

Airless, Chairless Musical Chairs

Written by Alex Baer

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There's a stand-up party game out, the traditional standby of social interaction in groups. Details have leaked: The game is from the Guild of Lazing Rich Old Buggerers (GLORB) -- the leisure service unit of Global Adherents of Special Persons' Protections (GASPP), itself a subsidiary of parent corporation HAVOCC, the House of Avaricious, Villainous, Oafish, Charlatan Capitalists.

It'll be a blast, as this is the same bunch behind Enron, the Exxon Valdez, fracking, GMOs, the BP oil volcano in the Gulf, mortgage crises, the credit crunch, bets on derivatives' bets, the hapless need for red-alert bank bailouts, inter-linked LIBOR manipulations, with even more in the pipeline, so to say, for the *really* lean years ahead.

That party game is similar to musical chairs: everyone mills around as they do in real life, then, at a set signal, players shuffle, scuttle, and scramble for a place of survival, in order to win the high honor of continuing to play the game.

The broader game, of course, is Life, with this insignificant piece only the financial subset upon which everything else for players totally relies and forever depends. This element is not like the board game of Monopoly, in which dice-throwing luck actively courts fair play and some wins. No, this part is far more like bean-counting than any feverish fan of accounting could ever imagine or dream.

This game is called, "Chairless Musical Chairs," or CMC. Once you sign up to play -- everyone in the lower 99.9 percent of the population is automatically an entrant by being a birth survivor -- the game is completely controlled by GLORB, GASPP, and HAVOCC.

The task is go round and round, just as in real life, every step of the way, via instructions and directions that slowly reveal a path players might take. Later, when randomly-selected players lose everything -- as routinely happens in this game -- players get the excitement of being penniless, at "Square One," a spot randomly chosen alongside an equally randomized dirt road.

This state of starting from scratch -- whether players are 8, 18, or 88 -- is known as "The Cheap Thrill," or "Having Champagne on a Mud Budget." There is no known benefit to players for starting all over again, with nothing, although speculation exists that this unpredictable and

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harsh outcome of game play is meant to re-invigorate and strengthen players and, therefore, the game.

No player is elected to act as banker, controller, or CEO. Instead, there are complex rules taken from the game's 87 volumes of ten-thousand page books that specify actions and details. Rules are also dependent on an array of randomizers, such as spinners, dice, guessing games, single-card draws, selection of short straws, and the like.

There are also sudden, no-warning collapses of the playing field with which players must contend. These apocalyptic crashes are alternated with abrupt waves of soap bubbles, accompanied by the issuance of rewards to random, apoplectic players, for the performance and completion of unknown events.

And, as vital in CMC as the child's game on which it is modeled, it is imperative to take possession of a chair, and by any and all means possible, when the music is randomly stopped. Making this more difficult -- the music is never played aloud and so, never heard.

Players attempt to locate chairs based on simulated music stoppage: spinner readings, the throw of dice, consensus votes, and the like. Those without chairs are sent to "Square One."

This game, by the way, is played only in chairless, totally empty and vacant spaces having no furniture or flat surfaces of any kind that could be arguably defined as seating or a chair -- not even in bathrooms.

The unheard "music" can also be stopped at any time by a featureless, automatic timer, preset before the birth of any players, to go off at unpredictable intervals that mere players cannot adjust, set, or clear.

It is apparently thought that playing this game to a draw, or anything close to that state, is considered a huge "win" by most players, with that verdict being a deathbed determination only.

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Oh -- a few spare details omitted until now: first, the real game is actually based upon the application, movement, and distribution of massive wealth far above the levels of the peons and pawns playing. Any actual link between the real game, and the CMC, is fully accidental, arbitrary, and fictitious -- just as there as no true causes-and-effects in the randomized lives of the players themselves.

All aspects of the one, true game are coordinated and controlled by 87 Masters, one for each Wealth Production Zone (WPZ) as created in the Charter of Unleashed, Unbridled, and Unrestricted Capitalism (CUUUC), last amended and ratified on December 12, in the Year of the Great Play, 2000.

A second unspoken detail: There is no way to win CMC. Many have tried. None have succeeded, not even smugglers of small, fold-out chairs. No CMC player has ever been graduated to Master -- nor will one ever be.

Still, the Game Plan maintains it is important to maintain the illusion of possibility during game play, for the sake of players, as well as for the game itself. After all, it is thought players must be given *something* to occupy their time, unless and until any one player is needed by Masters to carry out short-term work.

As it's said on all continents and in all WPZs by older contestants to one another, nodding their sage affirmations back and forth: "*Go with The Five Gs!*"

For the novice, that translates to: *Good game, good luck, good grief, good riddance, goodbye.*