Turkey Hunt

by Katie Norton

While I was still new at Black & Twigg, shortly before Thanksgiving, Percy brought me a handwritten memo to type, the subject "Turkey Hunt," addressed to all Black & Twigg employees in the San Francisco office from management. It said that the firm was going to host a live turkey hunt in the vast basement parking garage as a Thanksgiving treat for the employees. Part of the garage would be roped off and live turkeys set loose. However because we were in the City, guns would not be allowed. If you wanted to catch a turkey, you would have to use a rope, net, bag or your bare hands. I typed up the memo and handed it to Percy. "Very funny. Who is going to take this seriously?"

"There's a tradition in the Houston office. Black & Twigg's compound there is huge, with lots of small buildings and a tall headquarters in the center. Every year we play this practical joke on new employees. We tell them there's a turkey hunt, then we go up on the top floor of the headquarters building and watch the fun. First we tell them that the turkey hunt will start at Building 5. They all rush over there. Then when they get there, someone tells them it's been moved to a location clear across the compound. So we get to watch them race over to the opposite end of the facility. They are sent criss-crossing and zig-zagging all over the place and never find any turkeys."

It had all the charm of a bad fraternity prank. I could see how some of the redneck hick employees in the Houston office might fall for this. I didn't expect anyone in San Francisco to go for it. Wrong! The memo caused a huge hubbub and even got mentioned in Herb Caen's column. The Filipino draftsmen took it at face value and chattered excitedly about the turkey hunt for the rest of the afternoon. They were looking forward to it with gusto. One of them asked me if he could take his live turkey home on BART.

Martha, a proto-PETA type in HR, was appalled at the idea of hunting animals, bad enough, but to do so on company time made it

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doubly worse. She phoned the Humane Society, who sent over an investigator. Building management got wind of the turkey hunt and called the police. A San Francisco police officer showed up at the office inquiring whether we had arranged for traffic control in the parking garage.

Percy and Bob were thrilled with the havoc they had wreaked. And I was their accomplice in crime. The Vice President from the Houston office even cracked a smile. When I showed Percy and Bob the mention in Herb Caen's column, it made their day. They talked about it for months.