

## THE NOTE

“Oh Lord it’s hard to be humble. When you’re perfect in every way. Bum Bum Bum I can’t wait to look in the mirror. I get better looking each day. Bum Bum Bum.” Chris had heard the song on the radio on the way in this morning. He couldn’t get it out of his head. He was washing his hands in the company wash room. He was studying the figure in the mirror. “... To know me is to love me ... “

He knew most people think to themselves. He did to, but for some reason, today maybe he was in such a good mood or maybe it was because he was alone in the mens room, “... I must be a HELL of a man ... Bum Bum Bum.” He thought right out loud.

Last week after Marty hadn’t called for a couple of days and he couldn’t reach her by the phone he went over to her apartment. The door was ajar. He walked right in. Three people were inside. None were Marty. One was the land lord. The man and the woman were looking to rent the apartment. All of Marty’s things were gone. His jaw was loose, it felt buzzy around the hinge, just thinking about it.

Marty was so beautiful. She was a few inches shorter than he was. She had soft hair that seemed to joyfully dance around her head as if it were glad to be there. It was like a cool summer breeze on his cheek. The skin on her face was smooth and sweet, it begged to be kissed. She was easy to talk to and always joking around. She was so intelligent she could talk about almost anything. Being with her was the best thing that ever happen to him. And most of all ... He thought ... She wanted to be with him too. He took a deep breath. He let it out. *How could she have left, without a word.*

He decided he was not going to think about her again. *She is not going to ruin another day.* He was not going to think about all her joking around. The things she did to look silly. The way she could always make him smile even when he didn’t want to. He started to hum the song that was stuck in his head.

Chris was done in the washroom. He was on his way out. He reached for the door handle before he saw it. An envelope on the floor. “Hey, I didn’t see that when I came in the door.” He said laughingly. He was talking to himself again. *Was that a good sign? I might even start humming again.*

He turned his head to the left and right as if someone else might have dropped it, but how could that be? *I’m the only one in here,* he thought. *I locked the door when I came in.*

“Someone could have slipped it under the door.” He said in a deep quiet voice as he turned his eyes to one side. He bent over and picked it up. “No name or address, hum.” He whispered to himself. He unlocked the door and stuck his head out. The hall was empty. He didn’t see anyone. He stood there with the envelope in his hand. He shook his head.

He looked at the envelope. It was sealed. He didn’t know who left it or for who, *(Whom might be proper English) I don’t know.* He looked at it again. *It sure would feel stupid to show this around and tell everyone where I found it. I could open it. Maybe there’s a clue as to who or whom,* he nodded his head as if he was explaining the situation to someone.

*On the other hand it could be something juicy. No one knows I even found it,* the thought ran through his head. *Something juicy. No one knows I know.* “Ouuue Wee.” He said out loud. He looked over his shoulder. *No one. Oh Boy. Don’t open it now, some one*

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*could walk around the corner want to see what you're doing, wait. Wait until you're sure. His lips were moving, but not a sound could be heard coming out. He slid the envelope into a pocket. He sat at his desk. He checked the room. Everyone appeared to be minding their own work. He took a pen and pierced the end of the envelope ripping the end loose. He had miss placed his letter opener and now used a pen. Why didn't you open it in the bathroom? I don't know. I can't go back now. He looked around the room again. He reached inside with a thumb and fore finger. He pulled the note out. No perfume. What did I expect.*

It was just a note. Hand written in perfect script.

*Hi*

*I am what you might call an exchange student. There was no exchange. I simply came here to study.*

*I enjoy your foods, although there are some things I cannot eat.*

*I am from a planet far away. Those geniuses at NASA, haven't even discovered it yet. Its name can't be pronounced with your limited alphabet. I could point it out to you but it would do little good.*

*Your beings seem to like things a certain way. So I'll give it to you in parts.*

*The bad news is, Your world as you know it will come to an end, very soon.*

*The good news is, I've been observing your specie since I arrived. Most aren't worth my time. You, however, are.*

*Meet me at the McDonald's on West Fillmore drive in front of the Wal-Mart at 3:30 today. Don't be late or you will miss out. Go inside and wait. Don't look for me. I'll see you first.*

*ZONE DAR*

*P.S. This is my first, and maybe last P.S. I know I can count on you. Please don't tell anyone. We don't need a mob scene. This must be our little secret. OK.*

*P.S.S. My name really isn't Zone Dar but with your limited alphabet, again. It is the best I can do.*

*XXX and OOO's Whatever that means.*

Chris shook his head and read it again. Surely this is a joke. He looked at the note,

then crumpled it in both hands and threw it in the waste basket. “There” He took a deep breath. “It was a joke, right?” He whispered to himself. He turned his head to the right. “I don’t know. It looked real to me. Do you think it was a good idea to throw it away?” His lips were moving again. Chris thought he saw Glen turning his head away from him.

*I think I’ll turn on my computer. I have some forms to read.* Chris waited for the computer to do what it usually does. *Zone Dar I bet.* He found the ICON he had been working on and brought it up and read the first paragraph.

Property exchange of stock.

If the requirements of # 351 are met, the stock holders stock basis generally equals the adjusted basis of the transferred property. If the requirements of # 351 are Not met, the shareholder’s stock basis equals the FMV of the transferred property.

Then read the second.

Stock received in exchange for services.

A shareholder recognizes taxable compensation for performance of the service. As a result, the shareholder’s basis In stock received is equal to the value of the services performed.

He had forgotten what how the first paragraph read. *GREAT.* He reread the first. It still didn’t make sense. *End of the world as I knew it. Had it started already?*

Hooking the waste basket with his foot, he dragged it close enough that to retrieve the note. He surveyed the room. No one seemed to notice what he was doing. *I’ll reread the note, one more time, then throw it away for good.* His lips were moving again without him saying anything out loud. He pulled the paper across the edge of his desk a couple times, watching around the room as he did, trying to pull the wrinkles out. He read it again.

*Zone Dar? Who might that be? Ed in accounting? He’s diabetic. He can’t eat certain foods. He’s got pictures of his family on his desk. Wait a minute, Chris had a thought. He isn’t in any of those pictures. I could have a family too if I hadn’t thrown out those pictures that came with my new wallet.* Chris shook his head and squinted one eye. Ed doesn’t look the part.

*Glen that’s it. It’s got to be him. He’s unusually tall. He doesn’t have any hair on his head. He is quite thin and lanky. His eyes are a little bugged. If the light is right he looks a little more gray then flesh colored. He also moves funny when he walks. He looks alien.* Chris stared at him from across the room. Glen was hunched over his desk like some kind of stick bug.

Sue appeared in his line of view. *Sue, Is it Sue? Sue has an incredible vocabulary. She even seems a little spacey at times. She doesn’t look anything alien. That could be*

*part of her disguise. You think it might be her? I don't know. Why don't you ask her. No I think I'll get some coffee. I'll walk right past her, maybe stop to talk. There I go, talking to myself again. How do you bring something like this up? I'll sound like a nut. If she wrote the note she might let you know.* He cinched the corners of his mouth.

“Hi, Sue.”

“Oh, Hi Chris.” She looked up at him as if trying to see something. *I don't talk to her much, I mean just to be friendly,* Chris thought.

“I'm going to get some coffee. Would you like, I'll get some for you. How do you like yours?”

“No thanks Chris. No coffee for me.” She said as she pressed her stomach. She uncrossed and recrossed her legs the other way. “It upsets my stomach awful.”

He stood there holding his breath.

“I didn't know.” He said. *She can't eat certain foods, Hum but her facial expression don't give anything away. Think fast, buddy.* “Who do you think will win tomorrow, Tigers or the Cardinals?”

“Oh, I don't know. I haven't thought that far ahead.” She was looking straight at him one minute the next she had turned back to her computer screen. “Well at least it is pay day, today. What do you think?” She was so casual about things. *Was she the alien?* His brain went into one of those brain freeze things. Her phone rang.

“I'm sorry, Think about what?” He said. He thought she didn't hear him.

“Hunting Services, Sue Miller Assistant Director speaking. How may I help you?” This conversation was over, at least for now. Sue, maybe. Maybe not. He walked away. This alien thing was beginning to frighten him. He stopped at the coffee machine. He took a deep breath. He lowered a paper cup to the tap. The sweet smell of coffee caressed his nose. *I could never live without coffee.* He added a touch of cream and a couple shakes of sugar. He took a tiny sip. It was hot.

He turned back to his desk. Almost there, he passed by the window. The sun was shining brightly. It felt warm on his face and hands. He stood there enjoying the warm sun light. On the street below the street light changed. Cars going east and west stopped, allowing a herd of people to cross the street. A north bound truck turned left at the light. Chris stood there watching life as he knew it, as if he might not ever see it again. He wanted to remember every little detail.

“It's a shame about tomorrow.” Chris jumped, jerked his head around. For a moment he thought he saw a bug's face: flat topped head with two buggy eyes setting on top. Glen looked down at Chris with his emotionless face.

Chris sipped coffee from a paper cup. Glen spoke slowly. His voice deep and clear. It always reminded Chris of Lurch, the character on the Adams Family TV show.

“I didn't mean to startle you.” More of that monotone voice. *It could be sincere.*

“I didn't see you walk up. I was thinking about something.” Chris replied.

“Something frightening,” Glen said. “Like the end of the world.” *He added as if that happens every day.*

“Yea, yea. That was exactly what I was thinking.” Chris joked. *What does he want with me. Does he want to take me back to his planet. I can picture him and a couple of his praying mantis like, beer drinking buddies bent over my body. I'm on some sort of operating table. My chest is opened up. They are poking around in my chest like a junk*

*yard man removing a carburetor restrictor plate from an old junk car.*

“Too bad about tomorrow.” Glen said gazing out the window not looking at Chris at all but out the window.

“What?” Chris asked turning toward Glen.

“It is going to rain tomorrow.” He shrugged and tilted his head. “We finally get to the weekend and what does it do. It rains.” He turned and walked away. Chris sipped his coffee. He looked out the window. Now the north and south bound traffic had stopped. East and west was moving. *Glen had scared me*, Chris thought. The little guy inside his chest was hammering on his ribs something fierce. Chris swung his head one way then the other. Glen? Sue?

Chris walked back to his desk. He sipped his coffee and peered over his cup as he looked over the room. Glen had buried his head in his work. He was hunched over his desk again. *Why was he working so hard if today was going to be the last day of the world, as I know it. It can't be Glen, or can it? If he is Zone Dar he is good. Sue? Still on the phone.*

*No, This is a good joke. Ha Ha Ha. I'll bet they are all in on it, even Ed in accounting. Ha Ha Ha. A little something to help me get my mind off Marty. What a great bunch of guys. I'd better get back to work. I figured it out. The Twilight Zone-Darth Vader, yea right. It all makes sense. My world coming to an end. (Some one could carry me out of here in a straight jacket. That would change my world). Watch it, Chris had a sudden thought, your lips are moving again.*

Thomas the janitor was behind Chris washing the windows. *It seems Thomas can move about the office as if he is in stealth mode. It seems like I never see him come in or go out. He gets his work done without bothering anyone. He could have easily slipped the note under the door unnoticed. I forgot all about Thomas. But Thomas from another planet? I don't think so.* Chris shook his head.

“Hey, Thomas. What are you doing tomorrow?” Chris asked.

“Goin' home.” He had Chris's curiosity up. The little man inside Chris's head was jumping up and down. He was screaming. *It's Thomas. It's Thomas' Why not he has plenty of time to observe us as he washes windows or mopes the floors. He was free to wander about. He probably is a lot smarter than he pretends. He can probably talk with excellent pronunciation. He chooses to appear as he does. What a disguise.* Chris leaned back in his chair. He placed his hands behind his head. He gazed up at Thomas.

“Oh, and where is home?” Chris asked. He raised his brows and grinned. *I found him. Ha Ha Ha.*

“Mo Town. It's momma's birthday yesterday. We all gonna get together for momma's birthday. Her sisters and 'nat. Been doing nat Been doin' nat” He stopped a minute. “Been doin' nat since I'as 'bout 'dis high.” He lowered his hand to his waist, palm open and down. “'bout dis hi'.” He nodded his head for emphasis.

He proceeded to tell Chris all about it. He stopped washing the window. He turned to talk as if they'd been old friends and he needed to get caught back up. He told Chris funny things that had happen in the past. Chris really didn't need to know what momma received last year. Thomas couldn't have remembered it better if he'd written it all down. Chris went back to reading his report.

*Whoever placed that note in the mens room was probably laughing their heads off. Maybe it wasn't for me anyway. Maybe any dope could have found the note. He looked*

*around. Maybe there is a camera somewhere. FUDGE.* Chris lowered his face to his computer screen. He crumpled the note and threw it in the trash again.

His stomach ached. He didn't want to talk to anyone for the rest of the day. He was glad it was Friday. *I won't have to face the clown that left that note, at least for a couple days. They got their laugh. Why don't you just go home? Are my lips moving again? That would let them know I was mad. What if that joker is a lip reader? GREAT.* He opened the the envelope holding his paycheck. Just like any other week. He sighed.

Chris got off at three, like everybody else. Just a few more minutes. He watched the clock. Ten minutes till three. Nine minutes. Eight. Thomas is coming through the office. He is collecting the waste from the baskets. He is pouring the contents into a plastic bag. The little guy in Chris's head is screaming again. The note is on top of your trash can. Chris fumbled his pen into the trash. He bent over to retrieve his pen, he looked twice and retrieved the note. He stuffed the note into his pocket as if it was a ticket of some kind.

*Three o'clock. I made it.* Chris found his way out to his car. He didn't say good bye to anyone. He kept to himself. He sat in his car. He pulled the note out of his pocket. He read it one more time. *Well, it's not much out of my way, anyway. Besides I could handle a Big Mac and some fries. I've gotta eat something tonight.*

Chris drove to the McDonald's. He pulled into the parking lot. He hesitated. He inched his way around the parking lot looking for any ones car he might recognize (or a space ship. *Wouldn't a spaceship take up a large space like a Wal-Mart parking lot?) This thing has really gone to far.* His stomach grumbled. *I could simply go through the drive through. NOO I think I'll eat in, like the note said..*

Chris ordered a Big Mac, some fries, and a coke. He turned around to find a table. He glanced out the window. He thought he saw an old blue Ford Ranger with a crumpled fender, out on the street signaling to pull in to the parking area. "THOMAS" He said right out load. "Darn it" He said right out loud too. "That half wit has made a fool of me. He had to find out who fell for his stupid prank. He had to come here to find out for himself." Chris's lips were moving fiercely but he spoke softly so no one would hear him. Chris stopped frozen for a minute. He pierced his lips. He glared out the window.

*POOWANT* Chris heard a party horn. He jumped. He turned. She had the horn in her mouth. She removed it and gave him a smile.

"Surprise" She said excitedly. She sat in a booth. She wore a pointed party hat on her head, with one of those tiny stretchy bands under her chin. Her lips were curled up on the corners. Her eyes sparkled.

"Marty?" Chris's jaw went slack. He wanted to hug her and then he didn't. He had thought they were something special. Then she disappeared. *Now she's back as if nothing happen. As if she didn't know what I'd been through. Here she is sitting there smiling at me as if nothing, as if she hadn't done to me what she did. I'd like to burn her up with my X-ray vision. I can not. I can not of course.* "Marty" He said a second time. He knew his voice was about to crack. His jaw quivered. *I hate you. I hate you. No I don't.* "Why?"

"There was something I had to do." Her smile faded and it took on a serious look. "Did I upset you? If I did, I'm sorry. It will never happen again." She didn't look sorry. She didn't look sorry at all. She sat there with that silly party hat tilting over to the side of her head. He thought she was going to toot that silly horn again. She smiled as if I was going to fall for that. Who was I kidding. "There was something I had to do. I really couldn't talk to you about it." She shook her head back and forth. "I was out of my

thinking matter with worry. I didn't know what I was going to do if it didn't work out. It did, I'll have you know. I should have told you but I could not. I'll tell you all about it later. Please." She motioned with her hand. "Sit. Please stay." He set his food down. He couldn't take his eyes off her. She had him again. She knew it. His eyes couldn't leave her smiling face.

His throat was sore and dry. It hurt. He wasn't about to show her how much she had hurt him. He sipped his coke. His eyes watered. With the straw in his mouth, he stared at her. Her sandwich was half eaten. He watched her as she bit it again. Still smiling. She had the same meal as he had. She sipped her coke through a straw.

She pushed her fries across the table. "Here you can have mine. You know I can't eat them." She winked at Chris. He was staring at Marty. She was pleased.

Chris thought the skin on his face was slowly sliding down and around his chin. He picked up his sandwich. We are a couple again, that was for sure. She was back and that was the important thing.

He heard a deep baritone voice that carried through the restaurant. The monotone sound was unmistakable, Glen. "Sue have you seen Marty?" There was a slight pause. "Ed? ... Thomas?"

Marty put down her sandwich. The smile left her lips. The sparkle left her eyes. She was all serious. She stood up.

"We have to go." She said. She put out her hand.

"But ... I ..." He began to say.

"Hurry Chris. There isn't much time." She pulled on his hand. "I've got it all worked out"

THE END