

## Homeless Blender

So, we start with this homeless man.

A hobo?

No, not a hobo, more local. Homeless, you know, *sign* "will work for food." You've seen guys like him before on the corner. *That* guy.

All right. I see it. Desolate look on his face. His eyes gaze forward into nothing as cars drive by. Hard luck, a guy trying to make it, holds his sign...

Should he be white or black?

No color. Then it's about oppression. This is an everyman homeless man. With a bad leg injury. No, an obvious... an inherently obvious leg injury. Nothing you can see, but it's there. You feel the stiffness and discomfort. Wait! Change the sign. It will say "Need help. Anything will do." He doesn't get a job here; he gets a blender.

A what?

Okay, start again. Homeless man is on a busy street corner. He's got his panhandling sign...

Right, so this guy gets a blender from a passing Samaritan?

A food blender? How does that work?

Doesn't matter. It's a great gift. They sell incredibly well at this time of the year.

The homeless man has a blender and then what?

Okay, listen. I see him on the corner. No, he's on a median, middle of the road, between lines of vicious, holiday cars. Homeless man and blender ... and a Mc Dinner. Whatever, a bag from MacDonald's with something in it. Somebody gave him that.

That's the picture? What happens then?

**City Post, noon**

*A panhandler at the intersection of Beacon and Wentworth Streets received an unusual gift today—a four-speed blender. The man, who did not want to be identified, stood on the median between four lanes of busy holiday traffic for hours with the blender at his feet, greeting traffic goer’s honks with waves and an occasional smile. Area families traveling through the intersection, which sits adjacent to the local mall, added contributions of food and other gifts throughout the day, leaving the man with a vast assortment of food, tiny Christmas trees, toys, a cake, a gold framed mirror, a large latte and, of course, the blender.*

*The man continued to stand at the intersection throughout the afternoon holding a make-shift sign despite a stiff leg from an apparent injury and the onset of an icy cold front. He countenanced little of his pain or wishes, however, his only communication to passing traffic an occasional thanks and the cardboard sign in his hands reading: “Need Help. Anything will do.”*

*News crews crowded the area early on, taking video of the man and passers-by donating gifts. A few hours after the scene was first broadcast on DZZ’s Lunchtime News, a local film group began taping the event for a documentary. The name of the film crew was not known nor was it disclosed on city licenses at the time of this article’s publication.*

*One thing was known, though, it looks like a nice Christmas for this lucky man.*

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The camera shows a man standing on a median in the middle of a blaze of traffic. His face is expressionless. He holds the sign directly across his chest. Two lanes of traffic run on either side of him. On one side of the street is a smaller median and then a turn lane. Around the man is an assortment of gifts, boxes, new items, bags of food. A McDonald’s bag appears crisp and untouched. Setting prominently at his feet is a blender still in its box. A mirror resting against another box reveals a man

with a boom microphone outside of the video frame. The camera zooms in close on the man's face. He smiles then looks around skittishly. A voice comes from off camera.

"Are you surprised by the amount of gifts?" The man begins to mutter nervously. The first few words are unintelligible. Then as if prompted he responds.

"I'm very blessed." He slides to the edge of the camera frame. The camera re-centers twice to keep him in frame. The man is clearly uncomfortable. The camera pans to the side of the street. On the smaller median to the side of the turning lane is another stack of boxes and bags. Some might be food. There is a doll still packaged in a box, a sleeping bag, some loose cans of soda, and, oddly, a screwdriver set. There are old and new items in the stack.

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*(A quick musical flourish and then a radio station identification. A slow, droning but commanding voice comes onto the airwaves.)* This is Dave Deramont with *City Perspective*. All is well this wonderful day in the city. Shoppers are out. It's a little slow at Beacon and Wentworth, possible accident in the area. The weather should hold through the day, but watch out tonight as that Midwest system is due in and it will bring a lot of the white with it.

*(A loud production fill breaks in. The music is a mix of synthesized strings and heavy metal guitar. The sound is enormous. A grand voice booms, "And now the Dave Take on City Perspective!" The music pulls back. Dave's voice resumes in its slow drone.)*

It's a beautiful holiday season. The environment beckons us to happiness, the holiday message is good. Everyone marches to an upbeat rhythm during this time. (He pauses.) But the truth is most of us are unhappy. Most of us are depressed. You better not admit it, though. No, no. That contradicts the point of the season. But many of us are. Everyone knows it.

Truth is, though, there are countless variables that affect us every day. They affect the way we dress, eat, perform at work, who we think is attractive, who we think is successful, what we think is right and what we think is wrong. These forces are at work now on you. They are putting you in the spirit -- In the spirit ...

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The idea for the reality series started at about three that day. The cameras had been set up since about one. The news had done about three segments already. There was a meeting of an executive and two principal owners (very small operation). They agreed to use the earlier archive footage for the production. The executive suggested an immediate meeting with his team to secure the moment that was at hand. The great energy and fascination that had come that day was, he felt, "the most inherent aspect of the life of the series."

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So, we have him on this median and it's getting dark. He has gifts all about him.

Gifts? He's got more stuff than most of my friends. Here's a guy just trying to make it like us all and he struck a gusher.

Everyone's trying to make it. The problem is they want too much.

What does he think of it all?

He doesn't say. Rather, he keeps saying he's blessed, but he shows no emotion. It's almost like he doesn't care.

Think it's stuff he doesn't want? No cash, no booze.

I actually think someone gave him a beer at some point. He didn't drink it. He may have mumbled "Thanks" or something but that was all. He doesn't speak well.

Should we get an actor for this?

An actor?

You know. If this thing lasts. He's gonna have to do more to carry the action. Stuff won't just happen to him all the time. He's gotta do something.

No one will notice. They just want to see the beautiful.

You mean, the beautiful in the mundane? The beautiful in the everyday?

Not even that. Not simple. Too much. Most people want the mundane in the beautiful. He gives them that.

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This was sent out through an *Instagram* message at about 4:30 today through a link to a *Youtube* video. It sounds a little like one of those folk songs from the sixties, very melodic, electric but with an acoustic guitar root. It's really all about the chorus. There are maybe four lines in each verse but the chorus is catchy. It's familiar sounding, has the power of an anthem, that or a bar song. The voice and the production sound are country music oriented. A local group put it together, sent it out. Quick turnaround. It has a sincere and compassionate feeling, like those eighties "help the world" songs but without the celebrity politics. The song is in G major, a very positive and uplifting key. The last line in the chorus sticks in my mind.

*"And I have done much for a friend*

*by giv-ing him*

*my blender"*

### **An array of Tweets and Texts**

"I have seen my blessing today. It is the wonderful man at Beacon and Wentworth. Brought food and blankets."

"Blender dude is awesum. Gotta see him at Wentwth."

"I'm cryin, im crying"

"R U sick!!! Get him a beer with my dudes"

"Check out my man with the Bling! Peace out!" #Blenderman

"Sending coolest photo yet Blender Man"

"Who R these peple?"

"I just gave him a shawl and a silver luck necklace. This is all so amazing"

"Unbelievable! See what happened"

"I'm crying. I'm crying."

"Oh, oh!"

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He's hit by a car.

That works--A car hits him!

No, we mean he was just hit by a car.

Actually, a big truck!

Where is he now?

They're taking him to the hospital.

No, they're saying that he is dead.

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It ended at about six o'clock. No one is sure exactly what happened. The official police report says it was an accident. No details, pretty straightforward and simple: the man stepped off the median and was hit by a city truck rushing by on the street. Of course there was much discussion about the

details leading up to the death of the man. Video from the film crews left the situation unresolved. Of all the cameras present, the only video that actually showed the impact came from a spectator's cell phone taken from across the road. It is grainy. It shows the homeless man holding a box he had received from a passer-by minutes before. He lays the box on the pile of gifts, looks across the street to another cluster of boxes and gifts by a clump of bushes. A man from the film crew on the median appears to say something to him. The homeless man looks at the crewmember and without turning away shuffles sideways into the oncoming truck. The video was posted to a Facebook page. Later, a link appeared in a local Blog. That link was Tweeted innumerable times thereafter.

### **Recovering the script**

Several conspiracy theories came out of the video and the evidence. The most promising were published on Blogs by the early evening. Three of the most followed were:

#### *Consumption Overload Suicide*

Advocates hold that holiday cheer and goodwill overwhelmed the homeless man who had only hoped to get some money and food to get to the next town. The onslaught of packages and goods from well-wishers confused the man, who only knew how to live his life with few belongings and enough food and money to get him from one day to the next. The confusion evolved into madness said the Blog, posted by an author who went by "Burpie" and who usually handled political issues, could be seen in the video sequences released throughout the day on newscasts, Web sites and through Twitter feeds. Here is a man, it said, who wanted to keep his "boon bounty" but could not fathom how to receive it, transport it, store it, or convert it to daily needs.

#### *Reality Murder*

A corroboration of two sites yielded another theory that quickly made local conversation. An author on a site named *Watchers* wrote that the event had been staged as a climax to the reality video

that was being recorded. He claimed this based on the fact that there was no clear footage of the man's precise movements leading up to the collision despite the fact that at least three cameras were in operation filming the scene.

Another site, perhaps working from the initial claims of Watchers, described a similar story but added several key details, including evidence of a hidden camera one block away from the accident which could have filmed the truck striking the homeless man, and that somehow the blender which had throughout the afternoon been at the man's feet, evident by the multitude of picture texts sent by spectators and news photographers, had been moved, or "repositioned," shortly before the accident to a pile of gifts on the small island between the turning lane and the primary thoroughfare. If the man was sent to get the blender it would put him in the street for the truck to run him down. The question the blogger asks to end his entry is: *who* asked the homeless to get his blender just as the truck approaches?

#### *City Social Cleansing*

An ordinance was passed in a preliminary vote by the city council the month before the homeless man incident. It was scheduled to be officially voted on (and presumably passed into law) in the week following the homeless man incident. The new ordinance specified strict regulations against panhandling and public soliciting. Its purpose was to end the obstructive presence of any vagrant, panhandler, hobo, drifter, grifter or hitchhiking teen from the general flow of citizenry, and it was essentially supported by the people. However, the resolution was opposed by several factions. The basis of most of these groups was that should the resolution become an ordinance, then it would curtail individual freedoms. There were also concerns that, by the wording of the new regulations, the resolution would basically put an end to all outdoor sales, including cookouts, fundraisers, tent sales and park vendors. Close to the vote and feeling the backlash, the council feared that the ordinance might not pass. The alignment of these events inspired the idea, even hinted at in several local news sources, that the city had killed the homeless man to eliminate any conflict the goodwill on his behalf may cause the

public leading up to the ordinance vote. In a weak attempt at pushing back, more conservative circles aligned with the city's stance claimed that the killing was a "set-up by anti-ordinance factions" to create a martyr.

At least three separate lawsuits were filed within hours of the event by advocates as far away as Florida and California. The suits variously cite personal rights or justice issues.

**City Post, 6 am**

*A homeless man was struck and killed by a city maintenance truck this evening at the intersection of Beacon and Wentworth streets. Heavy traffic and low visibility were cited as factors in the accident. The man has not been identified.*

*The man received note for the outpouring of gifts and goodwill he received from city residents, especially for one gift he received, a brand new blender still in the box.*

*The contributions have been donated to city shelters in honor of the man All that remains at the site is the now famous blender, marking the place where the homeless stood yesterday. A declaration of thanks will be given by the city as soon as the man's identity is discovered.*

*Traffic has thinned considerably at the location due to heavy snow from a Midwestern storm system. Little sign of the event remains except scraps of refuse and the boxed blender with a bow placed on the median during the early morning hours. The odd testimonial continued to gather snow in the early morning hours.*

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*(A flourish of music and the grand voice speaks, "You're listening to City Perspective." The music pulls back and the commanding drone begins.)* This is Dave Deramond. Hello, to all of you out there trying to make it. What is the sound of the city today? What is the sound in your heart? Why, it's the

sound of the holiday. What does it mean to all of us today? Let it be a happy sound for all of you. We've got a good show for you today. Three guests who have a lot to say about who we are and where we are going. But first we have to give a word to our sponsors. I'm Dave Deramond, coming back in five minutes  
*(Music plays. Dave cuts out. The song is the one released the day before through Instagram. The volume swells as the show goes to commercial.)*

*And I have done much for a friend*

*by giv-ing him*

*my blender...*

**END**