

HUMBLEMAN

While many municipal governments struggle to solve the ever-growing list of human moral ailments, few have sought a solution such as the one Profitville pursued. I am not a personal witness to any of this story, and thus, cannot authenticate any portion of it. I pass it along in the event that a community elsewhere may benefit from the supposed experience. It is the least I can do, given my position as a moral and spiritual leader in Profitville.

Pastor Fred Anderson

Deep within the fortified complex of administrative offices in the large city of Profitville, seven men and three women gathered in utmost secrecy.

“Please, please, we must remain calm,” pleaded Mayor Aston. “One at a time. Councilman Roberts, you may speak first.”

“It’s a jungle in the streets,” lamented Councilman Roberts. “Looting. Break-ins. Robberies.”

Councilman Adams interjected strongly, “Just because the people from my district have money, don’t think for one minute that they’re going to pay for all this chaos.”

“What about the business district?” asked Councilwoman Miller. “There’s corruption at every corporate level.”

“There’s no question it’s rampant in every sector of our society,” added Mayor Aston. “I don’t think we have any choice. We must call him in.”

“Do you really think he can do it?” asked Councilman Orthene.

“Does he have the courage and strength to handle such a massive problem?” questioned Councilman McSwain.

“We truly need a miracle,” said Councilwoman Bayer.

“Yes, we surely do,” said Mayor Aston. “I believe he can do it. All in favor of seeking his assistance, say aye.”

“Aye,” the Council said in unison.

Speaking into the intercom, Mayor Aston called his secretary, “Miss Jones, please send him in.”

“He’s coming, Mayor,” answered Miss Jones.

With bravado and complete confidence, a dashing and ruggedly built gentleman entered the council chamber.

“Yes, it is I, Humbleman,” the gentleman stated in a matter-of-fact manner that oozed with gusto.

Underneath her breath, Councilwoman Bayer sighed, “What a man!”

“You’ve been briefed on the situation, Humbleman?” asked Mayor Aston.

“Yes, your capable Miss Jones gave me all the details.”

“Can you help us, Humbleman?” questioned Councilman Orthene.

“I would not be here otherwise, sir.”

“Please don’t take offense, Humbleman,” said Councilman Adams. “Have you ever taken on a problem of this magnitude?”

“Ladies and gentlemen, I have conquered Mt. Caramushi, previously considered impossible. I have crossed Death Valley in the middle of summer. I have fought the frozen tundra of the Arctic

cap in the dead of winter. Rest assured, I will find the answer for you, because I am ... Humbleman.”

“What a man!” murmured Councilwoman Miller.

“I must depart posthaste,” declared Humbleman. “Mayor, I will call you as soon as I have something for you.”

Humbleman left the safe confines of the council chamber and entered the jungle of the streets. He remained ever vigilant, for the jungle held many deadly assassins—both physical and spiritual. Balancing confidence with humility, the man weighed every scene and every character of human life that crossed his remarkable eye.

Somewhere between 42nd and 43rd Streets, a heated argument between two men caught his ear. When he turned to his right, he saw one man holding up his wallet and the other man holding up a hot dog. As much as he could gather, the man holding up the wallet said the other man would have to pry it out of his cold dead hands before he’d ever pay for such an inferior hot dog. The two men soon came to blows, but their fisticuffs were more show than actual injury-producing. Eventually, the irate customer left, and the vendor went back to selling his dogs.

Just as he was about to leave the scene, Humbleman gave one more glance to the hot dog vendor's cart. Noticing something at the base of one of the wheels, he put on his gloves while he casually walked over to the vendor. In order to keep any suspicions to a minimum, he ordered an item from the menu. Pulling out his wallet to pay, he feigned clumsiness and dropped his money. As he bent down to pick up the money, he also picked up the item he had seen and slipped it into a plastic bag he had in his pocket. Humbleman's vast experience in the dangers lurking around every corner had made him diligent as to carrying around empty plastic bags in his pocket. Hailing a taxi, our hero felt a surge in his calculating spirit.

Pulling out his cell phone, he called the mayor of the beleaguered city, "Mayor, I believe I have found the problem. I know that you must be in the laboratory by now, so would you please tell Doctor Wimbush to get ready? I am returning forthwith, specimen in hand."

"Will do, Humbleman," answered the mayor. "I knew we could count on you."

"Your confidence in me is not unwarranted, Mayor Aston. After all, I am ... Humbleman."

A woman standing near where Humbleman waited for the taxi said to herself, “What a man!”

“The A & M Truck Stop, please,” said Humbleman to the taxi driver. “Without a moment to spare.”

Upon his arrival at the aforementioned destination, he casually walked over to a long-nosed Kenworth tractor hooked up to a forty-five-foot van trailer with the logo of Mabel Murphy’s Home-Baked Pies on its sides. With a special coded knock, Humbleman gained access to the mobile laboratory through the rear doors of the big rig.

“Humbleman,” said Doctor Wimbush.

“Ah, Doctor Wimbush, how good to see you again.”

“The pleasure is all mine,” replied the able scientist. “What do we have?”

Humbleman handed the bag with the specimen to Doctor Wimbush and said, “I believe you will find the contents very interesting, good sir.”

Using special laboratory forceps, the doctor carefully removed the specimen from the bag and exclaimed, “Ah, yah. Notice the leather like protective covering that surrounds the specimen. If I am not mistaken, there should be a narrow opening

on the side of the covering ... ah, yah. By gently spreading the sides of the opening, I should be able to gain access to the root of the object. Now, by using these special laboratory tweezers, I will remove it from its leather covering. Ah, yah, there it is, my friend—*Currencius paperificus*. I think I may have something on this in my files.”

“Permit me to offer an interpretation, Mayor,” said Humbleman. “In layman’s terms, what we have is a common man’s leather wallet with what appears to be a common twenty-dollar bill inside. Please do not worry, Mayor, the items before you were not purloined, but merely found upon the ground. You are not complicit in any criminal activity, as the wallet and its contents will be returned to the owner of said wallet per the identification in the window section as soon as we have completed our thorough examination. I know that some might consider it as stretching the limits of moral behavior, but the future of an entire city, if not an entire nation, is at stake.”

“I have no reason to doubt what you say,” replied the mayor. “You are the epitome of honor and decency. You are, after all, ... Humbleman.”

The good scientist disappeared behind the curtain that hid the inner sanctum of secret files he

maintained. After a short period of clanging, banging, and shuffling of papers, Doctor Wimbush returned with some charts.

“Yah, here we go,” declared the scientific genius. Pointing to the first of two charts, he continued, “As you can see, we have a tree that suffers from a fatal disease. The mode of infection works thusly: The *Currencius paperificus* invades the root structure and taxes the carbohydrate reserve of the tree. By secreting various hormones, the *Currencius paperificus* creates an addictive dependency in the vegetative system above ground. Because of this love affair, so to speak, the reproductive system of the tree brings forth all kinds of malformed fruit.”

“If I may once again be permitted to offer an interpretation, Mayor,” injected Humbleman. “When the general population eats the evil fruit of the tree, so to speak, it consumes organic compounds that prevent inhibition of primitive man’s carnal instincts. Thus, we have the appearance of greed, lust, untruths, and the brazen criminal behavior so rampant in the city. Perhaps an old proverb would apply, ‘For the love of money is the root of all evil’.”

“Is there a cure, Doctor Wimbush?” begged the mayor.

“Fortunately, as you can see in this second chart, there is a species of tree in the *Cruciferus* genus that has provided such a cure. Though its original habitat was near the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, it is ubiquitous now. Taking a scion in the shape of a cross from this tree, we can graft it deep into the heart of the infected tree. As the graft takes hold, it establishes a physiological bond with the sapwood. The hormonal compounds that the invading *Currencius paperificus* secretes must now flow through the graft area. Remarkably, the wood of the *Cruciferus* graft has the power to transform these compounds into a form that helps to promote the setting of good fruit. Ultimately, the food chain passes these benefits on to the general population.”

Mayor Aston shook Humbleman’s firm hand and said, “Well, Humbleman, it looks like we owe you a huge debt of gratitude for your remarkable discovery.”

“You do not owe me anything, Mayor. It is what I do. For I am ... Humbleman.”

The young female laboratory assistant standing nearby murmured softly, “What a man!”

A sharp bolt of lightning struck the ground not far from Mabel Murphy's Home-Baked Pies semi-trailer. The rumble of immediate thunder shook the mobile laboratory so violently that those who inhabited it became visibly shaken. Who could blame them if they questioned their own senses when a booming voice followed the thunder saying, "Well done, Humbleman. I am pleased."