

Bringing Home the Bacon

by
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Generally, Robert DeSapio was content. He had had a steady job for thirteen years at Mercury Analyses Inc now and was looking forward to his third promotion (which Grainfield, his fat supervisor, had tipped him about). Along with roughly a 100 other analyzers, Robert's job was to calculate brand-value, checking for background variables, such as product use-value and quality. A tedious task, some might argue, but to Robert it was a true blessing. Numbers calmed him; they were predictable (provided, of course, that one knew all the factors).

Robert was at his desk moaning to emphasize the stress of an outrageous workload (as he had seen the others do from time to time), when Johnson, who was one of the new guys, came over and tapped his desk. Robert had shown Johnson the run of the mill on his first day, and ever since then, Johnson had frequented his desk like a moth would a light bulb.

“Hey, Bob!” he said with a smile. “What *is* that freakin' smell?”

“What smell?” Robert replied.

“Jeez, can't you smell it?” Johnson asked, taking a sniff and waving a hand under his nose. “It smells like somebody kicked the bucket. Been here since I started.”

Robert had forgotten the smell, he'd noticed it as well when he first arrived. In fact, now he thought about it, he had not only gotten used to the smell, he even kind of liked it; it was a sort of homey smell to him now.

“Oh, that smell.” Robert sighed “It's the stuff they use to clean the carpets, don't worry, you'll get used to it.”

“Hope so. I have trouble concentrating in that stench, smells like a freakin' butcher's back yard.” Johnson said and walked back to his desk.

About an hour later, a smiling Grainfield was at his desk.

“You're up DeSapio. Big man wants to see ya.”

“Now?” Robert asked and looked at his watch.

“That's right. Now remember what I told you: just accept the offer and say thanks.”

Robert got up and took his jacket from the chair.

“Follow me.” Grainfield said and lead Robert through the hallways of the executive staff.

When they reached a door with a sign that said “Joseph T. Birkman – Chief Executive Officer”, they stopped. Grainfield knocked on the door.

“Yees...” A dark voice boomed from the other side.

Grainfield opened the door. “Mr DeSapio sir.”

“Good good, show him in.” Was the reply.

Grainfeild waved Robert in and left him with Birkman.

Birkman was even more beefy than Grainfield. But what astounded Robert the most (since he had never actually seen Birkman), was that Birkman evidently only had one eye, the other was covered by a black patch.

“Do sit down Mr. DeSapio.” He said hinting at a chair directly in front of his big desk. “May I offer you anything?”

“No thanks sir.” Robert said, trying to avoid exposing his discomfort regarding the lacking eye.

When Robert had seated himself, Birkman finally said:

“So I guess you've been wondering why the CEO wants to talk to you about a promotion Mr. DeSapio?”

“Well sir, the thought did cross my mind once or twice.” Robert said, concluding that Grainfield had told Birkman that he had told Robert about the upcoming promotion.

“I have to tell you Mr. DeSapio, that this in no way is an ordinary promotion. What I'm offering you is a career advance few, if indeed any, have ever experienced.” Birkman said leaning forward in his chair, staring intently at Robert with his one eye. “Fact of the matter is that we've had our eye on you for quite some time now Robert; is it alright if I call you Robert?”

“Yes sir.” Robert replied “Please do sir.”

“Good good.” Birkman leaned back again. “As you very well know, this company has multiple fields of operation. The board has decided that you would benefit from a relocation.” Birkman held up his palm like a crossing guard. “Now, before you say anything, I want to stress that the decision is yours entirely, however I must advice you to consider this proposition an advance. But you will have to change branch.”

“It sounds very interesting sir... May I ask what the nature of this position would be?” Robert said with the distinct feeling that something was moving in his stomach.

“You may indeed Robert. Running this business requires exceptional vigilance, to say the very least, but most of all, it requires loyalty, a trait in which you, Robert, far surpass the rest of the staff at your department. The key stone for any company, its very central nerve, is its finance department. The board has decided that you should be taken on as our newest member of the financial staff, that so valorously toil to lubricate the delicate machinery that makes this company among the best in the market.”

Robert had never actually met any of the people working at the finance department, but he had a very clear sense that this department would be a welcome challenge to him. Stagnation was death; the secret of eternal life, Robert was convinced, lay in perpetual motion.

“But I must inform you that the position you will take...” Birkman continued before Robert had a chance to figure out what to say next. “Is of the utmost delicacy. It requires loyalty of unsurpassed

proportions. The board informs me that you have no family Robert, is that correct?"

"Yes sir." Robert replied not really sure what Birkman was getting at. "It is."

"Good good. Economy is very tricky business these days, and if anybody gets wind of a shortcut, what ever its nature, they will pursue it, mercilessly overthrowing previous morals of business conduct. Therefore we need to be sure that every single member of the financial staff be of the utmost loyalty to the company, not influenced by external impulses and sentiments. Do you understand Robert?"

Birkman had stopped smiling.

"Yes sir." Robert answered.

"Good good." Birkman's lips smiled again. "We will require of you to turn up at 7 sharp tomorrow morning then, someone will greet you at your *old* desk."

So *that* was why he had never seen any of the financial staff, they simply met before he did.

"Very well sir." Robert said wiping his hands on the legs of his pants.

"One more thing Robert."

"Yes sir?"

"I'm afraid I need you to sign this." Birkman opened one of the drawers in his desk and produced a piece of paper. "Don't worry about it, it's just a formality. You know, to make sure you don't 'kiss and tell' if you catch my drift." He handed Robert the paper and a pen with his persistent smile.

Robert started reading. It looked like standard legalese to him. Normally, Robert would have read a contract three times at minimum, but his present situation made it impossible; Birkman's lonely eye observing him as it did.

He signed the contract and handed it back to Birkman.

"Thank you Robert." Birkman got up with noticeable difficulty and stretched out his hand. The two shook hands. "Thank you sir." Robert said and then he left Birkman's office carefully closing the door.

At 6:45 the next morning, Robert was at his old desk with a cardboard box, packing his things. He had hardly had time for breakfast and he had burnt his tongue on his morning coffee. His last night had been restless, there were too many questions; what would his new job be more specifically? What had the contract said? When did he get off? And would there be a raise? He woken up, remembering only fragments of dreams; contracts signed with mucus, hands of clocks moving opposite ways, inreadable signs in endless hallways, calculators with Arabian symbols on them and the word Molek. All still lingering in his head.

Turning around after taking out the last papers of his bottom drawer, Robert was shocked to be

facing a small man with protruding eyes and a grayish complexion. The man was dressed in a sort of boiler suit a couple of shades brighter than his skin.

“I’m Emmet, the doctor.” The skinny man said with unfocused eyes.

Robert swallowed a lump and nodded. Why would a finance department need a doctor? Was it a sort of nickname? Judging by his appearance, Emmet might very well be very bright, if not a genius. He was a genius for certain, Robert decided, and felt honored being in such fine company.

“Follow me Robert.” He said and headed for the door to the back stairs.

Robert picked up his box and followed Emmet out the door. Emmet started walking up the stairs.

“I thought the stairs led to the roof.” Robert said simultaneously fumbling with the box and trying to watch his step.

“They do.” Emmet said with his back to Robert. “Eventually.”

Robert had always figured that he worked on the top floor because he knew what was on the lower floors and he knew that there were no windows above the floor he worked on. As far as Robert could figure out, the room left between his old floor and the roof of the building was far smaller than what would normally be required.

As they ascended the stairs, the smell intensified, Robert noticed. The homeliness of it had degenerated into a nauseating odor.

“Here we are.” Emmet said pulling out a bunch of keys.

They had reached a big green metal door with numerous security locks. Emmet started unlocking the door.

“So tell me, eh, Emmet, what exactly will be my job up here.”

Emmet put the keys back into his pocket and opened the heavy door. As he did so the intensity of the smell grew to an outright stench, the sweet sickly stench of rotting meat.

“To feed Homunculus.” Emmet said as they entered a big dark room with multiple red lamps illuminating the most terrible sight Robert (now gagging fiercely) during his 34 year old life had ever seen. In the center of the room hung a creature looking as if made from snake hide, yellow under the red light. From its trunk hung dozens of appendages resembling fingers more than legs, but buried into the floor. At the exact center of the terror, a small humanoid being protruded, as if halfway born, with a contorted and lip-less smirk. Robert stopped breathing, the thing moved again in his stomach. Unable to hold it back any longer, and now careless to even try, he emptied his stomach on the floor, trying to scream as he did so. The papers from his box covered the floor at his feet landing in the puddle of recently digested breakfast.

“The bucket is over there. Try to mix the fresh and the old as you feed him. I’ll find you a stool.” Emmet said, but Robert didn’t hear, he was too busy trying to salvage his papers.