

**THE ANONYMITY POLICE** September 29, 2009

*Cast of Characters*

*Lotta Mee*

*Agent John*

*Agent Doe*

*Sergeant N. Ignoto*

*(SWAT theme plays with main titles)*

*(Lotta walks in from stage right carrying a Big Book talking on her cell phone)*

LOTTA

Yeah, it was a pretty good meeting. Well, I have a bout an hour to kill so I'm going to check my Facebook account. All right I'll talk to you later.

*(She walks to desk and sits down and turns on the computer—Agents John and Doe go to the door and suddenly there are three loud knocks on the door)*

LOTTA

I wonder who that could be?

*(gets up and walks over to the door and opens it)*

LOTTA

Hi. Can I help you?

AGENT JOHN

Good afternoon. Is your name Lotta, Lotta Mee?

LOTTA

Yes it is. What can I do for you?

AGENT DOE

Can we come in and talk with you for a minute, Ms. Mee?

LOTTA

What's this about? is there something wrong?

AGENT JOHN

If we could just come in and talk with you we could explain it all.

LOTTA

Well, I'm not in the habit of just letting strangers...

AGENT DOE

All right, that's it! We tried being nice but now I can see we gotta play hard ball!

*(they both flop open their credentials)*

We have a warrant for your arrest.

LOTTA

Oh my! Well come in then. *(the agents enter)* Um, wait a minute. Those don't look like any badges I've ever seen before. Are you with the Fairfield Police Department?

AGENT JOHN

No.

LOTTA

Oh, then the Solano County Sheriff's Department?

AGENT DOE

Not quite.

LOTTA

You're not...FBI are you?

AGENT JOHN

I think we've built up enough suspense. Let me break it down to you, Lotta.

We are members of an elite squadron of foot soldiers of the Alcoholics Anonymous Secret Police Force.

AGENT DOE

We are the best kept secret in the AA universe. Our mission is to monitor and eliminate all online anonymity breaks in the western sector of the US.

AGENT JOHN

We are AA's best, last, and only line of defense.

AGENT DOE

We work in secret, we exist in shadow.

AGENT JOHN

And we dress in...well, whatever clean laundry we have. I'm Agent John.

AGENT DOE

And I'm Agent Doe.

LOTTA

Well, what do you want with me?

AGENT JOHN

Have a seat, Lotta. (*she sits*) You see, we have sophisticated surveillance techniques and we've been watching you.

LOTTA

You have? How?

AGENT DOE

Wiretaps, hidden cameras, microphones, computer hacking and round the clock visual stakeouts.

AGENT JOHN

And may I just say you are a whole lot sexier close up than with my binoculars!

AGENT DOE

Agent John, fantasize on your own time. Now, Lotta, it has come to our attention that you have broken your anonymity online.

LOTTA

Broken my what?

AGENT DOE

Your anonymity.

LOTTA

Oh, you mean that thing they talk about at meetings when they read the Traditions?

AGENT JOHN

That's exactly what we mean, Lotta. That "thing".

LOTTA

Well, I thought that was just for oldtimers in AA. I only have 1 year.

AGENT DOE

First off, there's no such thing as "only" having any time in AA. Each day without a drink is a precious gift from your Higher Power. Secondly, you're wrong. Anonymity is...

LOTTA

...the spiritual foundation of all our traditions ever reminding us to place *(pauses and motions for audience to join in)* principles before personalities.

AGENT JOHN

That's great that you can recite that Lotta and that people will chant it with you at meetings. But it's also easy to get people to chant "we will, we will rock you." Do you know *why* anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all of our Traditions?

LOTTA

No, I just like saying it with everyone else.

AGENT DOE

Well, you are about to get informed. So here's the deal Lotta, you listen to us, get informed about the importance of anonymity, and change certain behaviors, or we are empowered to arrest you on the spot and take you down to headquarters.

LOTTA

What happens at headquarters?

AGENT JOHN

Let's just say no there says "keep coming back." So look, it's a simple choice: we do it the easy way where we educate you, or we do it the hard way where you get arrested. What's your choice?

LOTTA

Well duh, I'll get educated.

AGENT DOE

Fine. Turn on your computer.

*(Lotta does and the Windows vista screen is displayed)*

AGENT JOHN

All right now enter your password. Or here let me do it.

*(reaches over and types in password)*

LOTTA

Hey! How do you know my password!

AGENT DOE

If I were you I'd be more concerned about how we know you are wearing purple underwear. I told you, we have very sophisticated surveillance equipment.

LOTTA

This cannot be legal.

*(Lotta cocks her head slightly looking upward as if in thought—thought balloon appears on screen reading "I'm going to sneak out my cell phone and call 911 on these clowns")*

AGENT JOHN

This is legal. We're not clowns, and don't even think about calling 911!

LOTTA

How...how did you know what I was thinking?

AGENT DOE

Hello? *(pointing to screen)* It's right there on the screen! Do you think we're stupid? Now, no more tricks. Listen up. *(pulls sheet out paper from pocket)* Here's a list of websites, type the name of the first one in.

*(AA website appears on screen)*

AGENT JOHN

Okay, this is the official AA website. What you see is the anonymity letter to the media.

LOTTA

*(reading)* The principle of anonymity is a basic tenet of our fellowship. Those who are reluctant to seek our help may overcome their fear if they are confident that their anonymity will be respected. If an A.A member is identified in the media, we ask that you please use first names only (for example Bob S. or Alice F.)

AGENT DOE

In other words, Lotta, this letter asks members of the media to respect our tradition of anonymity for the sake of helping people who may want to get sober and to keep the egos in check of those who have achieved sobriety.

AGENT JOHN

Now go to the next website on the list. *(she types in the address)*  
Okay, this is an article on Alcoholics Anonymous that recently ran in the newspaper.

LOTTA

Oh, yes I read this when it came out. I didn't know you could write articles about AA in the newspaper. Isn't that a violation of our traditions?

AGENT DOE

Absolutely not! As long as the writer follows the simple guidelines in the anonymity letter to the media it is fine. AA is not a secret society. How would people know where to find us or have basic information on the Fellowship if we remained hidden?

Anyway, time for the next website. Type it in Lotta.

*(she does so and Roger Ebert's AA blog comes up)*

AGENT JOHN

This is a blog by famous Chicago Sun-Times writer and television movie critic Roger Ebert which he posted a couple of months ago. As you can see from the title “My Name is Roger and I am an Alcoholic” he pretty blatantly breaks his anonymity.

LOTTA

You know, I thought he was an alkie!

AGENT DOE

Really? Many people who read this blog had no idea. What made you suspect him?

LOTTA

Well, I was watching his movie review show years ago and he gave “Dude, Where’s My Car?” a thumbs down. That movie is a classic! He had to be drunk not to like it!

AGENT JOHN

Well, actually that movie came out in 2000 and Ebert was not drunk because he’s been sober since 1979. By the way, “Dude, Where’s My Car” does suck. Anyway, the fact that Ebert has been sober for 30 years is one of his rationales for breaking his anonymity. He also had some serious health issues and says it is physically impossible for him to get drunk now and that’s another reason.

LOTTA

I don’t see any exceptions to the anonymity traditions on the wall at my home group.

AGENTDOE

That’s because there aren’t any, Lotta. You’re learning. It doesn’t matter if you are a celebrity, if you have decades of sobriety, or another other excuse, when members break their anonymity at the public level it is a violation of the Traditions.

LOTTA

But he says here that another reason he decided to break his anonymity is because he hopes this article can help others.

AGENT JOHN

That really is beside the point, Lotta. Usually anonymity breakers do have great motives, but the road to hell is paved with those. It's like in the early 90's when that guy who used to play on "Night Court" got sober and then did a TV Show about a guy in recovery.

AGENT DOE

Besides breaking his anonymity in press releases about the show, like "Dude Where's My Car" his show sucked! Now on to the reason we are here. Log onto your Facebook account, Lotta.

*(she types and it comes up on the screen)*

LOTTA

What's this got to do with my Facebook account?

AGENT JOHN

Well, Lotta as you probably know Facebook is a global social networking website where users can add friends and send them messages, add photos and update their personal profiles to notify friends about themselves. Speaking of friends, maybe you would like to add me to your friend list. I mean, I...uh...can be pretty friendly when I'm not working and...

AGENT DOE

Agent John! Can we stick to the task at hand? Now, let's look at your photos Lotta. *(pointing)* Click on that one. That's what brought us here.

LOTTA

Yes this was my birthday yesterday! The caption says "Life is great as a Friend of Bill W.! Thanks to every one in my home group and every one else in the rooms!"

LOTTA

But wait a minute! I didn't mention AA by name and it's not like I'm holding a big book in the picture.

AGENT JOHN

Well, Lotta, there is the letter of the tradition and the spirit of the tradition and this definitely violates the spirit of the tradition. Those key phrases

“Friend of Bill W.”, “Home Group” and “In the Rooms” are pretty well known. But there’s a bigger issue. You can tag or identify people in your pictures on Facebook and then when you publish it to the internet, everyone who is friends with that person can see it.

LOTTA

Yeah, I know that. So what?

AGENT DOE

Here’s so what: Gertie, a fellow alcoholic who you tagged in the photo is doctor and one of her patients saw the picture, put two and two together, and is now afraid to have Gertie perform her upcoming surgery because she thinks Gertie might come there drunk. Now do you see the importance of protecting anonymity?

LOTTA

Well, I never meant for that to happen.

AGENT JOHN

We realize that, Lotta, but researching your Facebook page we have found 13 obvious examples where you have broken your anonymity at the public level. We need to do a thorough scan of your account and thus are shutting you down for the two weeks that will take.

LOTTA

Two weeks! No way! I can’t go without Facebook for two weeks!

AGENT DOE

Why not?

LOTTA

Because...because...because I’m addicted to it, that’s why! I love to read about what my friends are doing, take quizzes like “What cast member of Gilligan’s Island are you” and post pictures and...

AGENT JOHN

Lotta, you need help!

LOTTA

I know and I recently joined a Facebook Addicts 12 step group.

AGENT DOE

Really? That might help you. Where do they meet?

LOTTA

Um...well...on Facebook.

AGENT JOHN

I'm sorry Lotta we're shutting you down.

LOTTA

No! I won't let you! No!

AGENT DOE

That's it! You're under arrest. Get against the wall. Agent John, read her her rights while I frisk her.

AGENT JOHN

Are you sure you don't want me to frisk her? I have more experience...

AGENT DOE

Agent John!

AGENT JOHN

Okay, okay. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you by people gossiping in front of your home group. You have the right to a sponsor. If you cannot find a sponsor, one will be appointed for you.

*(Sgt. N. Cognito bursts in)*

SGT. N. COGNITO

All right what's going on here?

AGENT DOE

Sergeant N. Cognito! What are you doing here?

SGT. N. COGNITO

I thought you two were up to your old tricks so I monitored the situation closely.

AGENT JOHN

But how did you know we were here?

AGENT DOE

Yeah, how did you track us? We work in secret we...

SGT. N. COGNITO

...exist in shadows. I know, I know. The question you should be asking Agent Doe is how do I know you're wearing hot pink underwear? Your surveillance is good, but mine is better.

AGENT JOHN

Okay, Sergeant if you're so smart, what color underwear do I have on?

SGT. N. COGNITO

You're not wearing any, Agent John.

AGENT DOE

Eeeeeewwww!

LOTTA

*(sexily)* Oooh!

SGT. N. COGNITO

Uncuff her Agent Doe.

AGENT DOE

But Sergeant, she's an anonymity-breaking Facebook addict! We can't just..

SGT. N. COGNITO

I SAID UNCUFF HER! The Traditions of AA do not have the force of law behind them. No is compelled to do anything in AA. We certainly hope that members will follow the wise examples of others who have gone before them, but if they do not, we certainly don't arrest them.

AGENT JOHN

But what about people like Roger Ebert who break their anonymity online? Don't AA members have an obligation to confront him?

SGT. N. COGNITO

If you read some of the responses to his blog you'll see that many did just that. But by doing so they are engaging in a public controversy. Bill W. wrote in "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" that as long as we don't argue about such things privately, it's a cinch we won't do so publicly." If you see an anonymity break, you should report it to your local Public Information committee who will forward it to the area delegate who will then send a friendly letter to the individual reminding them of our tradition of anonymity.

LOTTA

Captain, I have a question about this whole anonymity thing: in the Tradition it says at the level of press, radio and films-it doesn't say anything about the internet!

SGT. N. COGNITO

Well, Lotta, like Agent John told you earlier: there is the spirit of the Tradition and the letter of the Tradition. Going by what the Tradition strictly says no there is no prohibition on anonymity breaks on the internet, but going by the spirit it means any communication on a public level. Perhaps AA should explore changing the wording to what Overeaters Anonymous's 11 Tradition states: we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, films, television and other public media of communication.

AGENT DOE

Of course to change it would require the approval of 75% of the groups in the world.

LOTTA

Wow. This is a whole lot to take in. My head hurts. I'm kinda tired.

SGT. N. COGNITO

Perhaps you should lie down and rest.

LOTTA

Yes, yes. That would be good. This has been a whole lot to take in.

*(she lays down and sleeps and agents and sergeant exit)*

*(alarm clock sounds she awakens)*

LOTTA

You've got to be kidding me. That was all just a dream? That is the corniest, most overused cliché hack writers use when they can't think of a way to end a skit!

*("Who are you" plays)*

LOTTA

Where is my cell phone? Oh here it is. *(talking into cell phone)*  
Hello? Oh...uh...hi Gertie. *(pause)* You did? *(pause)* They did? Wow.  
*(pause)* I am so sorry about that, Gertie. I had no idea it would cause a problem for you. I'll take that picture off my Facebook account right now. I'm going to go through all my pictures and my posts and make sure I protect my anonymity and other people in the fellowship. Okay, bye Gertie.  
*(puts cell phone down and turns to computer)* Yep, I'm gonna remove all those pictures but first things first. That dream sure did seem real but there's only one way to be sure. *(screen shows Google screen then typing in "Agent John who wears no underwear)*

THE END (?)

*(theme from "Cops" plays as credits roll)*