging the Agency's refusal to hire gays. And believe it or not, the CIA's key defense is that gays present a "security risk."

As we left, we weren't exactly anxious to receive the prize that every law student hopes for — an all expense paid fly-back for more interviews. We were afraid our fly-back to Langley, Virginia might turn out to be a one-way trip.

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