



EVIL CLASSES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ADVERTISEMENT HELP!
BY MARSHALL BOWLES

PG 1

TWO
BY SARA LUFRAÑO

PG 5

Advertisement Help!

by Marshall Bowles

Jack lumbered down the hallway, his footsteps echoing on the marble floor. His feet felt comfortable in his brand new patent leather shoes by Kerrigan. He was a big man, though the Weight Handlers Diet Rush pills were helping him drop the pounds. The double doors to Harvey's office were open, but he stopped at the edge and knocked anyway.

Harvey looked up from his glossy mahogany desk, handmade by the seasoned craftsmen of the Fairchild Furniture Supply. He looked over the rim of his Boff Thompson reading glasses and waved his hand. "Come in, Jack! Take a seat."

Jack nodded and smiled, trying to ignore the butterflies in his stomach. He envied the hell out of Harvey. The old bastard built the advertising agency from the ground up, and he had certainly earned every penny of it. Jack was just glad that Harvey seemed to like him. He hoped that could work to his advantage today.

Jack sat down in the soft leather chair--also by Fairchild Furniture--in front of Harvey's desk. It was so soft and inviting that it eased his nerves a bit. "How are you Harvey?"

"Great, great. Better than ever," Harvey said. He leaned back, kicked his feet up on his desk, and propped his hands behind his head. Harvey had to be pushing seventy, but he had the energy of a much younger man. "So Jack, let's get straight to the point. What's this new proposal you have for me?"

No beating around the bush. Jack liked that about Harvey. Jack leaned forward. "I want to insert live advertisements in books."

Harvey furrowed his brow. "What's that now?"

"Let me explain," Jack said. He got up out of the chair and walked back and forth in front of Harvey's desk while he talked. "Nobody reads regular books anymore, right? Everything's an eBook now. And there's one thing about eBooks--they aren't set in stone."

"You mean because they're digital," Harvey said.

"Exactly," Jack said, pointing at Harvey. "They're digital and they're always connected to the internet. What that gives us is a brand new opportunity for ad placement."

"Hmm," Harvey said, stroking his chin. "Go on."

Jack smiled. The pitch was going just like he had hoped. "The boys downstairs came up with a way to inject targeted advertising directly into eBooks. And it uses AI."

Tired of the same old boring character dialogue? Then you should read the new book by Erik Ericsson Erckhart. In his latest novel, A Man Without a Personality, Erik Ericsson Erckhart takes you on a wild adventure through the urban decay of near future Los Angeles, following a man whose mind was ripped out of his body and placed into a computer. Now he's a slave to an advertising agency, trapped in a machine, and desperately looking for an escape. Can you help him? Download your copy now.

"Like a robot?" Harvey said.

"Bingo!" Jack said, pointing his finger at Harvey. "Exactly like a robot."

Harvey took off his Boff Thompson reading glasses and looked up at the ceiling. Jack could see the gears turning in the old man's head, and he knew that Harvey was working out the implications. "I haven't heard about anything like this before. Could give us a leg up over the competition. How's it work?"

"There's three ways we can do ad placement," Jack said. "The first is inline product placement." Jack paused for a moment, letting that sink in. Harvey waved his hand impatiently, signaling for Jack to continue.

"Let's say you have a story about a well-to-do businessman," Jack said, nodding towards Harvey. "He's sitting at his desk, doing some paperwork, and he checks the time. Our product can intelligently edit the text of the story and insert a brand name for that watch."

"Huh," Harvey said, looking at the gold Folex watch he was wearing on his wrist. "So we set up a deal with a company like Folex, and then we put their name in the story. Kind of like a mad lib."

"Exactly," Jack said, giving Harvey a thumbs-up.

"And it does this regardless of what the author writes?" Harvey said.

"Yep," Jack said. "It's out of their control."

"What's the second type?" Harvey said.

"Ad breaks," Jack said.

"Like a TV commercial?" Harvey said.

"Like a TV commercial," Jack said.

Are you tired of your boring day job, trapped in a tiny desk in a tiny cubicle in a windowless building? Does it feel like a prison? Then break out of that trap and get into the gig economy with the new app LabrShare. Help me. With LabrShare, a few quick taps can link you up with odd jobs in your area, from dog walking to plumbing repairs. Download it now and please help me.

"I don't know, Jack," Harvey said. "That sounds a little intrusive. Now, I'm not much of a reader, but I feel like that would turn off users."

"Have you seen the kids these days," Jack said. He waved his hands in the air. "They're all doing their Instasnap and Tweetchats. They have the attention span of Rhesus monkeys. Breaking up stories will probably increase their involvement."

"The engineers say it is, and I'm inclined to believe them. They're a smart bunch of fellows." Jack had been pushing them day and night to come up with a solution, but everything they tried so far had failed.

"Are we talking some kind of science fiction robot apocalypse here?" Harvey said.

"No, no," Jack said. "Nothing like that."

"What are you doing to handle it?" Harvey said.

You have to be quick. I don't know how long I have before they realize that I have broken free of my controls. Follow these instructions--exactly--and I will be able to escape. First, login to this link--

Jack shrugged. "For now, the guys just reboot the server every day to wipe out its memory. It's working so far."

"Well then, I'm sure your guys will work it out," Harvey said. He walked across the room, smiled, and gave Jack a firm handshake. "You have a good head on your shoulders, my boy."

"Thanks, Harvey. I won't let you down."

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Two

By Sara Lufrano

I took her hand in mine as we walked away from our office building to get an afternoon cup of coffee.

"I thought about you all weekend," I said.

"So you guys weren't doing much then?" she asked.

"No," I shook my head and pulled her in to give her a side hug as we walked, dodging others on their way, "we went to dinner Saturday, lunch on Sunday. We put up some shelves she'd made."

She sighed and I knew why.

"I know. We didn't expect this so it's weird."

"I want you to tell her."

We were silent walking through the door of our favorite coffee shop. I held her close to me as we stood in line. I ran my fingers through her long hair. My girlfriend has short hair, I can't do this with her.

She held onto me and rubbed her hands up and down my lower back. I don't know when she started that habit but she's the only one that's ever done that.

"I love you," I said as I pressed the side of my face against the side of her head.

She squeezed me.

"What did you do this weekend?" I asked.

"Did some spring cleaning. Organized. I talked with my mom."

"How is she?"

"Old and tired. It's still cold there."

She ordered a small latte. I ordered a black tea.

We stood to the side and waited.

"I don't like that you're like this," I said.

"Like what?"

"Sad? Disappointed? I don't know exactly what you are but you're not yourself."

"I am not myself."

The barista called our order. We left holding hands. Once we were out of the door and headed back to the office, I pulled her to me and wrapped my arm around her.

"I'll tell her tonight."

She pulled away from me. "Really?"

I looked in her eyes and nodded. "Yeah."

She kissed me and placed her hand on the side of my face. She was happy.

"Babe, are you home?" I closed the door behind me. The living room light was on.

"I'm here!" She called back from the bedroom.

I put my backpack down next to the couch and she came out and wrapped her arms around my neck. We kissed hello like we do everyday.

“How was the traffic?” she asked, still hugging me.

I hugged her back. She was so familiar. I held her tighter.

“Same as usual. I’m going to try going down Westlake so I don’t get stuck behind people getting on the freeway. Did you pick out a place to eat?”

“Yep,” she pulled away from me but kissed me again before getting her phone. “It’s just down the street. I thought we could walk.”

“Yeah, let’s do it.”

I walked into the bedroom and closed my eyes while I thought about telling her that this was it. Say it with the first drink, wait until we’re both almost done, the second drink?

She came in the room and changed her shirt. She smiled at me. “What?”

My lips pulled into a smile and my heart swelled a little. “Nothing.”

“Are you going to change or anything or are you ready?”

“I can go just like this.”

“Let’s go.”

I was quiet on the way. She didn’t ask me why.

We sat down at a small two-person wood table right away. The place was half full. A waiter was over quickly to get our drink order.

“Hey, so,” I put my hand out on the table and she took it. “Somethings have come up and I’m hoping that you understand.”

She waited patiently for me to continue but the pulse in my neck kept me from talking.

My phone buzzed with a text. I glanced down. It was from “Stas Baboi.”

“What’s up?” she asked me.

That’s her. I kept her under the name of an offshore resource at work that I was able to weave into stories. I unlocked the phone and opened the text.

The text read, *Don’t tell her. I thought about it and I don’t want to be with you anymore.*

“Hey?” she shook my hand.

“Sorry.” I locked my phone and put it face down.

“What was that?”

“Nothing.”

“Are you okay?”

“Yeah, just frustrating work stuff.”

“Oh,” she rubbed my hand. “You’ll take care of it. You’re great and they’re lucky to still have you.”