

## **He never saw that coming**

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It was good to know that I could still surprise myself. When you do the same thing for 20 years, you imagine doing new things, but inertia is the most powerful force in the universe.

Tom Goldman had hired me straight out of State College. He taught me more about business accounting in my first six months at Fort Collins Paper Supply Company than my professors had in the previous four years. He was the only direct supervisor I ever had until he retired.

Tom was only 62, but he was having “a little heart trouble” that he blamed on a “misspent youth.” That was a big joke to me and the other five accountants in Tom’s department. If you knew Tom, you knew that he was incapable of misspending anything.

We had no idea that we’d never see Tom alive again when we helped him carry boxes out to his car on his last Friday. Tom’s wife, Becky, found him dead when she went to wake him from a Sunday afternoon nap on his first weekend as a retiree. It was a heart attack.

Randy Fletcher had been Tom’s assistant supervisor. He was named “Acting Supervisor,” but all of us knew that was just until the paperwork cleared. The first three weeks without Tom felt like Tom was just on vacation because Randy kept coming up with excuses not to move into Tom’s office.

On Monday of the fourth week after Tom “retired,” Randy called us all into Tom’s office and told us that Fort Collins Paper Supply Company had been sold to Restaurant Supplier, Inc.

FCPSC had been a family-run business for 78 years. The grandson’s of the founder had taken over the year before; Randy said they were cashing in their chips because “they didn’t want to run anything but their mouths.”

A week after that bomb was exploded, we met the new owners. They had all 250 of us drive out to the Ramada where they fed us a good lunch in the ballroom.

I said we met the new owners, but, technically, the new owners were the Restaurant Supplier, Inc., stockholders. We met with the CEO of RSI and his whole upper management team.

The lights dimmed, a huge, rear-projection video screen flashed the RSI logo, and music with a lot of bass started playing. The music went down, and a video started playing. It was a recorded message from the CEO of RSI, Thad Kilmartin.

About three minutes into the video, Thad stops in mid sentence and says, "I hate talking to you like this. It seems so impersonal. Wait a minute, and I'll come see you face-to-face. The room plunged into darkness, the music was turned up, a spotlight hit the dais at the front of the ballroom, and there stood Thad Kilmartin as if transported magically from corporate headquarters in California.

Thad introduced himself and his senior staff. They spoke to us for nearly 90 minutes, and we spent the rest of the day filling out paperwork that made us instant RSI employees. We had our picture taken. The pictures were attached to cards we would swipe over sensors to open locks to gain access to places we had all been allowed to go freely that morning. We were told the sensors and new locks were being installed back at FCPSC while we met at the Ramada.

They must have had crews work through the night because they didn't just put the fancy do-dads on existing doors; they built new doors. From what I could see, no one but the people on boss row could use the bathroom without swiping a card past at least one sensor. They would be able to tell how often I went to the bathroom.

I never got married. I was 42, and I just never got married. Lots of people think I'm gay, but that's not true. I don't let my pecker lead me around, but I have had about three fairly serious, long-term relationships in the last 20 years. I even had a friend-with-benefits relationship with a woman in Marketing until she got serious with a guy and later married him. I just don't require companionship, and I like peace and quiet.

That's exactly why Joshua Davis was able to inspire me to action. I don't think he knew the meaning of peace and quiet, and I am fairly certain he couldn't spell peace and quiet.

Joshua Davis was already moved into Tom's office when I got to my desk that first day. He was about a foot shorter than me, but we weighed about the same. I am just a smidge under 6 feet 4 inches and I weigh 265 pounds.

"Well, Herman Munster, as I live and breath. Come on in Herman, we have to talk," were the first words Joshua Davis ever said to me. He called me Herman from that moment on.

Joshua Davis pulled my file out of a stack of personnel files right in the middle of Tom's old desk. He opened the file folder and ran his finger down the first page like he was reading it for the first time. He looked up from the file and plastered a big smile on his face.

"Herman, it says here that you are fucking perfect. Are you fucking perfect, Herman?"

I stared at him. I couldn't think what to say.

"No, Herman you aren't fucking perfect. There has been one fucking perfect person in all of history, Herman, and he could walk on water and make a ten-piece chicken nugget dinner feed the whole Jew and Arab Armies combined. So, unless you can walk across that fucking pond in the fucking center of this fucking one-horse, shit-kicker paradise, you aren't perfect."

I was incapable of speech.

"When I see an employment record this perfect and evaluations this fucking high, I suspect someone was sucking someone's dick. Were you sucking Tom Goldman's dick, Herman?"

A wave of anger rushed through my body so hot I thought my clothes might ignite.

Joshua Davis stood up on his side of the desk and stretched his smile even wider. He began to laugh. He laughed so hard he had to lean forward on the desk to keep from falling.

He moved to my side of the desk and slapped me on the back. I stood up a little too fast, and Joshua Davis faltered a bit. The smile slipped for a brief moment, and then the big smile glowed even brighter. He grabbed my right hand and shook it in both of his.

"Herman, you are my bitch. You will tell everyone in the whole company what a great guy I am. You will listen to every conversation you can, and you will stop by for daily chats and spill your guts."

"I need information to get ahead here. I need information and you will get it for me. Fuck, Herman, you are perfect. Everyone in this dump thinks your shit doesn't stink. They'll tell you anything. I need to know who's fucking who. I need to know who drinks and who gets high."

"You find me any faggots in upper management, and I might give you a raise. My boss in California was a faggot, and that cocksucker thinks a big raise and a big

promotion will get me off his back. I might make more money, but now I live in Shitville where I get to boss turds around.”

“If you play nice, I’ll give you my job when I hit the information jackpot that sends me back to California. If one word of this leaks out, I will have your ass fired faster than you can blink.”

“Now, get the fuck out of my office.”

Joshua Davis led me to the door and showed me out.

I was standing outside Tom’s office looking at my shoes when Randy Fletcher walked up to me, “Tony, is he as nice a guy as it looks. I don’t know what you were telling him, but you cracked him up.”

I looked into Randy’s eyes. My face was blank.

“Tony, what’s the matter with you,” Randy asked.

I saw that everyone else was coming out of their cubicles to find out about the new boss. In an instant, I knew what had to be done. I snapped a big smile on my face and looked at everyone.

“Joshua Davis is a total nut, you guys. I thought I was going to wet my pants in there. Out of my way, I’ve got to go,” I took off for the bathroom.

I hid in the handicapped stall for 20 minutes. That’s how long it took to put the plan together. I’d never tried anything like that before, but I had watched a boat load of television in the last 42 years.

After work, I drove home. I let Boomer out for his after-work business. I double-checked my mental list while Boomer chased a tennis ball a couple dozen times. He ran straight to his water bowl and started slopping water everywhere when I put him back in the house.

Inside the closed garage, I put the necessary items in a Safeway bag. I changed into old jeans and an old hooded sweatshirt. I put on a pair of mildewed combat boots nearly forgotten in the back of a storage cabinet, and I was ready.

All I needed was sundown and some beginner’s luck.

I got the beginner’s luck.

I was hiding in the park across the street from the Ramada trying to figure how to get Davis out of the hotel without anybody seeing me when he stumbled out of the Ramada on drunken feet and crossed over to the side of the street where I

was waiting. He stepped behind the tree right next to the one I was hiding behind and unzipped, whipped it out, and started to take a leak.

The old rubber mallet made a sound like a hand slapping wet sand when it connected with his head. He went down to his knees and fell forward into his own piss. When I rolled him over, his dick was still hanging out of his pants.

I pulled the waistband of his boxers and Mr. Happy returned to his home. Before I moved him, I put Boomer's ball in his mouth and wrapped lots of duct tape around his mouth and head. I taped his wrists and ankles together, packed my tools back in the Safeway bag, and hefted Joshua Davis over my shoulders.

That bastard was heavy. I worked my way through the trees that surround the park and the pond Davis bitched about. It took only 10 minutes to make my way to the thick pines at the bottom of Miller's Ridge. No one had seen us. I walked deep into the woods and halfway up the ridge. I had to stop twice and I was dripping with sweat before I found what I was looking for.

It took Joshua Davis nearly an hour to come to. It took another 15 minutes before he realized he was gagged and duct taped to the trunk of a big pine way out in the middle of nowhere.

My plan had been to scare the shit out of him with a big butcher knife before I snapped his neck, but I got carried away. I couldn't believe I enjoyed the wet work as much as I did. I think I kept him alive for over an hour.

It took three months to find all the pieces of Joshua Davis and more than that to identify what the critters had left of the pieces.

It turns out that RSI was a good company. We got better insurance and profit sharing. We kept the name Fort Collins Paper Supply Company and life went on pretty much as it had since I got out of college.

Well, there have been a couple of changes.

Randy Fletcher got the supervisor job and finally moved into Tom's old office. When Randy asked me to be his assistant, I jumped at the chance.

I don't want to jinx anything, but I've started seeing a woman named Sarah that works in town at Century 21. She's six years younger than I am, but she was married once before. Her and her ex never had kids, but she says she still wants at least one.

We went to the Grange Spring Fling last weekend, but Sarah's ex, Mark, was there and drunk as usual. Mark got up in my face at one point and told me he

was going to kick my ass and that Sarah was a slut. I laughed and told him to go home to sleep it off.

Sarah said she was proud of me for being so calm and so mature. I thanked her for the compliment, but I knew Mark and I would discuss his behavior again soon enough.