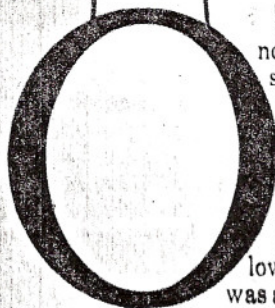


Sojourners
to
June, 1981



The Career Of Horville Sash

Once upon a time, in a city by the sea, there stood a skyscraper, spearing the clouds like a beanstalk. The company that monopolized the structure was Grindit and Co. Its speciality: bug spray.

Horville Sash worked in the lowest reaches of the building. He was a minimum-wage worker. Mail room clerk.

There came a day when Horville found a roach scurrying across the floor. As mail room clerk, Horville had only bugs to command. To bully. He raised his foot to flatten the helpless speck.

"Spare me." The bug spoke.

"A speaking bug? Such a creature is worth millions." Visions of money cascaded through Horville's mind, ~~splashing like a green, crisp waterfall of Washington-faced paper.~~

Horville spared the bug. His reward: a wish.

"I wish to be promoted to the second floor."

Granted. Horville's boss told him that very day. Horville marched into the

An uplifting tale. by Doug Peterson

second floor like MacArthur and Patton rolled into one. His efficiency apartment gave way to a three-bedroom townhouse.

Wait. Horville heard footsteps on the ceiling of floor number two. There was a third floor. A higher level meant higher wages. Splashing, splashing, the visions of monetary waterfalls returned. Back to the bug. "Another wish? Are you sure?" asked the roach.

"I'm sure."

The next day, Horville rose to the third-floor post of sales coordinator. Goodbye townhouse. Hello, cottage by the lake.

No use. The promotions were kerosene to a flame. Desire grew. Burned. Horville wanted the 10th floor. He wanted to swim among the green paper portraits of presidents.

"One more wish." It was done. Horville entered his 10th-floor position like a sultan on the back of an elephant. Personal secretary. Spacious office. His title: executive of sales.

His new home in the suburbs gleamed like a sword. He had cut his way to the top. But no. Can't be. Shufflings on the ceiling. More shoes, more people above his head. Higher. More rungs to the ladder. More power and money.

Back to the bug. Under threat of death, the roach granted another wish. President of sales. Horville's new office outsized his old apartment. His secretaries numbered three. "Pack your bags, wife, we're moving to Holt

Estates." These were big homes, lounging like lions at the edge of suburbia.

On the elevator, Horville saw it—more numbers. More floors. More desire. Climb, climb that waterfall. The roach was summoned. Another threat. What could the bug do? Another wish. Another home. Another office.

Tragedy. A memo appeared on Horville's desk, as mysterious as a mushroom. It came from the Executive Almighty. That meant Horville wasn't on top...yet. Climb. Climb. Climb. Again, the roach was called before the sultan. "Another wish or I squash you with my penny loafers."

What could the bug do?

As Chief Executive Almighty, Horville's domain covered six floors—94 to 99. Twenty-five secretaries, all his, filed into his palace like 8 a.m.-to-5 p.m. cattle. At night their stalls were cleaned.

Horville sat by the indoor pool on floor 96. The artificial wave system went out of control and tiny tidal waves raced from one end of the pool to the other. Banks of water met head-on like charging battalions. The walls echoed with the sound of splashes. The sultan laughed in the dark.

The next day, Horville discovered it by chance—a stairway leading up. "Another floor?" He scrambled up the stairs.

He was on the roof, his concrete aerie. Below, the city looked like a toy, a monopoly game. Below, people were just plastic pieces to be moved about or swept off the table.

He was the highest. Content, Horville headed for the stairway down. "What's this? A boy by the edge of the building with his eyes closed? What are you doing?"

"Praying."

"To whom?" Horville's wish: "To Horville."

But it wasn't so. The boy's answer: "To God."

"Who?" Horville had left his theology book in the mail room.

The boy pointed a finger skyward. "God."

Panic gripped Horville. Was there a floor above him? He couldn't see it. Just clouds. He couldn't hear the shuffling of feet.

"Do you mean there's an authority above me?"

"Yes."

The roach was summoned.

"Roach. Make me God. Make me the highest."

"Are you sure?"

He was. "Put me in the type of position that only God would hold (if he were on earth.)"

The very next day, Horville began work in the mail room.

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