

THE THINGS WE DONT KNOW

“Where in blazes is he?”

**Standing at the picture window,
Father Bob stares into the distance.**

“Where’s who?” “Bullets” asks.

**“Josh. It’s not like him to be late ... I
hope nothing happened to him?”**

**Hanging up his coat, Doc Rogers turns
to the two men. “Probably held up by that
crash on the bridge,” he says. “Haven’t
you heard?”**

**“Heard what ... what crash?” the priest
asks, anxiously looking over his shoulder.**

**“... three eighteen wheelers on the
Memorial. Heard it on the radio on the
way over.”**

**“I heard the same thing,” Bobby
‘Pretzels’ says, pouring himself a cup of
coffee. “Two trucks collided then collected
a third ... got both directions - all six lanes
- shut down.”**

“When did it happen?”

“... about fifteen minutes ago.”

Looking off into the distance Bob shakes his head. ‘That’s about the time he’d have been on the bridge,’ the priest says, half to himself. ‘He always comes that way ... and you know Josh, ‘Mr. Punctuality.’”

Pausing, again, he peers into the fog.

“Are you sure it was just three trucks, Bobby ... no cars?”

“Yea ... radio said it’s a mess. But nobody said anything about cars, or injuries, or anything.”

Sipping his coffee, Father Bob, the look of worry deepening in his eyes, says, almost silently to himself ... his voice trailing off ...

“Hope everyone’s all right.”

Hi. We’re here in the parish hall at St. Kate’s. Some of the neighborhood gang are gathered for a December early organizational meeting for the Valentine’s Day Interfaith Council Dinner Dance and Charity Raffle. It’s a new event; second year on the calendar. Last years went well and there are plans to expand it. Half the guys and their wives, several clergymen, and even a couple of new faces are here.

Seems the Rabbi’s late and that’s not like Josh. The deepening worry lines on Bob’s brow betray the concern he

feels. You see, these two guys have been friends for almost twenty years now and they know each other's habits quite well.

Sam Bates just came in with some pastries from her shop, and – surprise - she's brought her little girl, Emily Ann, along. Smiles abound as the sight of Sam's little girl, replete with a shock of red hair, an explosion of freckles, and two missing front teeth, brings a welcome respite from the air of concern in the room.

Nick Kossarides' wife Andrea and daughter Alyssa, with Sam and little Emily Ann's help, set about making more coffee and arranging the food and pastries while most of the guys engage in some light banter; mostly about the chance of the Boys in Black making the playoffs.

Well, all but Father Bob; he can't tear himself away from the window. Time for the meeting to begin and Doc Rogers calls for everyone to take a seat.

Just as Doc is about to begin, the door opens and in walks our tardy friend. The air of concern dissipates and Father Bob breathes a sigh of relief ...

Let's listen in.

"Where you been, Shuckels?" asks the priest, the echo of a concerned father in his voice. "You're late. We were about to call River Rescue."

His trademark impish grin lighting his eyes, Josh chuckles. "Sorry Dad ... I just ..."

“Ah, forget it,” Father Bob mutters, affection and relief evident in his voice.

“You get caught up in the crash on the Memorial?” Nick asks, interrupting the touching scene between father and prodigal son.

“... just missed it ... traffic was backed up just before the bridge, so I ducked into the right lane and took the Westover Bridge to Castle Street and came in the back way.”

“What! No one comes that way,” “Pretzels” says, shaking his head. “There’s gotta be thirty lights between Westover and here.”

“Yea and I caught every one of them,” Josh laughs. “Funny isn’t it, when you’re running late, you never catch a break ... just all the lights.”

“Well, just so you’re okay,” chuckles Pastor Swanson. “From the way Bob was looking out the window, you’d think he was waiting for his little girl to come home from the prom.”

“I’m touched,” Josh says, laughter in his eyes.

“Yea, and you’d probably do the same thing for Bob,” Pastor Williams says, chuckling at the look on Josh’s face.

“Funny thing was, it really wasn’t the traffic that delayed me,” Josh says, hanging his parka on the coatrack. “I lost my keys and couldn’t find them for five minutes. Must have set them on the counter in front of the microwave last night and they got swept under a napkin holder.”

“Been there, done that,” Pretzels chuckles. “Funny ... five minutes. Heck, I lose that trying to make a decent cup of coffee.”

“We’ve tasted your coffee, Bobby,” Doc Rogers says. “Want a tip ... lose ten minutes ... might be an improvement.”

Laughter erupts from most of the gang. Bobby’s famous for his knack for making the worst coffee in these parts.

The laughter dies down and the Rabbi continues.

“Yea and the strange thing is, if I hadn’t lost them, I’d have been on the bridge when those trucks collided. A couple minutes earlier, I’d have been

smack in the middle of that mess. Makes you wonder if someone was looking out for me.”

“Funny you say that, Rabbi,” Walt Robinson says. “Last month I was going to start a job and spent an hour in a traffic jam. When I finally got there, they had closed their doors. I was heading there with the upfront money the contract stipulated. Next day, their headquarters in Boston declared bankruptcy. I'd have lost everything.”

“Two years ago, there was that fire downtown in the Gardner building where my law firm is located,” Nate Karlsen says, joining the conversation. “Two people died, and more than a dozen were hospitalized. That day the kids got sick, Ellen had to go out of town, and I took a personal day to take care of them. If I'd gone into work, I'd have been in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

“You know,” ‘Mike the Russian’ says, “you often hear of someone who avoids a catastrophe by some simple circumstance like the ones you’re talking about. Like missing a plane that later crashes.”

“Yea, and people pass it off as luck, or fate.” Pretzels says.

“Well, it looks like your guardian angel was working overtime today,” Hammer says, sipping his coffee.

“Guardian angel Walt?” Josh asks, amusement in his voice.”

“What, Rabbi, you don’t believe in guardian angels?”

“Actually, no, at least not in the sense you do, Walt. We Jews do believe however that whenever we do a mitzvah, an angel is created that testifies for us before God after our passing.”

“A mitzvah?”

“A good deed, Walt” Father Bob says.

Josh pauses. “So, in a sense, we create our own guardian angels.”

“Well, then order up three for me,” Walt chuckles. You know my boys, don’t you? The Dalton gang...”

At the mention of Walt’s three boys, gentle laughter again is heard. His boys have a reputation, to say the least.

“Well, someone was looking out for you, Rabbi.” Doc chuckles.

“Like an angel, you’re saying ...?” Josh asks, eyes bright; his trademark grin stretching from ear to ear.

Sipping his coffee, Father Bob smiles and looks at his friend.

“Or maybe a God, Josh?”

You can’t find your keys for a minute or two in the morning, and unknown to you, a semi runs a red light at an intersection you normally pass through on your way to work ... a minute or two earlier ... and you had no idea ... Hmmm.

God is not a puppeteer; pulling strings and orchestrating the everyday events of life. But occasionally ... makes one wonder???

As people of faith, we pray. Words of praise, adoration, supplication, and maybe, the most treasured of all, thanksgiving – the ones we often don’t offer enough. We tend to pray for the tangible things we perceive; how we see God acting in our life.

But is there another dimension of God acting in our lives? Does He act for our well-being in ways, of which, we are unaware?

Have you ever wondered why the misfortunes of others didn’t affect you? Or the circumstances of meeting your spouse; where you might have been or what you might have done, instead of being in the right place at the right time? Or the other side of the coin. Have you ever suffered a

setback that prevented you from being exposed to a danger of which you were unaware?

Like not finding your keys in the morning ...

Shouldn't we say an occasional prayer of thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father, thanking Him for all He does for us ...

... of which we are totally unaware?

Thinkaboutit ... I'm Tony Baggz.

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