

# 1: The Go-Getter

If there was anyone at the Clason-Hill Trust Corporation who was a go-getter, it was Joe. He worked hard, worked fast, and was headed for the top. At least, that was his plan. Joe was an ambitious young man, aiming for the stars.

Still, sometimes it felt as if the harder and faster he worked, the further away his goals appeared. For such a dedicated go-getter, it seemed like he was doing a lot of *going* but not a lot of *getting*.

Work being as busy as it was, though, Joe didn't have much time to think about that. Especially on a day like today—a Friday, with only a week left in the quarter and a critical deadline to meet. A deadline he couldn't afford *not* to meet.

Today, in the waning hours of the afternoon, Joe decided it was time to call in a favor, so he placed a phone call—but the conversation wasn't going well.

“Carl, tell me you're not telling me this . . .” Joe took a breath to keep the desperation out of his voice. “Neil Hansen?! Who the heck is Neil Hansen? . . . Well I don't

## THE GO-GIVER

care what he's offering, we can meet those specs . . . wait—c'mon, Carl, you owe me one! You know you do! Hey, who saved your bacon on the Hodges account? Carl, hang on . . . Carl!"

Joe clicked off the "talk" button on his cordless phone and made himself calmly set down the instrument. He took a deep breath.

Joe was desperately trying to land a large account, an account he felt he richly deserved—one he *needed*, if he wanted to make his third-quarter quota. Joe had just missed his quota in the first quarter, and again in the second. Two strikes . . . Joe didn't even want to think about a third.

"Joe? You okay?" a voice asked. Joe looked up into the concerned face of his coworker Melanie Matthews. Melanie was a well-meaning, genuinely nice person. Which was exactly why Joe doubted she would survive long in a competitive environment like the seventh floor, where they both worked.

"Yeah," he said.

"Was that Carl Kellerman on the phone? About the BK account?"

Joe sighed. "Yeah."

He didn't need to explain. Everyone on the floor knew who Carl Kellerman was. He was a corporate broker looking for the right firm to handle an account Joe had nicknamed the Big Kahuna, or BK for short.

According to Carl, the boss at Big Kahuna didn't think Joe's firm had the "clout and leverage" to put the deal together. Now some character he'd never heard of had

## THE GO-GETTER

underbid and outperformed him. Carl claimed there was nothing he could do about it.

"I just don't get it," Joe said.

"I'm so sorry, Joe," said Melanie.

"Hey, sometimes you eat the bear . . ." He flashed a confident grin, but all he could think about was what Carl had said. As Melanie walked back to her desk, Joe sat lost in thought. *Clout and leverage* . . .

Moments later he leaped up and walked over to Melanie's desk. "Hey, Mel?"

She looked up.

"Do you remember talking with Gus the other day, something about a big wheel consultant giving a talk somewhere next month? You called him the Captain or something?"

Melanie smiled. "Pindar. The Chairman."

Joe snapped his fingers. "That's it! That's the guy. What's his last name?"

Melanie frowned. "I don't think . . ." She shrugged. "No, I don't think I've ever heard it mentioned. Everyone calls him The Chairman, or just Pindar. Why? You want to go hear the talk?"

"Yeah . . . maybe." But Joe was not interested in some lecture happening a month away. He was interested in only one thing—and that one thing needed to happen by the following Friday, when the third quarter came to an end.

"I was thinking, this guy is a real heavy hitter, right? Charges huge consulting fees, works only for the biggest and best firms? *Major clout*. I know we could handle the

## THE GO-GIVER

BK account, but I'm gonna need some big guns to win the deal back. I need *leverage*. Any idea how I can get a line to this Chairman guy's office?"

Melanie looked at Joe as if he were proposing to wrestle a grizzly bear. "You're just going to call him up?!"

Joe shrugged. "Sure. Why not?"

Melanie shook her head. "I have no idea how to contact him. Why don't you ask Gus?"

As Joe headed back to his desk, he wondered how Gus had managed to survive this long at Clason-Hill Trust. He never saw him do any actual *work*. Yet Gus had an enclosed office, while Joe, Melanie and a dozen others shared the open space of the seventh floor. Some said Gus had gotten his office because of seniority. Others said he'd earned it on merit.

According to office rumors, it had been years since Gus had sold a single account, and management kept him on purely out of loyalty. There were also whispers about Gus that went to the other extreme—that he had been super-successful in his younger days and was now an independently wealthy eccentric who stashed his millions away in mattresses while living a pensioner's lifestyle.

Joe didn't believe the rumors. He was pretty sure Gus brought in *some* accounts. But it was hard to picture him as a sales superstar. Gus dressed like a high school English teacher and reminded Joe more of a retired country doctor than of an active businessman. With his relaxed, easy manner, his long, rambling phone conversations with poten-

## THE GO-GETTER

tial clients (conversations that seemed to touch on everything *but* business) and his erratic, extended vacations, Gus seemed like a relic of times long past.

Hardly a go-getter.

Joe stopped at Gus's open door and knocked softly.

"Come on in, Joe," came the reply.

"So you want to call right now and try to get in to see the man himself?" Gus thumbed carefully through his large Rolodex, found the dog-eared card he was searching for and copied the phone number onto a small slip of paper, which he then handed to Joe. He watched as Joe took the paper and punched in the number on his cordless phone.

"On a Friday afternoon?" Joe grinned. "Yup. I'm going to do exactly that."

Gus nodded thoughtfully. "One thing I have to say about you, Joe, you've got ambition, and I admire that." Gus absentmindedly fingered a meerschaum pipe as he talked. "If there's anyone on this floor who's a go-getter, it's you."

Joe was touched. "Thanks, Gus." He headed back to his desk.

From behind him, Gus called out, "Don't thank me yet."

After a single ring, Joe was greeted by a cheerful voice belonging to a woman who identified herself as Brenda. He introduced himself, told her he needed to see the Chairman, and then readied himself to parry her stonewalling.

Instead, she shocked him by saying, "Of course he can meet with you. Can you come by tomorrow morning?"

## THE GO-GIVER

“To—tomorrow?” he stammered. “On a Saturday?!”

“Yes, if that works with you. Is eight o’clock too early?”

Joe was stunned. “Don’t . . . ah, don’t you need to check with him first?”

“Oh, no,” came her unruffled reply. “Tomorrow morning will be fine.”

There was a brief silence. Joe wondered if she had him confused with someone else. Someone this Pindar character actually *knew*. “Ma’am?” he finally managed to say. “You, ah, you know this is my first time meeting with him, right?”

“Of course,” she replied cheerfully. “You’ve heard about his Trade Secret, and you want to learn about it.”

“Well, yes, that’s it, more or less,” he replied. Trade Secret? The man was willing to share his Trade Secret? He could hardly believe his good fortune.

“He’ll meet with you one time,” continued Brenda. “After that, if you agree to his conditions, he’ll want to set up additional appointments to actually show you the Secret.”

“Conditions?” Joe was crestfallen. He was sure these “conditions” would involve a stiff consulting fee or retainer he couldn’t afford. And even if he could, it might require the kind of high-level credentials Joe certainly didn’t have. Was it even worth it to go on? Or should he cut his losses and find a graceful way to back out now?

“Of course,” he replied. “Oh, and what are his, ah, conditions, again?”

THE GO-GETTER

“You’ll have to hear that directly from the Old Man,” she said with a giggle.

Joe took down the address she gave him, mumbled his thanks and clicked off the phone. In less than twenty-four hours he was going to meet with—what had she called him?—the Old Man.

And why had she giggled when she said that?