



How to Succeed in Evil (excerpt) by Patrick E. McLean

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Prolog: Song

It's a beautiful afternoon over Southern California. Up and down the coast, the waves are breaking well and thousands of otherwise responsible professionals have been lured by the call of the sea. The old-timers with their longboards won't acknowledge it outside the tribe, but they whisper it around beach fires and fish taco stands. This is they best they've seen it. A pure gift from the salt mother of us all, the goddess Ocean.

Amid the dreams of endless summer and perfect waves it's easy to overlook the balance of nature. It's a nice concept, but there's a reason Mother Nature is called a bitch. All of her gifts must be payed for. Good surf in Southern California is purchased with bad weather on the other side of the Pacific. And if these breaks are the best -- the best in a lifetime -- what does that mean for the other side of the world?

But in the unreality of Southern California, the rich and the rich in time do not care. They ride effortlessly, gracefully, impossibly on waves built from the misery of others. The girls on the beach are well-oiled. The volleyballs ping back and forth, forth and back as if time did not exist and all eternity was a sunny day. Truly, it is paradise. Paradise with a little bit of traffic. So is it any wonder, that, for leisure or commerce, Singapore Airlines Flight 209 is inbound?

209 has had a hell of a trip. It was badly battered shortly after takeoff. Halfway across the pacific, the number three engine overheated. The pilot, Captain Song, eased it back to 20% power. While it's not the first time he's had to baby an engine, this is surely the worst flight of his career. Fight 209 is also losing cabin pressure. Somewhere near the middle of the flight, Song was forced to descend to keep the cabin supplied with sufficient oxygen. This means he has regressed to the beginning of air travel. Unable to fly above the weather, he must now play a deadly game with the weather.

This day the Pacific is filled with low pressure areas. They form, dissolve and re-form faster than Song's navigator can keep track of them. They are pawns in a malevolent chess game. Song seeks to slip between them, to climb over them, even backtrack and fly around. He does not always succeed. Sometimes the storms converge on the plane like the fingers of an angry black hand. Even as they try to knock him from the sky, Captain Song curses them. He speaks to them with an intimate hate and names them for demons in the tales his grandmother told him.

The demons of the East are largely unknown to meteorologists. So they name these areas of low pressure 'onions.' This is because the closely packed isobars on a weather map resemble a slice of onion. Meteorologists watch them closely, hunting Typhoons in the Pacific and

Hurricanes in the East. Surfers also watch the onions. They are the source of the precious waves. The more powerful the onions, the farther out to sea they are and longer they sit there, the better it is for the waves. Waves are formed by a series of complicated relationships, beyond the limits of human comprehension. Marijuana steeped conversations concerning questions of wave formation often take on mystical dimensions. But Oceanographers and meteorologists can get even farther out there. They smoke math.

Even as Captain Song prays for these onions to rot away into the sea -- to leave his ship and its cargo aloft on the uncertain waves of air -- millions of people pray for these onions to abide and grow in strength. If you believe that God answers prayers, Captain Song and the 239 souls aboard Flight 209 are simply outnumbered. But perhaps there is room for higher ideals than majority rule. Song's cause is just. His prayer is fervent.

The storms remain.

By the time Flight 209 reaches the magical area of high pressure that always seems to settle over Southern California, Song can no longer feel his left hand. He has seen his ship through 10 hours of dangerous flying. He is soaked to the skin and his sweat has turned to ammonia. He has taken the weight of the entire task upon himself and prevailed. It's not that he does not trust his co-pilot. It's not that he does not have faith in his crew. He is simply the captain. The responsibility is his. He has more experience. He has more training. Song believes in duty. He believes that duty, his sense of honor harnessed to a purpose in the world, will make him something more than a man. The storm has passed, and it seems he is proven right.

In the tones of an ordinary flight on an ordinary day, he asks the co-pilot to take over. The co-pilot notices that Captain Song must use his right hand to pry his left hand off the wheel. Out of respect, he says nothing. Song's will has triumphed over the limitations of his body.

The co-pilot wonders if his will would be strong enough. Somewhere deep inside him, he knows it would not. Captain Song leaves the cockpit and relieves himself. Now that he has a moment to consider it, his bladder is close to bursting. The relief is orgasmic. Even so, Song would have urinated in his seat if it had come to it. He washes his hands and feels every drop of water on his skin. He splashes water on his face and looks in the mirror. He knows the satisfaction that comes from being tested -- pushed beyond one's limits -- and find oneself equal to the challenge.

The moment is interrupted by the explosion of the number three engine. Song feels the blast ripple through the airframe and is back in the cockpit without drying his hands. Warning

horns sound. The fire suppression system is activated. He can hear the screaming of passengers. Most of the port wing is now gone, and the plane is losing altitude. The starboard engines have been throttled back, right full rudder is applied. Even as Song the man loses hope, Song the Captain does not. His will cannot be broken by circumstance.

Aircraft aluminum has no will. It has a predictable failure point, beyond which it will give no more. The wing has been through too much and, in accordance with the laws of physics and its technical specifications, it gives up. The copilot calls in a mayday, but he's so scared he's screaming it in Chinese. Song puts a hand on his shoulder. At his touch, the copilot regains control of himself.

Song takes up the mayday, in very clear, and slightly accented English. Los Angeles tower responds that all runways will be made available. Captain Song explains his situation more clearly. He does not know why he does this. It does not matter. Surely they are all dead. The flight recorder beneath his seat will explain everything after he is gone.

Song turns off the warning horns. If he is to die, at least he will not die with a headache. Small comfort. But comfort is comfort. The jet shudders again. The delicate equilibrium between full left rudder, full right stick, no left wing and reduced power on the remaining engines can't hold much longer. Next to him, the copilot is chanting "Namo a mi tuo fo" The copilot believes that this chant will allow one to obtain rebirth in Amitabha's Pure Land of the West.

On the beach the well-fed and safe lounge and watch the surfers in the light of the setting sun. If one were to squint, this could be the Pure Land of the West. The co-pilot may never see it, but if some part of his corpse can be recovered, it will probably be buried here.

Flight 209 is hit by breath of air and tumbles from the sky. The plane has lost its lift characteristics, and, in the eyes of physics, is now a falling body, rushing towards its terminal velocity. There is an equation that describes how long Captain Song has to live. He knows this math. Even though it is hopeless, he fights on. He fights for control of an uncontrollable plane. Song will do his duty unto death. Beyond death if he can. But there is nothing that a man can do. The fate of Flight 209 is bound by the laws of physics.

Chapter 1: A lot of words he doesn't know

To the East of Flight 209 the Laws of Physics are under serious assault. The surface of the ocean parts in a perfectly straight line. Superheated seawater explodes into the air. An impossibility is headed West.

This impossibility is a man flying many times faster than the speed of sound. This man never had a chance to study physics. He doesn't know what he's doing is impossible. He just does it. He is called Excelsior. In Latin the name means "ever higher" This impossible man does not know this. To be fair, there are a lot of words he doesn't know.

But what good are words in moments of disaster? The endless stretching instant as the car begins to skid. That high speed memory that the survivors play over and over again, looking for the meaning of it all. What words are equal to these moments? What words are of use? No? Please? Stop? Don't?

When the wheels lose traction and you look over at the innocent eyes in the car seat next to you, there are no words.

And this is where he is asked to go, this Excelsior. This is where he lives. Do we expect eloquence from the avalanche? From a mighty rocket? From the forces that shift the continents? No. We expect action. Power, undeniable. And this is what his powers have made him. A force of nature with the will of a man.

To be sure, there are other heroes. Other people with exceptional powers who have been called to help their fellow and (it must be admitted) lesser men and women. Some are more colorful. Some are more eloquent. But Excelsior has always been the most powerful.

In a perfect world, Excelsior would race towards flight 209 with a full heart. With humility. With fear. With angry tears in his eyes at the injustice of it all. He would be fully aware that each life on that plane was woven into the fabric of mankind. They might be sons, brothers, mothers, daughters, friends or enemies, but in his heart he would recognize that each was part of the mass. Each one another's hope of redemption, of love, of care. And that when even one soul is cut from the cloth of humanity, the entire garment is weaker. Unravelling in pain and loss.

In the perfect world, Excelsior would recognize that there are no explanations for tragedy, just excuses that masquerade as facts. But then, if it was a perfect world, planes would not crash.

Excelsior is ignorant of all of this. Perhaps he is desensitized. But he flies towards this disaster (as he flies towards all disasters) not because people are at risk. He goes because he has been told to go. For him, Heroism has ceased to be right thing to do. Doing what he is told is the right thing to do.

And today he's also going because he needs a win. He's been taking it on the chin lately. Not feeling like a hero. But what else could he be? He's the most heroic hero there has ever been. He's the first. The best. The strongest. Like as not, there will never be another like him.

But for all his power, he is, like anyone else, held captive to his own feelings. And right now, he's excited about a plane crash. Mostly because the last one was so good.

It seems like a dream now, but it had been 1944. A different age altogether. A bomber's controls failed and it dropped over New York City. He caught the B-29 and layed it down right in the middle of Broadway. Everyone had cheered. He drank with the bomber crew. He found a pretty girl, flown her around the island of Manhattan, made love to her in a cloud and went home to sleep it off. It was a pure win.

And a pure win was what he needed. To feel himself again. To feel that it all made sense. Now, if he had sex with a girl in a cloud she would get pregnant and sue him for paternity. How had it all gone so wrong?

But not today. He knows he will save this day. He imagines the cheering crowds. Some of them will have video cameras. The footage of his rescue will play over and over again on television and computer screens. He will not just be a hero again, he will feel like a hero again. He will watch himself on TV.

When he intercepts the plane it is at 6,000 feet, spinning and yawing and pitching out of control. Excelsior's stomach churns just to think about being trapped inside the metal frame. He thinks to himself that he has been through worse. But has he? He has never faced certain death. The beach, he thinks. Set the plane down on the beach. That will look good.

As the plane continues to fall, he imagines girls in Bikinis. The sun glinting off aircraft aluminum. Survivors wandering through a volleyball game, trying to figure out why the afterlife looks like Southern California?

Before he dives towards the plane, he fills his lungs and cries, "EXCELSIOR!" He doesn't want there to be any doubt about who's actually saving this plane.. But everything goes wrong. He can't throw a jaunty salute to the pilot or the passengers. The windows are rolling so fast,

they are just a blur. And he can't get a hold of the damn thing. As he darts in towards the fuselage, the spinning plane slaps him away with it's one good wing. He's glad no one sees it.

Excelsior gets mad and knocks the wing off. The plane falls like a stone. Behind Excelsior the remaining fuel in the wing explodes in a bright fireball. It's now or never. No more time for battle cries or salutes.

Excelsior dives hard and gets under the plane. His fingers dig into the aluminum. The plane slows, but not fast enough. He strains. The ocean rushes closer. At this rate, he'll never make it.

Rivets pop out of the plane as he presses harder. It is a physical impossibility to lift something without a place to stand. But he does. The plane slows. But then, with the shriek of rending metal the fuselage rips in the middle. The tail and the nose slam sharply together, trapping Excelsior in an aluminum sandwich of disaster. He is exempt from the laws of physics, but the plane is not.

The fuselage disintegrates. It is disaster. Pieces of bodies and pieces of the aircraft are everywhere. Excelsior can think of nothing. Dread and failure overcome him. Somehow, he spies a man in a uniform beneath him. He seems whole. Perhaps he is alive. But the water is so close.

He dives again. Perhaps he can still save one. One would be something. It wouldn't be victory, but it wouldn't be failure. He snatches for the pilot mere feet above the ocean. The grab is good. His fingers close around the man's wrist, and Excelsior launches himself skyward.

It is a feeling he wishes he could forget. Through the skin he can feel the muscles stretch. He feels the vibrating strings of the tendon give way. He feels, more than hears, the pop as the shoulder comes free from the socket. The body hits the water at over a hundred miles an hour.

For a moment, Excelsior is silhouetted against the setting sun clutching the arm he has saved.

No one will say it is his fault. And the few who will know the truth of it will say that he did all he could. But Excelsior knows differently. He is the child of an age that knew right and wrong. And even though he is surrounded by relativists, he remembers that a loss is a loss.

He stares down at the slick of blood and oil. Watches the aluminum sink beneath the waves. He won't go to the beach. Maybe he'll head west for a while. Find an unmapped atoll and hide himself away in shame. It's the only thing he can think to do.

But he knows, the next time there is a call, the next time there is another chance to be a hero again, he will go.

Like a junkie, he cannot refuse.

Chapter 2: World domination

Edwin Windsor leans back in his chair. His long form is all angles and ease. Well over six feet of him stretches from immaculately polished wingtip to slightly loosened tie. At the end of this day, he displays the rumpled elegance of a man who is perfectly at ease in a suit. Examining his face, one might mistake him for a serene mystic of the East. Except for a wrinkle that surfaces between his eyebrows.

This is frustration. Client-induced frustration. Deep inside him, Edwin believes that his life would be perfect if not for his clients. But, unfortunately for Mr. Windsor, his life is his clients. He is a most unusual kind of consultant. In all their myriad shapes and forms, consultants are a kind of parasite. At best symbiotic, but in all cases, useless without a host.

Even though he knows it is hopeless, he must try again. He interrupts the flow of babble that has engulfed him.

"So, Dr. Loeb", he says, "tell me about your business plan?"

Blood rushes to Dr. Loeb's shaven head. He is wearing a Neru jacket that is a little too small. The collar seems to keep the blood from returning to his torso. It festers and turns purple. Edwin thinks that Dr. Loeb's head resembles an obscene Christmas tree bulb. Perhaps he will have an aneurysm. This thought does not alarm Edwin. If it has to happen, Edwin would prefer for it to happen outside of his office. Just when the pressure reaches intolerable levels, Dr. Loeb releases it by screaming, "WORLD DOMINATION!"

Dr. Loeb's face returns to a more reasonable shade. Now Edwin has a ringing in his ears. In an effort to clear some of the insanity from the room, he says, "That's really more of a goal than a plan."

"DOMINATION! DOMINATION! DOMINATION!"

Clearly, Dr. Loeb is insane. All of Edwin's clients are insane. But not all of them are so obnoxious about it. Edwin tries to appease the man, in the hopes that the interview might end sooner. "I'll just put down Mergers and Acquisitions", he says as he pretends to scribble something on a pad.

"Ja, JA. Acquisitions! I will overtake ze world. And if you help me mit my endeavoring, I vill grant to you a small island as your revard. Say Aftsralia. Muhahahahaha HAHA AHHAHAHAHAHAH!"

As the laughter continues, the wrinkle of frustration digs deeper into Edwin's forehead. Australia? How insulting. Edwin's standard arrangement is 35% of the post-laundered gross. Edwin is not in the real estate business. And even if he was, Edwin knows that Australia is a

mere 5% of the Earth's surface. Australia is not enough. To say nothing of the fact that Edwin does not keep score in yards. He keeps score in dollars. 35% of the world's wealth, that is a goal.

Most importantly, taking over the world is an impossibility. The foolish conceit of a deluded mind. But his clients never seemed to understand this. The less able they are to control themselves, the more they want to control the world. Why not start with an small island? A city block? An apartment building? One's own temper?

Edwin knows that a reasonable goal is not buildings levelled, damsels abducted or heroes taunted -- these are not the ends. They are means. Then end is wealth. For lack of a better term, money. If a person has power or abilities, and that person is willing to live by their own moral code, then Edwin can help them. But this creature? This Dr. Loeb? All he seems to have is a shaved head and a formidable command of the cliches of villainy. This is a colossal waste of Edwin's time.

Sensing that Edwin's attention has wandered. Dr. Loeb shouts "AUSFSTRALIA!" again. He gargles on the word. Edwin flicks his eyes to Dr. Loeb. What is this obsession with land? True, it iss the only thing they're not making any more of. But time -- time is the only thing you can't buy. Edwin wonders why he is wasting his time with this idiot. One more try, he thinks, and then I will be done.

"Why are you yelling?," Edwin asks

"I'm excited."

"Please try to control yourself."

"Vell, I, ja, okay."

"Now, I am also excited. Because if you are this excited, you must have a wonderful plan -- a brilliant idea with which to take over the world. Please, tell me what it is, so I can help you."

"I have plans for a giant Laser."

Please, don't say, in space, Edwin thinks. Anything but another giant laser in space scheme.

"A giant laser!" cries Dr. Loeb. His eyes dart from one side of the room to another, looking for those who would steal his secret and sinister plan. Seeing that the coast is clear, he bellows "IN SPACE!" Once again, maniacal laughter.

Edwin rubs the bridge of his nose and waits.

"You're not laughing." says Dr. Loeb.

"That is correct. I am not laughing."

"But why? Do you not see the beauty of my sinister plan? Is it not unstoppable?"

"Unstoppable?" Edwin asks. "It's unstartable." Edwin gets up and leaves. He has decided that Dr. Loeb is the ultimate waste of time. A sunk cost. A waste so wasteful, so irredeemable, the only rational thing to do is to make future decisions as though Dr. Loeb had never existed.

"You're coming back, right? I mean, ja?"

Chapter 3: Edwin walking the hallway

No doubt, you are familiar with the cramped wightwarrens of the modern business world. Perhaps you are one of the unfortunates who spends your every working hour longing to escape these narrow, frustrated places where the smell of cheap carpet hangs low in the air, trapped among the poorly ventilated cubes. These places where the lesser demons of distraction run riot through phone systems and email. These places where the sun's true rays never penetrate. Where, just like the bottom of the ocean, floresca and fauna have adapted to the sunless environment. The plants are plastic. The worker apes, hairless, hunched and pale. And hopeless. Oh so hopeless.

When the worker apes dream of their reward after death, their Heaven looks a lot like Edwin's office. It occupies the top of high tower that has the benefit of the cleanest air and clearest light in the city. And, if you don't know what Edwin doe, you could easily mistake it for a temple dedicated to a clearer and more civilized religion than the world has ever known.

Edwin's office is the size of a football field. On two sides, three-story windows reveal the city spread out below. Edwin's desk is a simple slab, carved from the heart of a redwood tree. The surface is clean. Most notably, there is no computer.

This office is a place designed for the contemplation of lofty matters. If it were any kind of temple, it would be a temple of clarity. This is a room constructed to capture God-like intellect. Here one can nod to Apollo as he drives his blazing chariot across the sky. And here, Apollo will nod back.

This is the room Edwin abandons. Edwin is frustrated that he must relinquish such a space to Dr. Loeb. None of this shows on Edwin's face. None of it shows in Edwin's thoughts. But all the same, the carefully controlled emotions are there. They are pouring into a giant cistern of feeling hidden deep within him.

Edwin walks the long hallway to his lobby. Visages of past clients stare out at him from the walls.

Here, a picture of of Aluminar, semi-metallic skin flashing as Edwin passes. Aluminar had attempted to mine the center of the Earth and convert part of it's molten core into counterfeit nickels. Edwin had advised against this scheme, suggesting that if one was going to use the power to tunnel effortlessly through the Earth for mining, perhaps gold or oil would a more profitable objective. Aluminar had not seen it that way. He had never returned from his

storybook attempt to reach the center of the Earth. Perhaps he was still down there? Or perhaps he had encountered one of the several elements that rendered him powerless and inert. Whatever the case, the hole he had created in the poor soil of Eastern Oregon had collapsed in on itself. And now, only a nameless sinkhole marked Aluminar's grave.

Next, on the wall is the Voodooin'. Edwin had been able to persuade him that the proper use of powers was to provide Zombies as cheap temporary labor to large manufacturing concerns. It had been an exceptionally profitable scheme. But the Voodooin' had no love for business. He retired to his native Haiti where he indulged his first and real love, baseball. He had exhumed the bodies of many famous baseball players and reanimated them so he could watch them play on his own bizarre field of dreams hidden deep within the mountains.

Perhaps, most absurd, is the Carolignian, a man who has the power to transform himself into a warrior monk from the time of Charlemagne by rubbing a bit of dead flesh that he claims is the foreskin of St. Paul. Edwin had not asked questions. He had merely harnessed the man's powers to make money. But, soon after the money rolling in, the Carolignian had disregarded Edwin's advice, demanding of Edwin, "Since God is for me, who can be against me?" As it turned out, a great many people could be against him. Edwin had never known the victory of secular humanism to be so bittersweet.

And finally, Brainitar. Brainitar had cost Edwin dearly. Both financially and personally. He admitted, only to himself, that he had made a terrible mistake when he had been sucked in by Doctor Grapewigget's mad obsession. Steven Grapewigget had invented a way to remove his brain from his perfectly healthy body and implant it in an ageless, multi-function robotic pod. He hoped to prolong his life indefinitely and prove that this was the next logical stage in human evolution.

Edwin cared for none of that. But with the vast parallel processing resources of the human brain now in a machine interface, he devised a way for Brainitar to plug directly into the futures market. Using a combination of Brainitar's unique insight and a massive array of supercomputers, he had devised a seemingly infallible trading scheme.

But it had never been implemented. A factor unknown and perhaps unknowable had ruined everything. The phantom itch. It was phenomenon experienced by amputees, in which the missing limb was still felt to be there. The limb would start to itch, and of course, could not be scratched. This had driven Brainitar mad. As an unforeseen side effect of his transplant, the memory of his entire body became an itch he could not scratch. The brain inside the jar was driven insane by ceaseless and uncontrollable sensation.

Long nights had Edwin lay awake, wondering what he could have done differently. How could he have detected this madness. Insanity was hard enough to see in a normal person who was attempting to cover it up, but how do you read it into the folds of a brain suspended in liquid? There were no facial expressions. No human warmth or contact. None of the thousand bits of information that we all to rely on in our exchanges with others.

None of Edwin's clients had really followed his advice. But it was Brainitar who was most to blame for the spot Edwin found himself in now. A great portion of Edwin's own fortune had been tied up in Braintiar's scheme. And when Brainitar had decided, inexplicably, to hold a large dam hostage, Edwin's investment was lost.

Because of Brainitar, Edwin now had cash flow problems. Once again he is forced to wade through the sludge at the bottom of the barrel of evil as he searches for an untapped resource. Someone with talent. Someone with potential. Someone completely unlike Dr. Loeb.

Right now, Edwin wants to know how Dr. Loeb made it through his screening process.

Chapter 4: Child of Faded Empire

In the midst of the cavernous, modern lobby, Edwin's secretary sits behind an Early Victorian partner's desk. The herringbone accents, brass fittings and top inlaid with hand-tooled leather is at odds with the modernist decor. But, as Agnes is fond of saying, one mustn't surrender to the modern merely because it is here. It is important to put up some kind of a fight.

Agnes is dignified, gracefully age'd and looks a trifle like Winston Churchill in drag. If you mention the resemblance to Agnes, she will be flattered. She is an unreconstructed Limey and, as they say on the island seat of that lost empire, frightfully proud of it. There is no dual citizenship for Agnes. Heavens no. Her loyalty is to the crown and what it stands and stood for. And her prolonged stay in this heathen country has only strengthened her upper lip and her determination to set a more civilized example for the wayward colony.

At one time, an unfortunate person had seen fit to refer to Agnes as an "executive assistant." Agnes would have none of it. She denounced the term as a "barbarous jargon." And declared herself uncomfortable with the prominence of the syllable "ass." She is a secretary. She does not merely assist. She keep order. And perhaps it is her smoldering, blue-haired rage for order that prevents her from jumping as Edwin storms into the lobby. Or perhaps, it is that, after her long years of service to Edwin, she has seen it all.

"What is that?" Edwin asks, gesturing towards his office.

Agnes shuffles a few papers and ignores him.

"Agnes? How did that waste of time find it's way on to my schedule?"

"I'm sorry, are you talking to me?"

"Yes."

Agnes carefully collates the papers on her desk into a stack. She folds her hands and looks to Edwin with her chin high in the air. "Now, how can I help you, Mister Windsor?"

"That lout in my office."

"Dr. Loeb, yes, what of him?"

"Why am I wasting my time on him? He has no powers. He's obviously an idiot. There's no potential there for us to make any money. Why did you not prune him from my schedule?"

"I'm not sure I care for your tone."

"Agnes, please."

"It's true," Agnes grants, "he is a trifle substandard. But we are in something of dire straits here. Clients have been dropping left and right. Dr. Spocktopolis has gone completely around the bend. He is refusing his latest invoice."

"That's a collections issue."

"Yes, a matter for the Unstoppable Auger. Unfortunately, he seems to have let his name go to his head and has been stopped rather decisively by the authorities."

"Ah", says Edwin. He does not like mundane details. Especially less these days, when all the details are less than flattering.

"Ah, indeed", says Agnes, not totally unsympathetic "These are trying times for us all."

"Yes, but there is simply no way that that buffoon can help us. And why does he effect such a horrible Austrian accent?"

"The accent is horrible and out of place. Many of your clients want to be something they aren't, but, I have a good feeling about this Dr. Loeb."

And there it is. A feeling. Agnes is very old and very dear to Edwin, but a feeling? Edwin has no time for feelings. Feelings are fickle, fallible. Feelings fall apart, melt away or reverse without the slightest warning or provocation. To build a decision on feelings is to set a foundation in quicksand. Feelings! Even data can be falsified or misleading. But logic was something you can always rely on. Logic is the bedrock upon which Edwin constructs his world.

"He's not a Doctor", says Edwin, "This is lunacy. Show the man from my office. I'm going to the club."

"Edwin! Please! This is no time for golf." Agnes protests. The elevator doors close behind Edwin and she falls silent. She is old, but she is determined to keep from talking to herself for as long as she can manage.

She turns back to her desk, and there is Dr. Loeb. "Excusing me, but where is Mr. I mean, Herr Windsor-- Vindsor. Where did he go?"

"Mr. Windsor has been called away on urgent business. But fear not, he has left instructions for me to to reschedule your appointment for a later date."

Dr. Loeb jumps up and down enthusiastically. Oh dear, Agnes thinks, I must discover how this will pay. She smiles at the odd man in the Neru jacket, swallows her distaste and asks him if he would care for a cup of tea.

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