

A Story About Pensions

Corlan McCollum

The nineteenth floor of the thirtieth building on tenth street was occupied by people in white hazmat suits, carefully decontaminating a spilled vial of uranium-235. They were prepared for this sort of thing; which is to say, it happened often. Often enough that between the eighteenth and nineteenth floors of the building, enough radioactive and acidic spillage had eaten through and the floor was much thinner than it had been originally.

There'd been a small uproar about the danger that presented some time ago, but the uproarers had since retired on good government pensions, and no longer cared.

So the radioactive spillage on the nineteenth floor of the thirtieth building on tenth street might have, quite possibly, just maybe, leaked through a tiny bit.

The eighteenth floor was occupied solely by accountants. A quarter million accountants worked there, jam-packed into cubicles that warped the fabric of reality in order to cut costs. That's what the accountants did; cut costs, sometimes by also cutting conventional physics. They were very good at their jobs, despite their radiation poisoning.

This was a significant mystery for some time—they did not know about the lab above them, and the Geiger counter the accountants bought was silent everywhere but the water cooler, which nobody drank from anyways. Eventually, there was an uproar about it, because the accountants' insurance didn't cover radiation poisoning, and there was a big switch to private providers, and finally, upper management began to take notice.

Upper management occupied the twenty-second floor of the sixteenth building on ninth street. All the other buildings in the city were full of accountants and atomic labs. Their insurance provider gave them a kickback from having everybody sign up for their plans, and had very suddenly lost a significant profit. Upper management responded by buying another Geiger counter for the accountants and then firing them all when they said they already had one (to recoup their losses after buying the Geiger counter).

Upper upper management noticed the firing of a quarter million accountants. Upper upper management occupied the gazillionth floor of the only building on first street, three cities away. Upper upper management wrote very neatly in a file about upper management that they had demonstrated very diligent fiscal responsibility and sufficiently handled the accountants, and recommended them for promotion.

Upper upper upper management had just retired, so upper upper man-

agement put the file on the unoccupied desk in the corner office on the gazilionth and first floor. By the time the elevator arrived with the new upper upper upper manager, he was old enough to retire and did so without even stepping out of the lift. Then he died and drew pension in hell, and his pensioned healthcare didn't cover radiation poisoning.