

A large sheet of white, unlined paper was the only thing on God's desk aside from God's arms and His head. "Cain, I can't eliminate sporting goods shops," He said. "Some people depend on them."

"Well, I'm confused. You've struck every single suggestion I've given," Cain pointed out. "What are You looking for?"

God sighed. "First, what I *don't* need is what *you* personally dislike. I need you to tell Me what *most* people dislike. When you go out and take a bus somewhere or when you go shopping, what do most people talk about?"

Cain thought. "They all talk about how they want to eliminate sporting goods shops," he said.

God looked sternly at Cain. "You're lying. What upsets you, a common human? Not what upsets you, Cain Baxter – that's what I need to know."

Cain was finally beginning to comprehend what God wanted. The problem, in Cain's mind, was his inability to make decisions. It was this very personality quirk that put him where he had been a month ago: alone, miserable, and working full-time as a janitor. His inability to make decisions also led to that awkward moment when he was on the game show and, for twenty minutes, he had to decide if he wanted what was behind curtain number three or take what was in the box. He *hated* that the behind the curtain was a kick in the face.

Of course, since then Fate, as well as a sequence of nearly impossible events, had changed his life much for the better. After all, he went on his first date in years and he was currently employed as God's personal advisor. As God's personal advisor, however, crucial decisions had to be made, and Cain was the only one who could do it. And he was terrible at it.

"There's something that's always bugged me about golf."

"Cain!" God said vehemently, but still with a surprising cordiality. Rethinking, He said, "Maybe my idea isn't going to work out after all."

Ignoring God, Cain continued. "There are so many brands of golf balls on the market and none of them do anything special. They're just string wound tightly in a shell. Seems a bit extraneous, in my opinion, all those golf balls."

God did something He'd never done before; He dropped His jaw. Cain walked over to God's desk and bent down and picked it up for Him. God thanked him obligingly and put it back in place. It takes an awful lot to surprise God.

"That's it," were two completely awe-struck words that leaked out of God's mouth. "We can work from there." God quickly scribbled some notes on the previously blank sheet of white, unlined paper. "What else?"

Cain thought. "You mean, what else about golf bothers me? The pants for one."

God thought intently. In fact, the thought reached His brain so suddenly that He was almost surprised by its presence. "Oh, we have a problem."

"What's that, God?"

"To rectify the problem about the golf balls would solve one problem yet cause a much more serious one." Cain didn't follow. "To fix this, I would have to eliminate some of the brands of golf balls that already exist. Believe it or not, Cain, there *are* people who sit at large machines every day in order to produce those golf balls in massive quantities. The discontinuing of production of these companies would ultimately result in a catastrophic number of lay-offs. I'm afraid you're going to have to think of something else. I can't have that much unemployment."

"I don't think so," Cain rebutted. "See, if there weren't as many brands of balls, the ones that still existed would sort of monopolize the business. This would inevitably lead to an increase in prices. Well, this would dissuade many people to play golf, therefore lessening the amount of sick days people took in order to play a round. Well, for each job that this would end, it would probably support two or three jobs that would have suffered had it been for such a variety in balls. I know my doctor goes all the time, and it always is on days that my pancreas ruptures."

God laughed. "That's ludicrous."

"That my pancreas ruptures almost once a year?"

"No, I know about that. It's genetic, man. I mean, it's absurd that the elimination of golf balls would *save* jobs."

"Where's the flaw in my logic?"

God couldn't come up with anything. "So what else you got?"

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God eventually did take Cain's advice by lessening the number of brands of golf balls on Earth and, as predicted, this did not create unemployment problems. It was strangely overlooked by Earth, however, that this ever took place. A few golf experts commented how they suddenly had no recollection of the term 'Max Flight,' but other than that, no reference was made of the disappearance of all these golf balls.

Four people that had no idea whatsoever of this significant event were all in the same place at the same time. Stan and Himbert, both men whose years outnumbered their hair, were on a bench holding a quiet discussion. Gelinda was equally old, but had considerably more hair, and she was perched on a different park bench admiring Stan and Himbert. Paula van Tittle was nonchalantly walking past Stan and Himbert when she realized she didn't have a clue what time it was.

"Excuse me, do you have the time?" Paula addressed Stan who politely did not pay an ounce of attention to her. Instead, he kept his stare intent on Himbert and asked him the following question.

"Do you have any idea where I can sell some of my firewood?"

Himbert laughed for some reason that was clearly unclear to anyone but himself. "I've been lookin' to buy some of that for ages now. If you give it to me, I'll send my check in the mail."

Stan grew sad. "I don't have a mailbox, you can't send it to me. Hey, you got a mailbox, right?"

"Sure do," Himbert announced.

Paula, at this point, cleared her throat politely and tried again. "Excuse me sirs, but I'm sort of in a hurry. Do you have the time?" With similar nonchalance as before, the two men ignored her.

"Well," continued Stan to Himbert, "would it be totally out of the question if I were to borrow your mailbox? I mean, that way you could send me the check."

Himbert smiled. "I think that could be arranged, but I'm only going to send it to you. You have to drop it off back to me when you're done with it."

"How about I just drop it off in your fireplace?"

"I don't have a fireplace. If that's the plan, I need to borrow your fireplace."

Stan looked at him curiously. "You sell firewood and don't have a fireplace?"

"No. That's why I'm trying to sell it."

“Ah,” Stan commented. “So let me see if I have this right. I borrow your mailbox so you can send me the check for the firewood. Then *you* borrow my fireplace so I can have somewhere safe to return your mailbox. Right?”

“Right,” Himbert confirmed.

“Then how do I get my fireplace back?”

“I’ll mail it to you!”

Paula felt like a pitcher of lite beer. “*Excuse me!* Can either of you tell me the time!”

That’s when Gelinda finally spoke up. “They’re not going to speak to you, you know.”

Paula looked around to see the elderly lady sitting peacefully at a bench. Instinctively, Paula walked over to the woman and sat down next to her. “Why is that?”

“They’re having a very lengthy conversation.”

“Yes, I can see that, but does that mean they can’t give me the time?”

“You don’t understand. They’re trying for the world’s longest conversation.”

In silence, the two ladies listened to the two men continue their dialogue. Himbert was rubbing his chin. “It just won’t work! How will I get my mailbox back?”

“Why don’t you just get your own?”

“What do you mean?” Himbert asked.

Stan looked confused but stern. “Ask for it for Christmas.”

“How’s Santa gonna get it to me?”

Paula was amazed. “How long has this been going on?”

Gelinda leaned in a bit. “The whole conversation?”

“No, the bit about the mailboxes and the fireplaces. It’s just a bit absurd.” She paused. “At least, I *hope* the entire conversation isn’t just about mailboxes and fireplaces.”

“Oh no!” Gelinda reassured. “They’ve been talking about that for a couple of hours or so. It’s sort of an endless cycle, but I think they’re just starting to run out of steam. It’s hard to keep talking.”

“How long have they been going?”

“This is their fifth day. I don’t know if they are talking at night because I go home to sleep. Every day, though, when I come to sit on my bench here, they’re over there talking.”

“About mailboxes?” Paula asked.

“Sometimes. Oh, they started talking about the weather and sports and politics and beer and curtain patterns... guy stuff, but how long can you talk about the same old things? So they’ve moved onto bigger ventures.”

“Like mailboxes,” Paula commented.

“Yes, I suppose so.”

Paula was still very hurried in her task, despite having sat down to discuss the discussion. “Do you have the time, ma’am?”

“Why are you in such a rush, young lady? You’ve got plenty of years ahead of you, yet you keep wondering about the time.” Gelinda smiled. “Just relax and enjoy life.”

Paula, through clenched teeth, hissed, “Because I’ve been my height now since two o’clock, and I sort of expect my father to grow any minute now.”

Gelinda didn’t question this, but rather turned her smile from ‘cordial’ to ‘frighteningly happy’ and answered, “Five before quarter of half past three.”

Himbert, having heard Gelinda tell the time in such a silly manner, stopped mid-sentence and looked over at her. With the same calm, he turned back to Stan and asked, “Did you ever learn to tell military time?”

Paula kindly thanked Gelinda and ran away from the bench very quickly.

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Stanley Brickeizwicz and Himbert Shuzz did not claim the title of world's longest conversation. On the evening of their fifth consecutive day of dialogue, Stan lapsed into a coma caused, partially, by exposure to unextreme temperatures.

Himbert traveled in the ambulance with Stan and continued talking all the way to the emergency room. Himbert stayed by Stanley's bedside and spoke to the comatose gentleman steadily. Despite the condition of his friend, Himbert kept the goal alive. Stanley was in his coma for six weeks before emerging, picking up on the sentence where he had left off. By then, Himbert had given up and gone home to whittle more seahorses.

The Board of World Records could not give the record to these two gentlemen because a good majority of the conversation was held by Himbert alone. By definition, a conversation involves more than one person. Three world records *were* broken by this venture, however. Himbert was given the prestigious *World's Longest Monologue or Soliloquy*, the sought-after *World's Most Interesting Monologue or Soliloquy*, and the completely fictional *World's Most Unhappy Voicebox*. Himbert offered the third of these awards and a mahogany seahorse to Stanley to remember him by.