The Perfect Servant

JOHN J HUDSON, known as Basic J to his many friends, is making a difficult decision in the Pentagon. Word has just come through from B&C::: complete, precise and permanent programming of thought, feeling and sensory data demonstrated in experimental preparations after single exposure to virus rover this information conveyed in a three word interoffice memo::: rover is ready.

No further need to explain excuse produce any arguments or facts in support of departmental directives. It will soon be neurologically impossible to oppose or even to question. The virus is hereditary of course a permanent chromatic formula circuits of protest closed forever. Rover will see to that. Basic J has the responsibility of releasing rover in the United States of America. He looks up at Old Glory hanging over his desk. *American* programming of course... he will see to that. He gets up and paces around the room.

"Gotta stay ahead of the Commies... if they get there first with *their* programming... everybody's kids will speak Chinese at birth." This he decides grimly must be unthinkable::: 'The President is right. The President is always right. The laws are right. America is right. America is always right. The American way of life is the right way of life is the best way of life is the only way of life' from here to eternity.

His duty is clear. He salutes Old Glory. His throat is dry. He rings for Bently the perfect servant a faithful old dog of that he is absolutely sure. The psyche department checked him out and he checked so clear they used some of his bone marrow in the rover cultures. Bently stands in the door.

"Yes sir?"

"A glass of ice water please Bently."

"Yes sir."

With the speed of a conjurer Bently places a glass of ice water on a brocade napkin. "Good old Bently always knows what I need."

The perfect servant he draws the curtains. "Anything else sir?"

"No nothing else. Good night Bently."

"Good night Mr Hudson. Good bye Mr Hudson."

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O say can you see
If Bently's who
He appears to be?
A story by
William Burroughs
"What was that Bently?" Hudson put down the half empty glass.

"Good bye Mr. Hudson." For a moment Bently looks at him with something like emotion. He bows and leaves the room.

Hudson drains his glass. He sits for some time in silent thought.

Suddenly he knows what to do. Reverently he spreads Old Glory on the desk. He picks up a pen right to hand somehow and ready by a piece of parchment paper. He writes.

Dear Mary
I am taking the only way out. Please forgive me.

Spring drawer cold 45... It's the right thing to do its the best thing to do its the only thing to do... good old Bently... he knew somehow...

"I was on the way back to my room sir when I heard the shot sir. I found him like that sir." He nods to the desk. The side of Hudson's face is stuck to his waistcoat and explodes against the agent's grey flannel suit.

"You can say that again." said the agent.

"It was a terrible shock for me sir." There are two agents in the room two very special agents. They both turn and look at Bently in a very special way.

"You expect us to swallow this crap?" Bently draws himself up. "I have told you the truth sir exactly as it happens sir."

"And I say its crap. Do we have to, to the CIA man "Bently looks at him with a strange animal waste.

"That's what I like about Fred; he knows when he's had enough." Bently wipes off the grey features of a cold.

Husband to Wife: The laundry sure goofed; they must have sent me the wrong shirt. This collar is so tight, I can hardly breathe.

Wife to Husband: That's not the wrong shirt, stupid, you've got your head through a buttonhole.

He removes the cap from the desk. There is a slight explosion followed by a long reverent silence.

"If I thought that much of him he must be all right!" the agent bursts out in a voice hoarse with emotion. He turns away to hide the tears in his eyes. Another agent chokes and buries his face in a curtain wracked with sobs.

"Oh what the Hell" screams the CIA man "Its nothing to be ashamed of. Let's cry our decent American and responsible officials in this country should with one accord and for no discernible reason become maudlin drunk over a period of two minutes?"

"That is not for me to say sir."

"You have testified that the men were quite normal when you left the room."

"Yes sir. Whatever happened sir happened after I left the room sir."

"Things always seem to happen after you leave rooms Bently."

"Not always sir."

The new department head looks at Bently and his jaw drops.

"Why the man is smiling or snarling rather in a strange animal way. What the Hell?"

"ACHOO ACHOO ACHOOOOOO OOO"

"BLESS YOU BENTLY BLESS YOU BLESS YOU"

"ACHOO ACHOO ACHOOOOOOOO"

"BLESS YOU SIR BLESS YOU BLESS YOU"

"Let's all go ACHOO ACHOO out into the BLESS YOU BLESS YOU beautiful American ACHOO ACHOO streets and BLESS YOU BLESS YOU bless all our fellow ACHOO ACHOO Americans BLESS YOU ACHOOOOOO OOO"

Sneezing and blessing they rush into the street. Alone in the room Bently wipes off the grey features of a perfect servant to reveal himself as the Insidious Doctor Fu Manchu. He steps to the window.

"ACHOO ACHOO!" The cities and towns of America echo back

"BLESS YOU BLESS YOU" "ACHOO ACHOO" back from the farms cross roads and lonely sidings of "BLESS YOU BLESS YOU"

"ACHOO ACHOO" on the winds of Panhandle idiot honky tonks yodel back "BLESS YOU BLESS YOU ALLAYIHOO"

From car and plane "ACHOO ACHOO" Hell's Angels roaring back "BLESS YOU BLESS YOU" America America "ACHOO ACHOO ACHOO ACHOO" from purple mountain's majesty "BLESS YOU BLESS YOU BLESS YOU"

The doctor stands at the window waiting.

"Achoo achoo" with wind and dust "bless you bless you"

"Achoo achoo" a hoarse whisper echos back "bless you bless you"

"Achoo achoo" spitting blood "bless you bless you"

Old record running down "achoo achoo achoo"

Dying dying dying "bleess you bless you bless you!"

The doctor's silent blessing falls on silent cities from sea to shining sea.