



THE SHADOW FROM THE WALL

BY ROBERT B. NELSON

The shadow from the wall stretched for miles. As Carolina looked toward the horizon at twilight, the shadow merged with the wall into one dark, impenetrable barrier.

“This is the spot. As soon as it’s dark and they see that it’s safe, they’ll flash their headlights,” one of the coyotes said. “It’s harder for the cameras to see them after dark.”

“And harder for the vigilantes,” said the other coyote.

When they saw the signal, four flashes in quick succession, the coyotes retrieved the rope from their truck and threw it over the wall. After they felt a tug from the other side, Miguel climbed the rope. He waited at the top of the wall until Carolina had climbed the rope. He then lifted her gently over the wall and she jumped into the sand on the other side. Miguel watched for Carolina to move away from the wall and then jumped too. As he hit the ground, the coyotes on the other side of the wall picked him up.

"Are you two going to El Paso?" one of them asked.

"Yes, we need to catch a bus to Michigan."

"That will be 8,000 pesos."

"But we paid already," Miguel cried.

"You paid enough to get you to the wall. If you want to go further, you need to pay us."

"I've only got 6,000 pesos left."

"You can pay us the rest after you get work."

Miguel and Carolina could hear laughter from the other side of the wall.

Miguel took Carolina's hand and began to walk away into the darkness.

"If you don't want to sleep with the scorpions and the rattlesnakes, you'd better pay up," one of the coyotes said.

Carolina tugged at Miguel's arm. "Please pay them."

After Miguel paid the coyotes, he and Carolina boarded the truck. The laughter continued to drift over the wall.

Frank Landis had just been elected to the Michigan House of Representatives from the 79th District. He was able to hire two staff people in addition to a secretary, and decided to hire his campaign manager, Bob Bender, for one of the staff positions. For the last position he would need someone experienced in the ways of Lansing.

Bill Boyle had been chief of staff for the three previous occupants of Frank's seat, and Frank had asked to sit down with him.

"Bill, I need your help. Bob and I know nothing about how things work in this town." He looked up from his chair with the expression of a hopeful puppy at dinnertime.

"Representative, I was planning to retire. I don't need the hassle. Besides, I've worked for legislators who were in the majority and in the minority. You're in the minority, and frankly, it's not fun."

"First of all, you can call me Frank. Secondly, I'm not like your previous bosses. I intend to get things done here. I'm not going to simply introduce a bill, hold a press conference, collect money from the interest groups that don't want the bill, and walk away from the issue."

"Well, Frank, what issues do you want to tackle?"

"Immigration, for one. It was an issue that seemed to resonate with the voters."

"I agree that it's an issue that needs to be addressed. This state can't afford to lose any more jobs, especially to illegal aliens. However, the bill would probably be assigned to Representative Miller's committee. He's unlikely to take it up."

"That's why I need you. You can help me get this bill through. If you agree that this is an important issue, we can work together and get this done."

"Let me think about it. I'll let you know in a week."

"Great. In the meantime, I'll have Bob look at how some other states have dealt with the immigration issue." Bill could not contain a smile as he left the office.



Ernesto Cavoso was seated near the rear of the bus heading for Michigan. He noticed a young couple huddled together in the back seat. He left his seat and went to the back of the bus.

"Do you folks have green cards?"

Miguel's blank expression told Ernesto what he needed to know.

"Don't worry, they won't send you back," he whispered. "You probably saw the brochure telling you where to catch the bus."

Miguel nodded.

"The brochure doesn't say you have to have a green card, does it? No, they want to hire as many illegals as they can because they can pay you less than those of us with green cards." The rumbling of the bus made it difficult to be heard.

"Tell me, why did you take the risk to come to America?"

"The risk was greater living in Mexico. The drug gangs had taken over our city. There was a shootout. Her sister was walking home from school. They..."

Carolina buried her head in her hands.

Miguel's voice cracked, "The day after she was buried, we contacted the coyotes."

"I'm so sorry. Let me know if I can help you when you get to Michigan." Ernesto returned to his seat.

Bill and Bob sat at the conference table in Frank's office.

"Bob, why don't you go over the research you've done on other state laws."

"Sure, Frank. I've reviewed recently enacted statutes in Colorado, Iowa, Arizona, and Oklahoma. There seems to be two components to each of these laws. The first punishes the employer for hiring undocumented aliens, even going so far as making it a felony to knowingly hire one. The second set of provisions punishes undocumented aliens, by denying benefits and even



requiring them to be detained by local authorities until the feds do something.”

“The question,” Frank mused, “is whether we should include both components in our bill.”

“Well,” Bill paused for effect. “My philosophy on legislation is to make the bill as aggravating as possible to as many folks as you can. Then, when the outcry starts from one side, you can always amend it, assuming those that you are satisfying pony up.”

“I like that strategy; let’s see who blinks. Bob, tell the Legislative Service Bureau to draft a bill that has penalties for both employers and the illegals.”

A tall, barrel-chested man boarded the bus when it reached the blueberry farm. His Spanish was so fractured it was barely understood by the passengers.

“Welcome to Carey’s Berry Farm. Before you proceed to your living quarters, you need to show me some identification.”

The man walked down the aisle, checking each passenger.

Ernesto looked back at Miguel and motioned to him not to worry. By the time the man had reached Miguel and Carolina, there was no one else on the bus.

“Let’s see your ID.”

Miguel held out his empty hands.

“I thought so. Look, I’ll let you work here, but you have to do as I say. As soon as you don’t, you’ll both be headed back to Mexico in handcuffs. Comprende?”

Miguel and Carolina nodded. The man directed them to a trailer in which two other couples were living. As they walked to the trailer, the man’s gaze was fixed on Carolina.

In their bed that night, Miguel put his arms around Carolina.

“There will be a time for us to have children, but not now,” she said.

At 10:30 p.m., the door of the trailer opened abruptly. The man who had boarded the bus earlier stood at the foot of their bed, reeking of alcohol.

“So, we’ve got a couple of illegals here, have we?” He put his right hand on Carolina’s left breast. “You’ve got some nice pechos, señora.”

Miguel rose from the bed and started to strike the man. But the man, who was some eight inches taller than Miguel, pushed Miguel to the floor. He grabbed Carolina’s arm so hard that she screamed. As he led her out of the trailer, Miguel raced after them. He stopped when the man turned around.

“Remember what I told you, Pancho.”

The man dragged Carolina through the trailer park and opened the gate outside of the house that stood at the end of the trailer park. The house was 6,300 square feet and had two balconies, which completely surrounded the second and third floors. As he entered the house, his father stood in front of him. “Who is this, John?”

“Just one of the new wetbacks that arrived today. I’m going to break her in.”

“You can do what you want with her, but not in this house.”

“Ah, come on, Dad. It won’t take long.”

“Look, John. I’m trying to set up a meeting with some legislator who wants to throw me in jail for hiring illegals. I don’t need him to find out that one of them was raped in my house.”

As John Carey pulled Carolina back through the gate and toward his blue Mercedes, she looked back to see the moonlight shadows from the fence that separated the house from the rest of the blueberry farm.

Frank was standing next to the window of his office, looking out at the Capitol, when Bill knocked on his door. “Come in.”

“Frank, great news. Ted Carey has agreed to meet with you on Thursday.”

“And who, pray tell, is Ted Carey?”

“He’s the owner of Carey’s Berry Farm, one of the largest blueberry farms in the state, right in the heart of your district.”

“And why is that great news, Bill?”

Bill held back the urge to scream at his boss’s ignorance.

“Carey is concerned about how your bill affects his business. He doesn’t want to face felony charges for hiring illegals when he really can’t determine who is an illegal and who isn’t.”

“Mr. Carey, I know that since 9/11, the feds have clamped down on issuing green cards, and yet your profits don’t seem to have been affected.”

“Why should I cater to this guy when under our campaign finance law, he can only donate \$500 to my campaign?”

“That’s just the individual candidate contribution limit, Frank. He can donate up to \$20,000 to the House Minority Caucus.”

“Yea, but there’s no guarantee that his donation to the caucus will help me.”

“All he has to do is tell the minority leader that he wants it targeted for your race when he hands in the donation. It’s done that way all the time.”

Frank quickly walked to his desk and buzzed the intercom. “Ruth, clear my schedule for Thursday.”

Officer Edwards emerged from the emergency room and approached Fran.

“Are you Mrs. Landis?”

“Yes.”

“I understand you brought this woman here.”

“That’s right.”

“Did you see anyone else with her?”

“No, she was alone.”

“How do you know her?”

“I was driving home from my doctor’s appointment; I’m eight months pregnant. I found her on the street. I drove her here because she was bleeding profusely. How is she?”

“She’ll be fine.”

“You have to find out who did this.”

“Look, lady. In my view, we should be sending her back to Mexico. If I find her on the street again, I’ll turn her over to Homeland Security.”

Fran began to protest, but Edwards held up his hand.

“Are you going to take care of her for now?”

“I’ll take better care of her than those who are paid to protect her are doing.”

“Lady, I’m paid to protect U.S. citizens.”

Edwards turned and left the hospital.

Ted Carey squirmed in the chair across from Frank. The two men were alone in Frank’s office.

“Mr. Carey, I know that since 9/11, the feds have clamped down on issuing green cards, and yet your profits don’t seem to have been affected. If anything, they’ve gone up. That tells me that you’re probably hiring a lot of undocumented aliens.”

“Representative, you’re correct to point out that the feds have a stake in this. In fact, they have ample powers to punish me if I hire an illegal. There’s no need for the State to be involved. Your bill is unnecessary.”

“Then why have at least four other states enacted legislation to control immigration?”

“Can we close the door, Representative?”

Frank rose from his chair and shut the door.

“Look,” Ted whispered. “I hope your bill doesn’t go anywhere. But if you amend it to eliminate the penalties on employers before it gets out of committee, I’m prepared to raise \$60,000 for your caucus from me, my wife, and my son.”

When Frank arrived home that night, his wife greeted him.

“Frank, you know how I’ve been needing more help at home, with the baby being due next month?”

“Sure, but you know we can’t afford to hire anyone.”

“What if I were to tell you that I have someone who’s able to help me, and the only thing we have to pay her is room and board.”

“That sounds great, but what’s the catch?”

“She’s not a U.S. citizen.”

“What?” Frank screamed. “Do you know what they’ll do to me? I’ve introduced a bill that penalizes illegal immigrants. I’ll never get re-elected if the press gets hold of this.”

“All right, I’ll make sure she doesn’t leave the house.”

“Okay, and as soon as we have the baby, she’s got to go.”

“I’ll tell you Frank, the way I’m feeling, that could be tomorrow.” Frank leaned over to kiss Fran.

That night, Fran went to the local bookstore to buy a Spanish-English dictionary.

She went to see Carolina, who was sleeping on the couch in the basement.

“Do you want to find your husband?”

Carolina nodded.

“From the information you gave the hospital, I believe I have been able to find the address where he was working.”

Carolina’s eyes widened.

“Don’t worry, I will help you draft a letter to him so you can let him know you are all right.”

Bob Bender knocked on the open door to Frank’s office.

“Chairman Miller has scheduled a hearing on your bill for a week from Tuesday.”

“But that’s too soon. We don’t have the votes lined up yet.”

“He knows that. He wants your bill to go down in flames.”

Frank slammed his fist on the virtually empty desk. “That fat sonofabitch. It’s all about the party, isn’t it? He doesn’t want to give anyone on our side of the aisle credit for a bill.”





Bill Boyle had overheard the conversation between Frank and Bob. He stuck his head into Frank's office. "You really need something dramatic to happen between now and the hearing."

"Like what, pray tell?" Frank barked.

"You need something like what happened in Denver, when an illegal killed a cab driver."

"Dream on, Bill."

After receiving Carolina's letter, Miguel had written her back. They would find another blueberry farm where they could work and where she would be safe. He would come to get her on Saturday around midnight. She should leave the back door unlocked and he would come down to the basement.

Fran delivered the baby on Saturday morning. Frank returned from the hospital and drove Carolina to the police station. Five minutes later, Officer Edwards received an anonymous tip of an illegal immigrant outside of his office. Frank went back home and poured himself a whiskey. He knew that his bill would not be voted out of committee on Tuesday. His legislative career was probably over. He retrieved the mail from the mailbox and noticed a letter addressed to Carolina Segura. Frank began searching the house for the Spanish-English dictionary that he had seen Fran using. Pouring through the letter he read: "Sabado-Saturday, Medianoche-Midnight."

Miguel left the trailer camp at sundown. He had asked Ernesto to help him find the address on Carolina's envelope. Ernesto had drawn a map for Miguel. The blueberry farm was 4-1/2 miles from the Landis house. It was 12:15 a.m. when Miguel reached the house. As Miguel quietly opened the door, Frank stepped out of the foyer, which led to the kitchen, and blocked Miguel's entrance into the house. Without saying a word, Frank handed Miguel a 9-inch kitchen knife. Miguel stared quizzically at the knife and as he looked up, Frank fired one shot from his rifle into Miguel's chest. Without checking on Miguel, Frank stepped outside and

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broke the windowpane in the back door directly above the lock with his elbow. He left Miguel in the entranceway and walked calmly over to the phone.

The press conference was held in the rotunda of the Capitol Building. Frank cleared his throat to get the attention of the twelve reporters who had shown up—four more reporters than had attended the governor's last press conference.

"I am gratified that the House has today approved my bill, which establishes significant penalties for undocumented aliens who take jobs from Michigan citizens. I am saddened by the fact that it required the commission of a serious crime on the part of one of those aliens to get us to this point."

"Representative Landis," shouted one of the reporters. "Why was the bill amended in committee to delete the penalties for employers?"

"I believe, Tim, that the House felt that employers in Michigan were not always aware of the fact they were hiring undocumented aliens. This is a bill that honors the citizens of this country who work an honest job every day and raise families—families who should not be threatened by aliens from outside of our borders. These aliens would not only steal our jobs, but endanger the safety of our homes as well." Frank's voice rose, "We should not punish businesses struggling to make it and who happen to hire illegal immigrants... unwittingly."

Ted Carey, standing at the northern entrance to the rotunda, some 60 feet behind the reporters, did not wait for the press conference to conclude. He slowly turned his back to the podium and left the Capitol.

Carolina felt the baby kicking as the bus, leased to Homeland Security, headed for the border. Miguel will be sending me some money soon, she told herself.

As she stepped down from the bus, Carolina was engulfed by the shadow from the wall. ■



Robert B. Nelson is a former commissioner of the Michigan Public Service Commission. He is currently of counsel with Fraser, Trebilcock, Davis and Dunlap in Lansing and is an adjunct professor at the Michigan State University College of Law. Mr. Nelson previously served as chairman of the State Bar Administrative Law Section. He is completing his tenure as lieutenant governor of Michigan Division 16 of Kiwanis International and is a grief counselor at Ele's Place.