

## The Tale of Another Job

A story by Andrew T.S. Bedgood

Success can be measured by how far one rises. Failure can be measured by how far he falls.

In a plain town, not unlike the one you may call home, sits a plain house in a plain yard. Inside this small house are four rooms: a rather small kitchen/dining room combo, a living room, a bedroom, and a bathroom. Each room, save for the living room, decorated the same: empty walls painted a fitting plain white. On the living room wall rests a clock with its hands frozen at 6:00. The hour hand pointing directly below draws one's attention to the man beneath the clock; a man by the name of Job.

Meet Job. A man of many accomplishments. A man with nothing to show for it. Job wasn't born prosperous, but his ambitions led him to prosperity. He diligently strived to be the best and his perseverance would pay off. Graduating from high school as fifth in his class, he went on to a successful, fully-funded college career. Having all his expenses paid, he could focus his attention on his studies and he graduated with a B.A. in Business in less than three years. By the time he was 22, he was hired as an assistant manager at a retailer while he worked on his Master's in Business. He excelled at practice in addition to academics and by the age of 24, he was working his way into corporate management; at the age of 25, he was pulling in over \$150,000 per annum. A true rags to riches story. But, this tale isn't about the successes of this man named Job, but rather what happened to him after his successes made his failure even greater.

Meet Job. A man who had it all. A man who lost everything.

A frequent question asked when observing Job as he sits there in his plain, unspectacular house is, “How did a man so ambitious, so successful end up here?” It’s a question he asks himself after a long day at his 9-5 as he sits down with a bottle of whiskey in his hands. The cheap stuff. Bottom shelf. It’s bitter. It’s warm. Its stench is harsh and unpleasant. It’s everything Job needs as he sits to ponder what exactly led him here to a seat beneath a broken clock in a plain house.

Twenty-seven years old and pulling in \$9.52 hourly, Job, according to the standard that he had achieved for himself, was a failure. A mighty man who climbed to the shoulders of giants by his own hands had fallen from them with his own clumsy footing; a sentiment this mighty man ponders as he draws another swig from the bitter bottle in his hands.

A heavy sigh; the audible reflection of his state of mind. Staring down at his bottle of salvation, Job drifts deeper into thought. What his thoughts are, only Job and God can know exactly; but his increasingly heavy breaths are a good indicator that they’re unhappy thoughts. One can interpret by how he clenches the bottle, knuckles whitening as his fist tightens around the neck, what the thoughts may concern. Deeper and deeper into thought, he grows angrier and angrier; an indication that each passing moment leads to pondering more unpleasant ideas.

A man’s mind is his respite from the world when all other escapes fail. After a long day of work, as he sits beneath his frozen timepiece clutching his bottle of freedom, his mind wanders to the happier days. A pleasant sentiment with unpleasant side-effects.

To understand the state of this man stuck in place on an unspectacular couch in a plain house, assume the capability to read his thoughts—thoughts only he and God know.

Beginning at the beginning—the happier days—his mind races to the thoughts of what it was to be successful. *My life was mine*, perhaps he thinks. *I had my own world in my hands.*

*Everything I wanted—everything I dreamed... nothing was out of reach for me.* A crooked smile at the sentiment of the power over his life he once had. A sigh. Another drink. Another thought: *How, then... how did it all fall apart?*

How did it fall apart, Job? How did everything you strived so hard to achieve come crashing down around you? Was it your hubris? Your faith in yourself certainly could have been your undoing. You worked so hard to reach your status that you felt invincible. But, Job, you are still a confident man. Never one to turn the blame on yourself, the cause of your downfall is a mystery you will take with you to the grave. The bottle in your hand grows lighter as you lift it to your lips one more time.

What else weighs on that heavy heart of this desperate and pitiful man? What other thoughts can be so powerful that they can so move the bitter liquid to his mouth with such regularity? So desperate for freedom, yet so bound to this existence, where does his respite carry him now?

Just as his success had ended abruptly, his thoughts of such times must also come to an end. It's a pitiful but inescapable reality as the thoughts of his life transition to the present. A necessary but expendable and easily replaceable worker at a dead end job where individuality exists only as the nametag displayed on his regulation 3-button polo. This is the position Job ponders ceaselessly: how is it possible for a man with everything and everything going for him to end up here doing nothing for nothing? Rather than attempt to break from this reality in which he finds himself, Job is contented with his bottle of harsh escapism as he sits motionless beneath a clock that holds an unmoving time. The warm bottle comforts him again.

The lying clock above his head continues to point down frozen in time, but time unfrozen continues to march on along with the thoughts of Job. Each minute passing in a haze of

forgotten ambitions and disdainful thoughts draw the day closer to an end. The weary man beneath the lifeless clock begins to fade as he drinks the last swallow of his bitter kindness. Another sigh as the world around him fades to oblivion; the empty bottle falls to his feet.

Hunched on his couch, arms at his side and head facing downward, Job drifts into his vividly unforgiving dreams. Rather than a backdrop to his monotonous and plain life, his thoughts are now become an experience for him in which he gets to live his every musing. His body twitches rhythmically. His hands clench and unclench in time with his slowing heartbeat—each fist forming more loosely than the previous until, at last, Job lies still.

What are the dreams of this miserable man? What can a man dream when he no longer holds on to such things? As plain as his life and as painful as his conscious contemplations, Job's dreams bring him little rest—an exhausting sleep lost in thought. A deep breath as he drifts farther into his unforgiving fantasy. For a moment, he looks at peace.

Another breath. The darkness subsides. The warmth of the sun casts itself on Job through his living room window. His eyes open and he rubs the sleep and a day's worth of drinking from them. The clock on the wall above him reads 6:00. The time is 7:42am.

Resting his head in his hands, the only thought on Job's mind at this point is how much he'd rather not go to work in an hour and eighteen minutes. Each day, the same mindless cycle of tasks. Each day, the same joyless ritual. This is the plain life of an unspectacular man. This is the life of Job.

A deep breath as his thumbs circle his eyes. His head pounds from the unwelcome advent of dawn's light; each pang accompanied by a stronger dreading of the day ahead of him. He has no choice in the matter; he needs the money and this job is all he has. But, maybe he

considers the possibility of what he would do if another option presented itself. What would you do, Job, with the opportunity to abandon this life, your life?

Silence. He sits still with his head in his hands as the broken clock above his head refuses to remind him how time marches on. The mute ticking of the clock is the only sound in the room.

He exhales deeply as he stands. Job, in his silence, has come to realize that fantasies of escape will do him no good. This is Job's life and Job, despite despising his life, is content living it. He has no choice in the matter, something he considers as he wanders to his bedroom to ready himself for another day of work.

The living room of this plain house is quiet and empty—nothing but a worn couch and a broken clock sit in the room. Quiet and empty, the living room shows no signs of life.

Stepping back into the living room, Job runs his fingers through his wet, freshly showered hair in a lazy attempt to style it. He puts as little effort into his appearance as possible—to him, it doesn't matter. His khakis are wrinkled, his shirt is stained, his speech is slurred. This pitiful man is Job, a man who had great dreams and ambitions.

Another sigh as Job thinks of the day ahead of him. He pulls his keys from a hook beside the door and steps outside.

The sun is blinding. Job curses as he holds his eyes tightly shut. He brings his left hand up to his eyes to shade them and continues to walk toward his car—the last of Job's possessions from his past life and the most impressive thing in his current one. He slides into the driver's seat and starts the car. The engine comes to life with a silent but lively roar. The steering wheel in Job's hands feels like escape. The door beside him shut firmly and his unkempt work uniform

feel like prison. He sits still gripping the wheel tightly for several moments before putting the car in reverse and beginning his trek to work.

Every weekday, Job makes this journey. Thirty minutes behind the wheel every day to reach his destination: a dead end. Every day, he drives in silence and thought. Every day he considers what it would feel like to escape this maddening monotony. Every day he does nothing to deviate from his routine. This is the life of a man governed by routine. This is the life of Job.

Ten minutes pass. The first ten minutes are always the easiest of his drive. His mind is still asleep as he sits quietly and instinctively maneuvers his vehicle towards his destination. Little is on Job's mind at this time as he breathes in the morning air and enjoys the scenery.

As each minute passes now, Job slowly begins to awaken more fully. His thoughts become more elaborate and frustrating. He feels trapped. His grip tightens around his steering wheel as he clenches his teeth and lets out a restrained groan. He longs for the life he had; a life so far behind him that his fond memories of such a life seem more fantasy than fact. He longs for this fantasy life. He longs for any life but the one he has. These are the aspirations of a desperate man. These are the aspirations of Job.

Twenty-seven minutes have passed since he first started his car; his workplace is now in view. Every second brings him closer to this prison—to his personal hell. Every second he considers what he might do to avoid it. A tight smirk forms in the corner of his mouth. What could he be thinking for such an expression? *What if I didn't have to go to work today?* Perhaps. More likely, however, is, *What if I don't go to work today?* Whatever the thought, it's certainly exciting for him as he presses harder on the accelerator. The speedometer climbs steadily as he passes under a yellow light. His workplace draws even closer. He stares forward;

he stares past his workplace and continues to drive. His foot never leaves the gas pedal and his personal hell speeds by his left side as he presses onward to anywhere but here. His smirk opens into a smile and Job begins to laugh.

Freedom. Freedom from this hell. Freedom from this life. Job now speeds onward to oblivion as everything he has come to know fades behind him, as his accomplishments and achievements did before. Staring blankly at what lies ahead, Job begins to ponder if this is really better than the life he had.

The empty bottle falls to his feet and darkness closes in around Job. In his plain living room in his plain house, Job sighs one last time as silence and darkness envelop him. Above him, a broken clock lost in time points down as if to say, “Here lies Job.”

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