

THE BASTARD'S STILL ABOUT!

It's a warm afternoon as I roll into work after a heavy night at an my favourite bar.

I'm in such a run-down mood I almost don't notice the smell of deodorant in the air. Deodorant can only mean one thing - an outsider. No-one here cares if their smell offends anyone. The smell is pretty thick which means the bearer must have been here a while.

As these thoughts steam sluggishly through my brain, I trundle through to the expresso machine and fill my tankard with the syrupy dark roast Italian.

Barely have I time to turn off logins than I meet today's visitor.

"Simon?" the boss chirps from the doorway "Ah.. I'd like to meet John Stern, he's the speaker from "MOTIVATION 2000" that we mentioned in the departmental newsgroup last week..."

"HI!" John gushes, powerdressed to the max.

"Oh, Do we have a departmental newsgroup?" I ask the boss, toying with him.

"..and sent you email about.."

"Well, you know I don't read my email, it's just a load of mealy mouthed whining from malcontents" I counter

"But I send you mail all the time.."

"Like I said, it's just a load..."

"AH SIMON, John's here to talk to us about improving our department's morale"

"Morale? What's wrong with our Morale? Hell, I laughed THREE times yesterday"

"Yes, I heard the ambulance... Simon, this is a compulsory meeting. All the department will be there..." the boss urges, fingers crossed

"Ah yes, how is the flock?" I ask, disinterestedly

"I'm sorry? Simon, the whole department is going. It would be good.."

"Yes. Well, I don't think it would be *good* `morally' for me to attend"

"Simon >PREGNANT PAUSE< I'm not *asking* you to attend.."

Now THIS is a turn-up for the books! The boss, against all popular rumours, appears to have a spine. True, he's sweating profusely and has picked up a tremor, but he does appear to be holding his ground. I re-evaluate the potential threat of John, and decide to attend.

"Oh. Oh, Ok then" I mutter in a defeated manner

The relief on the boss's face is phenomenal. He immediately ceases radiating nervous heat and his bowels get a new lease on life. He smiles nervously and starts his exit to a new world of respect and authority...

We all have our dreams...

"GLAD TO HAVE YOU ON THE TEAM SIMON! YOU WERE MAYBE A LITTLE HESITANT TO START OUT WITH, BUT I'M SURE WE'LL GET TO BE

GREAT FRIENDS!!!" John blurts

"Yes" I say, concentrating on remembering where I put my coffee

"YES. NOW COME ON, BUCK UP!!!"

"I'm sorry?" I whisper, instantly in attack mode - the boss freezes in terror

"BUCK UP!, YOU KNOW, MOTIVATION!!!"

"Oh, `BUCK' up.." I relax

The boss giggles nervously and resumes his exit waddle.

"YOU KNOW SIMON WHENEVER I HAVE MOTIVATION PROBLEMS I SAY TO MYSELF `IT'S A DAY TO CELEBRATE, `CAUSE TO DAY IS THE FIRST DAY OF THE REST OF MY LIFE!""

"I see. So it'll be a double celebration for you today then?"

"I'M SORRY, I DON'T GET..."

The boss `GET's alright, and hurriedly drags him from the room. I decide its time to get some real work done, and call an ex-operator trainee of mine who works at the National Security Information Centre. A good trainee too, passed with flying colours. You can tell, he's still alive.

"HELLO!" he shouts "WADDAYA WANT!"

Old habits do die hard

"SIMON HERE" I shout back

"SO?"

I compliment myself on a job well done.

"I want some information on a John Stern"

"Stern. Isn't he that Motivation guy?"

"The very same."

"Yeah, I don't have to look him up, but I will anyway. He came here three weeks ago for a motivation retreat. I got a non-specific disease those days"

"Tragic. But what did I tell you about problems? CONFRONT THEM HEAD ON! DON'T AVOID THEM!! It's bad for your rep."

"Yeah, you're right. He's coming back in a couple of weeks for a refresher and I can't back out those days because we're updating vetting info on some national politicians and I'll want a copy for... backup purposes"

"I'm sure you do. Well, what can you tell me?"

"Well, I'm afraid I can't tell you anything Simon. As you know all our information is carefully monitored for compliance with the Data Security and Privacy Laws, and there's no way to extract information without it being monitored"

We laugh, and he emails everything to me. I look through the data and find that Stern is cleaner than the Watergate filing cabinet. A great shame.

Motivation O'Clock arrives and I wander to the seminar room. John's setting up some display on his laptop, no doubt with lots of cartoon characters depicting co-operation and unity. Nothing turns my stomach more...

"SIMON! GOOD TO SEE YOU!!" John spurts. He slips his hand into mine with a non-threatening orientation. I grab it in such a manner that his ends up on top of mine in the classic repressive Body-Language manner. He immediately notes this, loosens his grip and starts to remove his hand, all according to plan. A squeeze and twist later and John's morale is a little less than 100% with two dislocated fingers.

"Oh! I'm sorry!" I gush, helping John back to the nearest available seat... which unfortunately has his laptop with it's fragile liquid crystal display.

Tragic.

>Whumph!< The room is plunged into darkness, the cause of which I can only guess at. Today's guess is the campus climate control computer started every heater and fan at the same time instead of one by one, resulting in a massive load on the campus power supply, popping all breakers. Just a guess of course.

"Nobody Move!" I call "It's dark and we don't want any accidents!!!"

Everyone in the department freezes, knowing what this means. The god of computing wants a sacrifice, and volunteers are being called for.

"HOLD ON EVERYONE, I HAVE A TORCH IN MY BRIEFCASE!" John calls

If John were telekinetic, he would be reeling back from the mental shouts of "DON'T DO IT!". However, he obviously, and sadly, is not.

>WHOP< >WHOP< >WHOP<

Or should I say, WAS not.

Two minutes later the lights come on and the tragedy is revealed. The police are called.

"...apparently, fell forwards, head first into his briefcase, the spring-loaded lid of which slammed down upon his neck three times, snapping it like a twig"

I nod. The boss nods. The flock nods. One big happy family once more.
