



The Corporate Kid

Neil Shulman and Susan Wrathall
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Summary by Bob Littell, Chief NetWeaver

Preface – by Bob Littell – Up until now I have only written summaries of Non-Fiction books since they feature and propose definite business philosophies, skill sets, and action steps that can, and in many cases, SHOULD be applied in today’s business world. And while Neil and Susan’s book IS ‘fiction’, it also contains those same three categories. One of the first questions every person should ask, “*How would I have reacted to the situation at the very beginning of the book?*”

While driving your new Jaguar, you’ve been directed off your main route home by a detour sign. Not paying close attention, you become disoriented and find yourself in what might be considered a ‘bad part of town’ economically speaking. As your cell phone rings and as you go to answer it, the phone falls from your hand to the floor-board. You reach down to retrieve it and for only a few seconds you take your eyes off the road ahead. As you come back up with it, you realize you are about to hit a black woman in her 20’s crossing the street. You swerve to try and miss her but you only succeed in not hitting her head-on but nevertheless, you broadside her and send her flying.

As you look out, you see what you believe is possibly a lifeless body on the road. A fairly large group of persons begins gathering, all African Americans. One of them is a teenage boy who, after seeing that the car occupant is not coming out to check on the person he had hit, approaches the car. You, as the reader, already knows the teenager to be the woman’s son but, Bill Bradford, the driver, is not sure what action this teenager has in mind.

Would you:

- 1) lock your car doors; call 911 and simply hope the police and ambulance get to you before some from the assembled gathering decide to try and extract you from the car?

- 2) Immediately jump out of the car, ignoring what reaction the crowd might have, to check on the condition of the person you have hit and offer whatever medical help you might be able to provide?
- 3) Some other action? What would it be?

SPECIAL NOTE - Because this book is fiction, although as it goes on, you start to believe it could easily be real life, I'm eliminating any chapter references and just summarizing the story. And IF. . .by the end of the book. . .you don't have a handkerchief in hand, like I do every time I read the book or watch "Pay It Forward", I feel sorry for you.

Referring to the options above, Bill Bradford, the CEO of Hospitals of America, one of the largest in the country, was the driver of the car, and he chose Door #1. He only got out of the car after a policeman arrived. Bradford immediately began 'posturing' his story, saying that the lady, **Ramona Sullivan**, was jay-walking and walked out in front of his car. That's also what he told Morrie – his attorney – leaving out the part about dropping his cell phone, and reaching down to retrieve it, which is what really caused him to lose sight of the woman crossing the street. With a few key facts omitted, Morrie assured him it wouldn't be a problem and that he would handle it with the insurance company.

Incidentally, the teenager who approached Bill's car, with half-hidden tears but also mixed with anger, was Ramona's 15 year son, **Charles Sullivan**. They along with the others in the group had just come out of Sunday church, so unbeknownst to Bill, this was not a mob, but a group of worshippers, many being elderly, along with a mix of younger persons, along with their children.

The ambulance takes off to the hospital with Ramona, and her mother, **Lorraine Jackson** – Ramona's mother and Charles' grandmother – in the passenger seat – leaving Charles and his younger sister **Gracie** behind.

After showing his license to the policeman, and still shaken from the incident, Bill goes to nervously stuff his billfold back into his back pocket, but doesn't realize that he has missed his back pocket and the brown leather wallet falls unnoticed to the ground. As Charles and Gracie are returning to the spot where their mother had been hit, Charles spots the wallet and quickly picks it up and stuffs it into his back pocket. But his retrieval is not beyond the Gracie's view, as well as that of some teenage onlookers who would play into the picture later on. Charles avoids Gracie's questions until they are back at their modest apartment and when he finally shows her the contents of the wallet, dumping all the bills into the bathtub, there is \$352.

"Look at all that money. We're rich! Charles, we're rich!" exclaims Gracie contemplating what she would do with her share.

As they are counting the bills, Mrs. Carter – friend of the family - enters the house to check on the children, but after calling several times, she hears no response. Needing to use the one and only restroom, where Charles and Gracie have been counting the bills in the bathtub, they simply pull the shower curtain completely shut and somehow manage to maintain silence and stillness until Mrs. Carter is done. She leaves thinking the children are out playing somewhere.

While Charles begins carefully placing the bills back into the wallet in the same order they had been, Gracie whispers harshly at him, *“What’re you doing? Why are you putting money back like that?”* . . . *“You’d better listen to me, Charles! I want some of that money: Give me some of it. You better not keep it all to yourself. That’s not fair. Then I really will tell.”*

But Charles’ response catches her off guard - so much that he has to repeat it: *“I’m not keeping any of it.”*

Charles then makes his first ethics speech to Gracie:

“You don’t know anything do you?” . . . *“You ought to be ashamed of yourself.”* Charles realizes that rather than focusing on how the money could be used to help their out-of-work mother who would now be in much worse shape, he knows that Gracie is really imagining the clothes, a new radio, and a bicycle, she would buy with the money.

Her comeback to Charles isn’t effective either: *“Charles. He hit our mama! He doesn’t deserve to have his money back. Think about that fancy car he drives. . .he doesn’t need this money. It’s chicken feed to him. He spends that on lunch, I bet. He spends that in one hour.”*

Hearing no response from Charles, and thinking she’s gaining ground, Gracie continues: *“Look, can we at least keep a little? He won’t even know. That’d be fair. We get some, he gets some. We can use it to buy Mama something. You know, something real nice. She needs something nice.”*

Charles: *“Gracie I **said** I am not keeping it. It isn’t mine. It isn’t yours. It’s that man’s. Period.”* . . . *“The best gift we can ever give Mama is to show her that she’s a good mama. The best mama.”* Over Gracie’s, *“but. . .”*, Charles continues, *“How did she raise us? She sure didn’t teach us to steal. Do you ever listen to her? Or in church? Would she be proud of us for taking that wallet? Yes, the guy’s a jerk, but that doesn’t mean we should steal from him. Where have you been, huh?”* Charles glares at her, *“Did Mama teach us to steal?”*

Charles in conclusion: *“And I’m not going to let that man be right. You saw how he looked at us. I bet he’s reporting his wallet stolen right now instead of wondering if he might have dropped in running back to his car to escape the big, bad ghetto. I won’t be just another black kid who stole his wallet. I don’t know if you can understand.”* Charles pauses. *“We’re better than that, Gracie. You understand?”* What a great ethics lesson – brother to younger sister.

As he pulls Gracie into a hug, she **'whispers almost inaudibly'** *"Give it back to the man."*

Up to this point, we haven't followed Bill Bradford home after the accident. As he breathes a sigh of relief reaching home, his relief quickly turns to disgust as he has to park several houses down from this own house due to other cars filling his driveway and on the street. Figuring it was some Junior League event his wife, **Paige**, had arranged without his knowledge, he's even more surprised as he enters the door, *"He heard the low noise of a crowd in the backyard, with the telltale sound of splashing from the pool."*

After berating his wife for not having told him about this and also after quickly dismissing an introduction Paige makes to the father of one of his son's friends, his wife is confused, because she can't believe he has forgotten **Andrew's** (his son) birthday party. And when his son comes up to hug and greet him, and Bill still hasn't figured what the party was all about, he scolds Andrew for being dripping wet and ruining the floor, and sends him back outside.

And later after the party, and after Paige informs him of his blunder, Bill goes up to Andrew's bedroom to try and make amends and apologize (if that's what you could call his weak attempt). But as Andrew is ready to forgive and forget, Bill's cell phone rings. It's Morrie and so instead of having Morrie call back, his response to Andrew is, *"Hold that thought. I have to take this"* and he walks briskly out of the room. There go his chances for "Dad of the Year".

Back at the hospital to where Ramona has been transported, It turns out that although her injuries are serious – ruptured spleen which was successfully operated on and repaired, and a broken leg, and many bad bruises and scrapes - she's definitely going to recover. But already owing the hospital \$8,000 from treatment for cancer the year before, and without medical coverage of any kind – and no Medicaid – the financial abyss is growing wider and deeper.

And although Charles definitely wants to visit his mother in the hospital, his more burning desire is to somehow find Bill Bradford and personally return his wallet. From the wallet, and a business card, he is able to identify the Company – "Hospitals of America" – although he hasn't the slightest idea what "CEO" after William Bradford's name means, he reasons, *"Perhaps it's just part of his name. . .like "King George III" or something else rich people are called."*

At the bus stop, waiting to go downtown Atlanta for the first time in his life, he runs into Davon, one of the teenagers who along with Gracie, had noticed Charles picking up something off the street. Davon deduced it was the man's wallet, and so he begins pressuring Charles to give it up. Charles cleverly avoids a serious confrontation with Davon, by convincingly claiming that he turned the wallet over to the police.

Then while riding the bus, as bad luck would have it, who gets on but TJ: *". . .unsmiling, tall, wall-built. Shades covering his eyes, gold earrings in both ears, hair braided back in cornrows. Attitude filling up the whole bus."* Charles: *"What's up TJ?"*

TJ, turning off his rap pounding headset: *“What’s up yourself? Where you going? You ain’t supposed to leave this hood, little man,”*

Without Charles having to say, more than *“Just taking care of some business,”* he says to TJ: *“Thought you’d be kicking it at the crib all day.”*

TJ’s surprising response and a 2nd major lesson in the book: **You can’t always judge the book by its cover:** *“You don’t know nothing, Charles. I ain’t going to be one of those lazy brothers staying home all the time. I’m finding me a job. **Today.** . . .”I’m for real.” . . . “Job Services. I’ve been taking some classes. They’re going to hook me up with an electrician **apprenticeship.**” Charles inquires: *“What’s that?”**

“It’s like you follow a guy who already knows how to do a job and you learn how to do it. Then one day you become a full electrician.” Charles is most impressed and says, *“You going to hook me up?” . . .*TJ: *“You a baby. How old are you?” . . .*Charles: *“Fifteen. I’ve been trying to get a work permit but can’t get anyone to hire me.”*
TJ: *“I know the feeling. Look, if I get something going, I’ll be sure to help you out. Okay?”*

Charles’ closing thoughts – thinking about TJ - as he gets off the bus and after some final directions from the bus driver: *“You learn something new every day.”*

Imagine you’ve never been in the downtown business district of Atlanta. Busy business people – walking, almost running, to wherever they’re going. A woman walking with coffee in her hand while texting, bumps into Charles and spills coffee on his shirt, and without even noticing what she had done, continues on her way. But then another lady viewing Charles, obviously thinking this lone teenager to be a homeless vagabond, hands him a couple dollar bills telling him to get some breakfast with it.

So here’s the picture outside the home office of Hospitals of America (HOA). There’s a protest going on with a group of poster-carrying picketers with signs saying things like: *“UNFAIR”* and *“GREED”*, and *“Worker’s Rights”* and *“Shame on you, HOA”*

And by coincidence, one of the picketers turns out to be Charles’ **Aunt Etta** – Lorraine’s sister. She explains that the picketing is because the entire housekeeping staff is about to be fired based on a financial decision to save money by **‘outsourcing’** those jobs to a company that was non-union and also where the company wouldn’t have to provide healthcare benefits.

So here’s Etta, getting ready to lose her job, in her 60’s, with few future job possibilities and several health issues facing her as well. Just one more family member who is being hurt by Bill Bradford and his company. And Etta, as a long-time employee, around when Bill’s father ran the company, says, *“His father never would have let this happen” . . . “Seems to me like Bill Bradford has forgotten where he came from.”*

After Charles confesses to Etta that he is here to see Bill Bradford, acknowledging that Bradford was the one who hit his mother and put her in the hospital, Etta is concerned that he is possibly there to extract some revenge. Without telling her his exact mission, he convinces her that's not the case and proceeds to figure how to get by the lobby guard and into the elevator to reach the 26th floor.

Charles hears a woman saying she has an appointment with Bill Bradford and sneaks onto the same elevator with her and arrives in the receptionist waiting area along with the woman with an appointment to see Bradford. While the receptionist goes to get some coffee for the woman, Charles sneaks by her, only to finally be confronted outside the CEO's office, by **Gladys**, the gatekeeper and protector of Bill Bradford. You get the feeling she would take a bullet for him.

Prior to this, Bill Bradford has gone into a real panic mode as he discovers his wallet is missing and has added this to Gladys 'to-do' list – cancelling all his credit cards, etc.

So after Charles admits that he is here to return Mr. Bradford's wallet, and after Gladys tries a couple times unsuccessfully to persuade him to just leave the wallet with her, she realizes he is only going to return it directly to him and calls in: *"Mr. Bradford? There's a young man here to see you" . . . "His name is Mr. Charles Sullivan. No he doesn't have an appointment, I'm afraid. He said it would only take minute."*

After Charles is told Mr. Bradford is too busy to see him, and after meeting **Sheila**, the gum-chewing 'secretary' to Mr. Bradford (Gladys is his 'personal' assistant and evidently higher in the pecking order than Sheila), the door opens and Bradford bursts out into the area in a semi-tirade: *"Did either of you talk to my wife? Has she found my wallet? We need to start calling to cancel my credit cards and report them stolen."*

After obvious frustration at why this 'lost kid' hasn't already been disposed of by his two guardians, plus after Charles re-introduces himself, it finally hits Bill: *"Suddenly Bill realized that this was the same boy who stood outside his car yesterday, yelling at him to come out. How in the world. . .?"*

As Charles reaches under his shirt to retrieve the wallet, Bradford thinks he's going for a gun and jumps and scrambles underneath his assistant's desk: *"Don't shoot! It was an accident! Don't Shoot!"*

Charles, after jumping back himself, *"Nobody's here to shoot you . I just came to give you back your wallet."*

After dusting off his pants and recomposing himself, Bill invites Charles into his office and shuts the door. Although Bradford is still suspicious (*"What does this boy want?" "He's only a teenager."* *"Did the boy steal the wallet so he could come and confront him?"*) But when

he finally asks the boy, “*How did you get my wallet?*”, Charles response was that “*It fell out when you got in your car yesterday.*”

And as Bill opens his wallet and looks through it, he double-checks because he’s surprised that everything is still there including all the money, minus the \$1 Charles admits he took to purchase the round-trip bus ticket to get there.

And when Bill says, “*I guess you expect some kind of reward. You didn’t come all this way just to give me back my wallet*”, Charles, with a puzzled look, says, “*No, sir, I just wanted to return it to you. . . It’s your wallet.*” Still not believing him, Bradford continues: “*You didn’t come here and expect nothing. Now tell me the truth.*” Charles: “***It was just the right thing to do.***”

As Charles is leaving Bill’s office, he looks back at Bradford sitting behind his big desk:

“I guess I also came here because of the way you looked at me, at all of us yesterday. I just didn’t want you to think that we stole your wallet, is all. Just because someone is poor doesn’t mean we think stealing is the right thing to do.”

After turning down money for the bus ride home, as well as an offer for some kind of reward, Charles sends one more parting dig:

“You know, here you are a CEO and you don’t have any manners. You haven’t thanked me. And, you haven’t even asked me one thing about my mama. I returned wallet and you still can’t believe I did it for no other reason than what I already told you.”

As Bill stared at the closed door and as the guilt built up, he picks up the phone and instructs Sheila to call down to security. . .*stop the boy. . .and have the guard bring him back up to my office.* As you might guess, without any other explanation, Howard, the security guard grabs Charles by the arm, and forcibly accompanies him back up to the 26th floor. He assumes that Charles has done something very wrong. As Bill comes out of his office and sees the tight grip Howard has on Charles’ arm, he almost shouts, “*Let go of him! Why are you holding him like that? What’s wrong with you?*” Might have helped if Bill had been a little more precise with his retrieval instructions to Sheila, wouldn’t it?

After apologizing for not having thanked him for returning his wallet, and with a fairly sterile, “*Second of all, how is your mother?*”

Then Bradford surprises Charles and us as readers with this:

*“Charles I understand you won’t let me give you money. I respect that. You’re proud and have a good head on your shoulders. My father was that way. He started this company from nothing, and look at it now. Everyone starts somewhere. They say, **give** a man a fish and you feed him for a day. **Teach** a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. So if I can’t give you money, maybe I can teach you to fish.”. . .”Meaning maybe I can give you experience. I’d like to give you that start, so I’ve decided to give you **one share** in*

this company. It will come to you in the mail in the next few days.”

Not only does Charles not have the slightest idea what a ‘share’ of stock in a company means, but he mistrustfully asks why he’s being given a share?

“Hospitals of America is a very important corporation. Charles, and has been for years. Owning a share is a good thing. You returned something important to me. Not many people would have done that. So, as a reward I’m giving you a share. If you want to learn about business and hard work, it’s a good place to start. See how a company is run. How business decisions are made.”

Charles asks how much his 1 share is worth and is told \$45.85 but when he asks what the -4.15 beside it stands for, Bradford explains that, *“Our stock was doing great. In fact it was up past \$50 a share only a week ago. Since May, we’ve been going downhill. And those protestors outside aren’t helping.”*

Realizing that his aunt is one of those protestors and one of those people who he would be *‘getting rid of’*, Charles still decides not to start trouble then.

Bradford concludes their meeting by inviting Charles to come to the shareholder’s meeting coming up next week.

Charles has sneaked out to meet with Bill Bradford without his mother’s or Lorraine’s knowledge. When he returns from returning Bradford’s wallet, he finally goes to the hospital to see his mother for the first time after the accident. On the way up to her floor, he and his sister happen to run into **Mason Smith** in the elevator - unannounced – to see Ramona.

It runs out that Mason Smith is an ambulance-chasing attorney who got wind of the accident through the policeman who was there at the scene:

“Mason couldn’t believe his good luck and, if all went well, he’d have to remember to thank Officer McKeon for the tip. A big-time CEO hits a poor, innocent black woman on her way out of church? A jury would eat this up. He smelled a payday coming his way.”

Smith makes his way to Ramona’s hospital room and after handing his business card showing he is a ‘counselor at law’, Lorraine immediately reacts, *“We didn’t call for an attorney”*. Nevertheless, Ramona thanks him for coming but explains that they don’t have any money to pay him. His response:

“Yes, ma’am, I’m only too familiar with the unfortunate circumstances of innocent victims thrown into perilous situations through no fault of their own. But my services are free.”

Without revealing his source for how he knows so many of the details of the accident and the person who was driving the car, Ramona and Lorraine seem relieved that this may be in fact the miracle they are hoping for.

Here we're introduced to another visitor at the hospital who plays some important parts later on – the good-looking chaplain – **Oliver French**. He is immediately taken with Lorraine and describes her as, *“one of the most lovely creatures he'd ever seen.”*

As Bill Bradford had promised, the stock certificate arrives in the mail, but with Charles the only one knowing about it. After all, he had sneaked out to return the wallet and Gracie was the only other one who knew about it. Realizing he does need to learn more of what it means and if he can use the money from it to help his mother, he confides in Reverend Oliver French who was coming over to court Lorraine. Oliver explains to Charles what a stock certificate stands for and that it wouldn't make sense to cash it in for the current value but that in the long run, it could become very valuable. He also calls it an **'opportunity'** for Charles and encourages Charles to attend the Shareholder meeting to which he was invited by Bradford.

Charles is excited about attending the Shareholder meeting, now that he has a suit coat which Lorraine, his grandmother buys him. But then he's devastated when Ramona forbids him from attending the meeting. This comes after learning from Mason Smith, her attorney, that Bradford had instructed Morrie, Bill's attorney, to play hardball and not pay anything. She had no knowledge of the \$1MM amount he was asking for. All she was expecting was to have the hospital bills covered. Mason is already picturing the new car he'll be buying with his contingency fees. Charles decides for the first time in his life to lie to his mother and offering a lame excuse for where he's going, and with his new suit coat in his backpack, which he later changes into, he takes the bus again downtown – to HOA corporate headquarters – to attend his first shareholder meeting..

At first, the person checking shareholder names to confirm who is eligible to attend the Shareholder meeting, is sure there must be some mistake when Charles tries to check in. But seeing his name is on the list, and being told that Mr. Bradford is the one who invited him, Charles takes his name tag and walks in. He sees Bradford who seems glad to see him and ironically Bill has also brought his son, Andrew to expose him to the business.

It turns out the Andrew and Charles end up sitting together. They discover that Andrew knows as much if not more about rap music and artists than Charles who has grown up listening to Motown songs. And although Charles is there for business, Andrew could care less and is tuning out the meeting in lieu of his earphones and music.

Questions and complaints come up from various persons about how the company's stock is being negatively impacted by the sign-carrying housekeeper protestors about to be fired, but there was also an announcement that one shareholder would be randomly selected to serve on the company's **Policy Advisory Committee**.

As they keep repeating the number '61', with no one responding, finally Charles realizes he had been reading his nametag upside down, thinking it said '19'. He finally realizes it's really '61' and goes to the table to identify himself. Although skeptic about a minor serving on the committee, they confirm with Ira Goldstein, HOA's corporate attorney, that there is no 'minimum

age' requirement in the corporate bylaws. Also Ira takes a liking to Charles and welcomes him on board. The meeting has lasted into the evening and at the bus-stop, Oliver is waiting for Charles since he suspects where he had gone. His mother's anger is only diffused and re-directed after learning that Gracie has stolen a skirt from a store, and to which she was now going to have to return it the next day. Luckily Ramona knows the owner and is sure she won't prosecute after the skirt is returned.

With money Oliver has given him for washing his vintage car, Charles goes to a shopping mall to buy some pants to match his coat to make it a suit. At the mall, he runs into Paige and Andrew Bradford, there to buy some clothes for Andrew. After introductions, Paige, who herself grew up in a very modest income family – worked two jobs to put herself through college - offers to drive Charles home. After several attempts to dissuade her from doing so, especially driving her Range Rover into their neighborhood, he finally acquiesces.

Not content to simply drop him off, Paige insists on meeting Charles' mother. As you might guess, as Paige and Andrew see Ramona's condition and hear the story of her plight, and the fact that Bill is refusing to pay ANYTHING – not realizing the role that Mason Smith has played in this, both she and Andrew are stunned and infuriated.

At home, Paige confronts Bill who makes some feeble excuses for his actions. With this shock and the cumulative impact of everything up to this point, and after a jog, Bill begins to really look inward. Heading to the office with a plan to change things, he over-hears some employees talking in non-glowing terms about him and the difference when his father was running the company. That does it. He calls Sheila and instructs her to arrange for "**Jimmy**" their corporate limo driver to pick up Charles to bring him to the Policy Advisory Committee meeting.

Funny aside – on the limo ride with Oliver along as the chaperone – Jimmy expects Charles to want to listen to some gangster rap music, but when he asks for Marvin Gaye and the Temptations music, they all end up singing along.

The way the media learns that Hospitals of America had committed Medicare fraud was not revealed until toward the latter part of the book when it turns out – no surprise - Mason Smith, the *slimeball* attorney, was the source. The fraud only involved one office and the individual responsible was fired and they were working with the Government to deal with it. Nevertheless, this on top of the 'outsourcing' of the housekeepers picketing outside corporate headquarters, was going to make the Policy Advisory meeting a very contentious one.

Much of the Policy Advisory Committee meeting centered around clever ways to offset the negative PR by creating a diversionary strategy – focusing on all the great things HOA had done in the past. Charles taps the shoulder of his friend, Ira Goldstein, sitting next to him and says, "**So we're going to be advising the company on how to look better in the press?**"

Ira: "Yes, we need to look good in the eyes of the public. If the public doesn't believe

in us, the value of our company will continue to go down.”

Charles: *“So if we just change people’s minds, we can make more money again – is that it?”*

Ira: *“That’s it basically. HOA has always been a very successful corporation, Charles, and we’d like it to stay that way.”*

The energy and enthusiasm builds, following a suggestion that a PR blitz be created for ‘damage control’. At about this point Bill Bradford enters the room and to everyone’s surprise openly admits that HOA had committed Medicare fraud but explains the circumstances and the action taken. And as Bill says, **“Our job is to find a way to get HOA back on America’s good side”**, Charles raises his hand and after standing and clearing his throat says, **“Um, so if you want America to believe in you again, what about just telling the truth?”**

After the chairman exclaims **“What?”**, Charles continues, *“Well, Mr. Bradford just came in here and said that we could do a better job if we knew all the facts. And after what he said, I sure feel a lot better. I mean, every basket has a bad apple once in a while. But just because one person does something doesn’t mean it should represent the whole group.”*

As Ira tries to reel Charles in, Bill ‘waves him off’: *“You know, the young man has a point.”. . . “On Friday this week, I’ll meet the press and tell them the truth: that Hospitals of America takes responsibility for the actions. That we don’t run and hide behind our lawyers. When my father built this company, it was to make a better way of life for people, through good medicine. Everyone makes mistakes, and we’re fixing ours in the hopes that America can one day trust us again.”*

There’s a touching scene when Bill comes home and with Paige and Andrew present, Paige says, *“Remember when I first met you? You were so idealistic. . .so proud of your father and the company he founded. But more importantly you were proud of the kind of man your father was. You were proud of what he stood for. . .you wanted to be just like him.”* She paused, **“I’ve lost respect for you”**, she whispered.

Bill responds, *“I know,”. . .“And I’m going to have to work to regain that. I’ve been trying to get in touch with Morrie. I’ve decided to settle with the Sullivans. You’re right, it’s the right thing to do.”*
Paige: *“Really?”* Bill: *“It’s important to you, and I respect what you think. That’s important to me.”*

It’s at this point in the book that I was sure the story would just wrap up and the final pages would detail the happy ending. I figured that somehow Bill would cave in to the plight of the ‘housekeeping staff’ and everyone would walk out into the sunset holding hands and singing **“Kumbaya”**.

NOT SO FAST!

When Bill finally reaches Morrie the next morning, his great mood and the promise to his family that he was going to resolve the Sullivan's situation and do 'what was right', took an unexpected detour.

Bill is informed that the Sullivan's attorney (remember the weasel) has called to say that unless he pays the \$1MM, he is going to go to the press with the car-accident story and how the evil CEO had hit this poor black lady crossing the street from church and now was refusing to pay her anything for her medical bills and her pain and suffering. Bill had been thinking \$100,000 or so as what he would settle for, but upon hearing this, he began to have the picture that the whole thing by the Sullivan's had been a very carefully thought out plot:

"He couldn't believe that the Sullivans would do this to him. Had his wife been tricked? Was this whole thing a scam? Had the Sullivan boy tricked Paige into going to their apartment to feed her a sob story, angling for a million-dollar jackpot? Bill slammed his fist down on this desk. Charles and his whole family, with their crooked little plan – put the poor mama out on display with a broken leg to get Paige's sympathy. And Charles pretending to be a saint – 'Oh, sir, I just wanted to return your wallet.' "

Thoughts raced through Bill's mind: ***"Was it all just to make sure they weaseled their way into my life so they could rob me blind? Oh, they made quite a show of refusing my wife's money. . .when all along they just waiting for a big payday."***

In the meantime, an unlikely bond takes place between Charles and Andrew, Bill and Paige Bradford's son. After a few questions which Andrew posed to his father about what 'outsourcing' meant, and partly because of Andrew's curiosity about Charles as well as his sudden interest in learning the real story behind what's happening with his father and the negative press about him and the company, Andrew is inspired to **secretly** take his first bus ride down to "the hood" (the neighborhood where Charles lives). He ends up in a pick-up basketball game playing on Charles' team. . scores the winning goal and the bond between them is sealed. He arrives back home late that day to a police car and both parents ready to file a lost-child report.

Let's put it this way, the bad mood his father is in following Morrie's latest news, is compounded by this incident and Andrew.

If you want to know how the book ends, you will either have to come to the book club meeting where the author Neil Shulman will detail it, or you will just have to buy the book which is what I would recommend anyway.

I can promise you that either way, or hopefully BOTH WAYS – meaning you'll attend the book club meeting and buy the book, you won't be disappointed.