

Our Uncle Sam Buys a Used Car on *Time* But Finds that Our (National) Debt makes it Difficult.

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Our Uncle Sam is looking over a few cars in the auto sales lot of one of the “Auto Row” dealerships clustered along Stockton Hill Road here in Kingman, Arizona. He’s not certain which car he wants but is drawn to a sexy, older-model V8 dating from the 1990s before we began to worry *excessively* about Climate Change sometime 30 years from now in the middle of this century when it’s far too late to do anything about it.

The salesman approaches. “That’s a beauty, ain’t it?”

Uncle Sam casts a nervous glance. “Yes. I guess. I mean, it depends on the price.”

“O, don’t fret that none.” He studies Uncle Sam for a moment. “Say, that is *some hat* you’ve got there!”

“Thanks.” Uncle Sam fiddles with the hat brim a moment then steadies his gaze at the salesman. “Whadayamean don’t worry about the price?”

The carefully dressed yet strangely wet man extends a warm handshake in answer. “My name’s Bob. I handle car sales and I’m the finance guy, too. I could put you into any car we’ve got on the lot here, if I had a mind to.” His arm extends to encompass the full dimensions of the sales lot glimmering in the all too bright sunlit day. (Subtly, Uncle Sam wipes his returned hand on his red-white striped trousers to remove the sweat.) “Yup! Any car. Want to take this baby out for a test drive? You might have to take off your hat... since it ain’t a convertible.”

“Why not! You sure you can make it affordable for me?” Remembering his manners, “By the way, I’m Uncle Sam.”

“Uncle Sam’ you say? My wife has an Uncle Sam, too.” Bob looks benevolently at what he assesses to be a centuries-old *punim* (Yiddish for “face”). “So, don’t worry about the financing, if I can’t get you into this beaut, no one can. Get in: keys are in the ignition.”

After a few minutes of fidgeting and getting comfortable, Uncle Sam and Bob leave the lot and disappear in the direction of *Starbuck’s* or *Dutch Brother’s* or *Golden Corral* or *Home Depot* or... any of the other chain joints that line the street sending their profits to some other state or country. Or, maybe just *Walmart*, the benign cancer of America before *Amazon* stepped in.

From the backseat we can see Uncle Sam having a great time driving along the boulevard. Shifting gears and giving it a little gas – glancing askance at Bob to make certain he won’t be reprimanded for a little *Old Guy Hot Rodding*, only to detect a faint, telling

smile cross Bob's lips knowing he has Sam hooked.

"You look good behind the wheel there, Uncle Sam. Maybe knocks a few decades off of you. Hell, looking at you, you don't look a day over 120!"

"I'll be 247 years old next birthday. Don't feel it, though."

"You don't say!"

"I do say! Believe it or not."

Bob twists his view back to the road, "Pull back in the driveway and let's go into my office and talk turkey. I want to see you drive this car home today!"

(Inside seated at a desk: Bob on one side and Uncle Sam on the other. Bob's scratching his head and screwing up his face as he looks at a computer generated report in his hand.)

"I've got your credit report here, Uncle Sam..."

"My what?"

"Your credit report. It assigns a score for credit worthiness and yours is **three-hunnert out of about eight-hunnert, fifty**. Doesn't go any lower than that. Hell, dead guy has a credit score of three hunnert."

"That so?"

"That's a fact. Doesn't mean anything to me, though, Let's see what we can do here. The report lists all of your debts and other personal information." Bob points at a line on the report for his own reference. "Says here that you have a family of three hunnert, twenny-nine million, five hunnert thousand people. That sound about right?"

"Yes, sir. It does. Give or take, depending on what's happenin' on the border."

"Okay. Says your total debt right now is a little less than thirty-one trillion dollars? That's just a whole heap of money, by golly."

"Covid..."

"Boy, don't I know! Let's take a look at the other side of your financial situation for a minute. Now, you owe thirty-one trillion dollars *but you make* around four-and-a-half trillion a year. That's pretty good money, Uncle Sam."

"Yeah, but as you said, I got debt coming out my ol' ying-yang."

"That's a fact, you do. But it says here on this third page that you can print your own

money.”

“That’s pretty good, isn’t it? That ought to count for something in my favor.”

Bob sits back and scratches his head. Drums the eraser on his pencil against the desktop and scans the walls of his office. The wetness has not left his face. Uncle Sam sits idly waiting for Bob to complete his ruminations. Finally, Bob speaks, “Would you happen to know somebody who could co-sign for this loan? Somebody who could guarantee that it would be repaid should you not... you know, should you fail to make payments on it?”

“You mean make someone else pay for it instead of me?”

“Yeah, that’s what it is, you know, basically.”

“I guess Mexico could co-sign for me. They’d pay for it, I’m sure of that.”

“Okay. That’s one possibility. How ‘bout China? Says here that every year you rack up about a half-a-trillion in trade deficit with them. Maybe they’d think kindly about co-signing this note?”

“No...” Sam dismisses China with a gesture. “I don’t talk to them anymore. We don’t get along. I couldn’t... I wouldn’t know how to ask them.”

A heavy silence pervades the small office. Finally, Bob lifts a pencil and scribbles a note on Uncle Sam’s credit application. “I’ll tell you what, Uncle Sam. I’m going to make this loan and guarantee it myself. Because I got to tell you, I know a lot people who lend money and I can’t, for the life of me, think of anyone who’d trust you. We just got to keep it right here in the family and hope nobody gets wind of how much trouble you’re really in.”

“Trouble?”

“Sam, I’ll be honest...”

“Like Abe? I liked him.”

“Me, too. Yeah, like Abe.” Bob looks hesitant. “Really, Sam, you’re bankrupt. But, thank God we got each other to lie to.” Bob reaches over and grabs the keys to the 1990 Fordolet and tosses them across the desk. Sam picks them up and smiles.

Thrusting a finger at Bob he says, “*I want you!* To keep this to yourself.”

“Mums the word... Uncle Sam. Mum’s the word. Nobody’d believe it if I told ‘em.”

Sam stands and extends a hand to Bob, “To tell you the truth, Bob, nobody seems to care...”

