

Art Series Turns Sour as Bank Cracks Down on Bohemians

by Con Chapman

BOSTON. Massachusetts is known for its tight-fisted ways when it comes to charity, regularly ranking far behind more religious areas of the country in terms of per capita giving, but one local bank is trying to change that. “At First New England we're part of the community, and we want to make a difference,” says April Coverly, who heads up the bank's Office of Charitable Giving and Sponsorships.



Boston Symphony Orchestra

With millions of dollars to give away, however, it isn't possible to get Gary Adamick, the bank's president, to every event on the calendar, and so Coverly calls on mid-level officers to represent the institution at less-prestigious gatherings. “It's good training for them,” says Adamick, “and it means that I don't have to eat rubber chicken every night of the week.”

So tonight Emil Anctil, a vice president in the bank's “workout” or collection department, finds himself at the Waban Hills Theatre Ten-Minute Play Festival to hand out a check for \$250, have his picture taken with a representative of the group, and say a few words about the bank and its involvement in the community.

“Make sure you don't put our giant pen in your purse, sweetheart.”

“This is something new and different for me,” he says nervously as he fingers the knot in his tie, the only one in the crowd packed into a cramped basement theatre. “Most of the time when I speak in public it's to announce that I'm foreclosing on somebody's house.”

But Anctil steels himself and walks onstage to shake hands with Lenora Dubwig, the group's dramaturg, whatever that is. “Thank you so much, we really appreciate it,” she says as he hands her an oversized check.



Rehearsal

“Thank *you* for making our community a more vibrant place,” Anctil says, glancing down at a 3” by 5” note card. “You know,” he continues, “at First New England, we're all about people—the people in the many communities we serve.”

A few audience members cough or glance at their programs, having learned that they have to endure such self-congratulatory speeches by corporate sponsors as compensation for lower ticket prices.

She's a dramaturg, whatever that is.

“But we can't serve people if certain other people aren't going to do their share,” he says in the steely tone he uses when he padlocks a manufacturing plant that's in default. “Like Tony Corrallo—yeah you in the black turtleneck and the beret.”

A man in the back row glances at the people on either side of him, uncomfortable at having been singled out. “You're bouncing checks like they're Superballs,” Anctil says, harkening back to a toy from his lonely childhood that he would use to amuse himself when other children refused to play with him.



“I need two hundred bucks in your account bright and early tomorrow morning to cover checks you've got in float, plus another \$65 for overdraft interest and penalties,” Anctil says in an even but menacing tone that reminds a listener of Sergeant Joe Friday of TV's “Dragnet” series.



"We want your toaster oven back too, you scumbag."

The malefactor slinks off to the snack bar, spending his last \$5 on a cinnamon latte, but Anctil isn't letting him go. "You want me to come out there and repossess that froofy coffee you're drinking?" he snaps, sending Corrallo up the steps and onto the street to lick his wounds.

Dubwig senses a growing discomfort among audience members, many of whom have financial problems of their own, and moves to cut Anctil off. "This is *my* microphone, sweetie—I paid for it," he snarls at her as he checks his notes for the next miscreant he needs to crack down on.

"What did you say your name was again?" he asks her. "Was it—Dubwig?"

"No, no, you must have me mixed up with someone else," she says with an artificial smile. "My name's Blanche—Blanche DuBois."



"Huh," Anctil says. "I don't see your name on my list, so I guess you're in the clear."

"That's a relief," she says. "I can never depend on the kindness of strangers."

Available in Kindle format on amazon.com as part of the collection "The Spirit of Giving."

