

I looked up and I saw that Mom was relieved to change the subject and Dad's face now clearly beamed in awed respect for his wife. Even then I didn't understand what he saw but I could also see in her face that she would revisit this very sensitive subject with us in a future conversation and indeed she did.

As I searched for Grandpa Gus I learned more about my new hero, my mother, than I was prepared for. I remember thinking, *'if I'm half as lucky, God'll gimme a woman just like Mom.'*

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Atlanta was a beautiful city. The first thing Uncle Patrick did was take me, Patricia, Charlie and a gaggle of cousins we could barely remember on a tour of his place of employment, Coca-Cola's main office and production floor. It was obvious that Uncle Patrick knew everything and everyone there. Uncle Patrick didn't act like any uncle I'd ever heard of. Here we were, a bunch of kids, loud, obnoxious, and giggling stupidly and Uncle Patrick just hoisted Charlie up on his shoulders and started his tour with me, Patricia and the whole gang in tow.

First he showed us the gleaming corporate floor high on the twentieth floor. It was spectacular. And even though Uncle Patrick was dressed in jeans and a golf shirt, everyone, white, black, male and female, spoke to him and us as if we were someone important. Everyone offered us soda, Coke products of course, and we were amazed. I learned by listening to ambient conversations that Uncle Patrick was an executive himself. Uncle Patrick as it turned out was vice-president in charge of manufacturing which is exactly where we went next.

As we passed the spotless production floor, we saw many workers almost snap in salute as Uncle Patrick passed by. Some of the workers were in blue khaki uniforms, while some were in white coats and hard hats. They looked like doctors in danger, or overdressed construction workers.

The size and scale of everything was enormous. There were hundreds of giant tanks taller than a man in wooden stays. Special forklifts would move the huge tanks that were lined up for as far as the eye could see. This stretch of real estate was where Coke and it's sister products were made. The workers on the floor seemed like busy ants. We watched from a steel grate catwalk, hundreds of people in various uniforms scurry about the production floor.

The constant beeping of the forklifts darting about between yellow painted lanes was busier than any freeway I had ever seen.

On the floor below, I saw a pretty young woman in a long skirt and a beautiful blouse. Her face was so pretty that I couldn't look her directly in the eyes – honestly, she was that gorgeous. My heart stilled but not in the way I thought I felt about Jessica Pilgrims. This girl's *something* touched *something* in me, and it felt good. The only problem was that she was older than me by about two years. Why would a girl of obvious college age take time to notice an acne-infested teenager? Owing nothing to answer the question, I dismissed her as I watched her put on a white lab coat and a hard hat. My lower jaw fell when I saw this man old enough to be her father hug her. I hated him.

The place smelled sicken-ly sweet. It reminded me of caramel and orange peels. When I asked people who worked there, "what's that smell?" I was surprised to hear the same answer-as-question; "*what smell?*" over and over again.

The girl I had noticed before now seemed younger. My mind kept jumping back-and-forth between her and what Uncle Patrick was telling us about his production teams. When I saw her put on that hard-hat and white coat, I said to myself, "Man-O-man", she works here – she's a grown-up". I now knew I had no chance with her. Even though, my heart felt this peculiar twingle, (*another of my Oliverisms, a twinkle mixed with a tingle to form a twingle*) that moved me in a way that reminded me of something that my mother told me on our now famous ferry-ride.

I had soon forgotten about her as we stepped onto the constantly moving lifts that moved constantly between the grates of each of the floors of the factory. Now on the second level, I looked over the rail and I noticed again, the pretty girl that was just out of my *age-in-years* reach.

I saw her talking to one of the drivers. She had long pretty hair tucked under the white safety helmet. Just then, I heard a large crack that sounded like a tree snapping in half. Suddenly the deafening tone of an alarm hollered its loud onerous voice throughout the plant. Everyone started looking around frantically and as I looked up to ask Uncle Patrick what was going on, I heard the cracked voice on a PA system, "sugar barrels broke ties, clear the lanes now!"

As I watched below, I saw dozen of large aluminum barrels taller than Uncle Patrick rolling like gangbusters. I watched people running in every direction as the alarm kept screaming at a deafening pitch. Charlie was lean-

ing over Uncle Patrick's head holding on to Uncle's ears to steady his position as he looked with panic down to the floor.

My sister Patricia was standing there looking over in horror as several of the barrels knocked into several workers. We could hear the sound of bones cracking even from our perch fifteen feet above. The agonized moans of those hit mixed with that dead-blam alarm was like something out of a bad horror movie. Patricia almost threw up every time she heard the dull crack of a new bone breaking on the floor below. Finally she covered her ears as she burst into tears.

I didn't think I was particularly morbid but I couldn't resist looking over the rail to see what was happening to the pretty woman in the safety helmet. I'm both sorry and glad I looked. The man who hugged her was running into the path of a barrel. I couldn't believe it. "What's wrong with him" I thought to myself. Then I saw the obvious. He must've loved her because he did what I'm not so sure I'd ever do, for anyone; he threw his body into the path of a barrel and pushed the pretty girl out of the way in just the nick of time.

As he lay crushed under the barrel, he uttered in a tone of agony I never want to hear again, "run Dannie-Girl run..." he managed to say to her. 'Dannie-Girl', I thought to myself, what a strange pet name. Or maybe he was saying 'run damn-it baby run' I dismissed the thought as I saw her immediately take off running as his upheld head surrendered to unconsciousness or death as his lifeless jaw clunked against the concrete floor.

Suddenly, resisting-ly, she turned back to the man who had just saved her life. She knelt beside him. I could see... no, that's not it exactly; I could sense, the pain as she watched her man lying on the floor with blood streaming from several parts of his body. My eyes darted about as I saw right down the middle of the lane three randomly rocking barrels heading straight for her. She jumped up from the crouching position and began running. I watched her try to get away but I knew she was losing the race because she kept looking back.

I wanted to scream out to her, '*don't look back – just keep running*' but my thoughts were stuck in the back of my throat. She was only seconds away from being killed and I thought about the Balesterio Bridge. But I knew that in consideration of what I tried to use God's power to do with Jessica Pilgrims, that I had no right to ask God to stop those barrels. In those few seconds of thought which seemed to progressively grow slower and slower and even slower, I thought of how I had tried to use faith to get Jessica Pilgrims to go to bed with me. I felt so ashamed of myself that I couldn't face God but just then, through the blare of the alarm, Patricia's incessant screaming,

Charlie's horrified ohhhh's, my throbbing left arm, and the continuing cracks and moans from the floor just below me, I heard a strong yet gentle voice. It said, *'Oliver, I will allow it just this once and in My name'*.

I only had seconds to react. I didn't have time to sort out my feelings of delusion and ambivalence. I leaned over the rail and stretched my tingling left hand toward the woman running at full gait and said in a voice just over a whisper, 'Father God, in the name of Jesus Christ the savior, I command those barrels to stop. In faith in the faith of your promise dear God, stop those barrels, now – Shel-kelmar.'

Before I could complete the second 'faith-in-faith', I felt what I had forgotten as the prelude to this miracle. I felt the nausea and wanted to double over. And as I looked over, the barrels that had been chasing the young woman on the floor simply stopped.

The barrels didn't roll to a stop; they didn't coast to a stop. Something else didn't hit them to stop them – they just instantly stopped moving with my words. It was scary. I felt the souring burn of gastric juices in my esophagus as I threw up on the catwalk. The running woman was safe I thought until I noticed that she wasn't moving at all. She looked more like a wax statue than a real person. She was frozen – frozen in time. And then I realized that ALL motion all over the plant had stopped. Everything and everyone was absolutely silent and motionless.

Now you won't believe me, but what I am about to tell you is the absolute truth. As I looked around me not a single thing, person, object, even the flickering of the florescent light was moving. I was the only one moving.

I almost soiled my pants as I looked up to Charlie sitting on Uncle Patrick's shoulders. He was frozen there pointing to the floor. And the way he was leaning, so far over, it was impossible for him not to fall. Patricia stood there with a tear stopped in mid drip down the pretty alabaster of her pretty cheek. Was I in the *Twilight Zone*? Was this one of Rod Serling's jokes? I often feel like the intestinal convulsion increased when I heard what I heard next.

*"Oliver, you betrayed the gift of the mustard seed but still, I love you as from the when. You were, you are to be one of my mightiest but I removed My grace from you in your abuse of My blessing."*

It was the softest yet sternest voice I'd ever heard. Was I dead? Was I unconscious? No! And I knew what it was but did not want to face it. The voice forced me by its powerful benevolence to accept the fact that I was in the presence of the God Himself.

The voice continued. *“you have accessed my power by your true belief in the power of the Word. And just as I with a word, willed this world into existence, your belief in My power grants you the power to do the same. Oliver Morodar, do you know why I rested on the seventh day? Do you remember?”*

Did God really expect me to answer him? Who was I and why should I believe that I was talking with God? But still, what did I have to lose? I was stuck in this delusion until I woke up, I figured so why not see where this would lead.

“No Lord, I supposed to create a Sabbath, a day of rest.”

*“Yes, a day rest is part of it. Do you remember reading how when someone touched the hem of my Son’s garment, My Spirit made flesh – do you understand the concept that Emmanuel could actually feel virtue flow out of him as the person of faith believed that just a touch of His clothing could heal?”*

I nodded something but the presence did not wait for me to answer.

*“The power of faith flowing through a human, even an angel, through anything is incredible. When I created this world, I did so using only my word and the power to alter matter to form what is, from the shapeless void. Not everyone would understand Oliver but I know you know the effects of that much power – a power of planet creating magnitude, flowing through anything, would surely take its toll on the conduit.*

*“Oliver, when you invoke My power through faith, to flow through you, you are petitioning the most incredible power in all creation to accomplish the task of moving whatever mountain it is your will to move, or not to move. When you my little one, have that much power flowing through you, especially at your age, it makes you feel sick or what you call nausea. I rested on the seventh because I too, needed a respite after utilizing the power of the universe to create your present home, earth.”*

“Then why Lord, did you...”

He interrupted me, *“because you tried to use my power, MY POWER, to sin, to do a thing that is at cross purpose to the divine order. And if you knew who you were, you would never have attempted it. But I know and I can never allow that. At the beginning, I promised to protect you and her. And that divine order is why I am allowing you to use your gift of belief on this occasion only. I knew before the foundation of the world that you’d be here today. That young woman below has a special purpose to fulfill for me, for Shel-kelmar, before her temporal life here is over; before I reclaim her spirit to me. I knew that your power and belief in me would cry out to save her and togeth-*

*er, Morodar, we are, will, we've done, we did. I also wanted to give you a glimpse of the incredible power that can once again be yours but will not be yours until you fulfill one of the purpose for which I have set your life apart for."*

I stood there starring blankly. I didn't see anything, but I knew that a, no, THE presence was still there. I believed it then, I believed it when I was grown and I even believe it to this day. And it was God's words that formed my life's mission.

He said to me, "*I am leaving you now but you Oliver, will seek out the mystery of your grandfather's disappearance. And when you find his end you will find your new beginnings again... in Me.*"

I was stunned and intrigued, "how did you..." I never completed the sentence. Of course He'd know – how could He not – He's God.

The voice smiled at me. I could feel it. I felt this reassuring warmth and I felt my left hand rise involuntarily. It, my arm that is, *tingled*, a feeling somewhat akin to the sensation of the strong electrical pulse that raced through my arm when I was ten as I stuck a butter knife into an electrical socket. Now, in addition to the energy surge, my bones felt this enormous heaviness. I almost fainted but the voice filling both my heart and my head spoke again, "*when the time comes Oliver, you will know what to do with this – even this feeling too.*"

Suddenly the voice was gone. More precisely, the presence of the voice was gone and just as quickly, the warehouse filled with sound as barrels continued to roll, knocking down everything in their paths. Then I looked over and saw it; the three barrels chasing the pretty young woman in the lab coat had ceased to roll. In fact, they appeared frozen in positions that were impossible for barrels of this size to come to rest in.

And as the commotion stopped – as the young woman escaped with her life – as Patricia's tears finally dried up, I stood there feeling both hollow and filled up. I glared around looking around for someone who had seen, experienced, and could offer proof to what I had just witnessed.

As Uncle Patrick led us back to the parking lot, the only evidence that the unreal was real was the tingling in my left hand and the residual taste of upchuck and acid reflux still left in my throat and burning my esophagus. The effort to move a mountain that saved a girl who God had purposed for some thing – something special enough to allow his power to flow through my undeserving body once only, and a for what so far has been, a final time.

It was then that I decided to keep a diary. I knew that I must sit, remember, and write down every clue I could, to effort the cause of how Grandpa Gus died. All at once I knew that the family reunion I was attending was not about family reunion but was orchestrated by God to allow me, his undeserving servant, the opportunity to settle Gusweto's claim with Him.

We were in the outer vestibule when she walked by me as we passed in the visitor's gallery. She turned to me and mouthed ever so silently, "*thank you*" and waved to me as she walked along side the gurney the man who saved her life was lying on. The EMTs were busy fussing over him – trying to save his life I suppose. As she waved, the green/blue of the stone in her Cherokee pinky ring caught my eye. The ring was ordinary – the stone wasn't anything special but I saw streaks of platinum sparkle from between the layers in the stone seated in the ring. As to the girl, I never knew her name and I never saw her again. I grabbed a piece of paper from my pocket and wrote a note or two about her and her unique ring. I scribbled something about that ring could only have come from the Southwest, perhaps New Mexico. I shoved the paper back in my pocket as I watched the ambulance drive away.

Ask me what I regret most and I'll tell you. One; that I ever fixated of Jessica Pilgrim's breast. Two; that I will never be allowed the opportunity to fixate on the *lady-in-the-hardhat's* heart. I regret that I'll never see Dannie-Girl again and three; the oddest thought that didn't annoy me until this very minute, 'who in the heck was Shel-kelmar?'