

Cuidado de la Salud

I was in my usual hangout in San Juan Cosalá, Bar *El Castillo*, playing “Look-Ahead Eightball” where you have to call your next shot. It was dark except for the hanging light over the pool table. I assumed Fred and I were the only ones here, a bottle of Negra Modelo in hand, when I spotted someone sitting far back near the rear door. He looked familiar, so when I went to the *baño* I took a closer look.

“José!” I shouted and grabbed him by the shoulders in a bear hug.

“Shhhhhh,” he whispered. “I’m thinkin’ and I don’t want nobody to know I’m here.”

So I sat down. I was about to say something quietly when I felt a pair of hands on my shoulders and jumped a mile. It was Josb□, the other twin. He sat down, waved Fred over and we all sat in silence for awhile, the only ones in the bar. The bartender came over briefly and spoke to them in rapid Spanish. As far as I could make out he was pissed because the usual entourage the Hose Brothers brought with them, playing a tuba and trumpet, weren’t here. José waved him off and the bartender went back to his bottles mumbling bad words.

“Que pasa?” I asked them. “I haven’t heard from you guys for a long time. And you always come with a crowd. No wonder the bartender is pissed off. You usually bring in a lot of people with you. You are usually good for business.”

“We got new business,” Josb□ said in an undertone, “so can’t share with *cerveza* buddies now.”

“Jes...we got bangbuster plan now,” José said.

I laughed...quietly...and said, “What’s your scam...” I hardly got the word out when they both put their hands over my mouth.

“We into health...salud...up north,” Josb□ said. “Big bucks in health now.”

“Oh, come on,” I said, rolling my eyeballs. “The healthcare fiasco in the US is all over the floor. The Republicans don’t want to do anything that hurts the

corruption in insurance companies and the Democrats want to make us like Europe. Nobody agrees with anything.”

“We got plan. Can’t lose,” José said smugly. “We be rich like Greek king, My Ass.”

“You mean ‘Midas,’ the king that was able to turn anything he touched into gold. That wasn’t a real good thing, actually. Anyway, what is your scheme now? Your ladder business was a great idea when they built the wall on the border and selling Holy Water rights to the Catholic Church after cleaning up Lake Chapala was a stroke of genius.”

“We make health free and no cost to Obama guys. We be heroes and rich at same time, Josb□ said.

“That’s hard to believe,” Fred chimed in. “They say it will cost us over a Trillion Dollars.”

“Not *por* us,” José said. “We make everybody rich with good health too.”

“Okay, okay. How are you conmen going to do it this time?” I asked chuckling. The Hose Brothers were geniuses. They always seemed to find a way to make a lot of money from American problems.

“We not be congus. We give service,” Josb□ said, a sanctimonious, hurt look on his face. “You promise not to tell anybody?”

Fred and I looked at each other. “Of course,” I said. “We promise, don’t we Fred?” He nodded and we took a gulp of beer as Josb□ began to talk.

“We make San Poncho deal,” he said. “First we go to rich guys, say we make big money for them in *salud* market.”

“What the hell is a ‘*salud* market?’” I asked reasonably. “I’ve never heard of it.”

“We do sub-prime health market bag,” he said. “Offer 100% insurance deal, no strings, and everybody want to get into market. Two weeks after first deal, we give back double money. They give us more money, we keep giving double. Rich guys think they get richer for nothing.”

“But let’s say that works,” I said incredulously. “What about the poor people? How do they get healthcare? I don’t get it.”

“We keep taking money from rich guys, give poor guys insurance for nothing,” José said calmly. “Sometimes give rich guys some money. Pretty soon plenty of money and poor guys always get good medicine for zero. Obama make us ambassadors or something, and we be rich.”

I looked at them dumbfounded. I couldn’t see a flaw in their argument. Finally, Fred who is in investment, said, “But what if the rich guys don’t make any money after awhile?”

“We keep money like blood...keep going round,” José said. “Nobody know difference, everybody get what they want.”

“Look,” I said, totally confused. “I heard of something like this and the guy is in jail for 150 years. It sounds like a ‘Ponzi’ scheme.”

“Not Ponzi,” the Hose Brothers said in unison. “Is ‘San Poncho’ deal. We don’t got no San Ponzi in Mexico. Bery different,” José said. “Yest good ol’ capital stuff, like English Smith guy say.”

Fred chimed in, “You mean Adam Smith, the? Capitalism? You guys have got to be kidding. You’ll never get away with it.”

“Perfect legal,” José said with a straight face. “You want in on San Poncho?” he asked.

I still don’t know how it happened, but Fred and I gave the Hose Brothers \$100 and sure enough, two weeks later we got \$200 from them, got our teeth fixed for free in Houston and bought a bag of prescription drugs for five bucks.

I love capitalism.