

Paul Charles
4231 Pittaway Drive
Richmond, VA 23235
rrmedia@mac.com / 804-402-9724
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Office Plant

by

A.D. PAUL
(Paul Charles)

No one knows how long it had been there, or even how it got there. It just appeared one day, sometime in the long ago past. Maybe it was already there when the staff from Cabinets & More moved in, and that was a little over five years ago. And even though no one could really determine what species it was, they didn't put much thought into it either. It was just there in the corner of the break room, high upon a shelf, and that's just the way it was.

Margaret from accounting surmised that it was a Rubber Tree plant. She had caught her brother peeing on one in a hotel lobby when he was only five, and she would never be able to get that image out of her head. But, Horace from assembly disagreed. He swore up and down that it was a Fig. "If that's not a Fig", he insisted, "you can all kiss my pasty-white ass." And from then on, everyone referred to it as a Fig.

If it wasn't for Tina, who "worked" the phones, it would have died a long time ago. But, every now and then, much to the delight of the forklift drivers who would eat french fries damp with grease, she would climb atop a stool in her pink "BEBE" sweatpants and pour a little ice from her Big Gulp into it. And each time that she would bend over to move the stool into position, and those four little letters on the back of her pants...B...E...B...E...would expand to the width of the Hollywood sign, the forklift drivers would fall in love all over again.

The fact that it was still alive at all was a miracle. It had grown as tall as it could, even lifting the drop ceiling a full three inches before it finally stopped. And the closest fluorescent light which was over three panels away, blinked intermittently, teasing it like a bullet-riddled canteen. Even it's leaves, which once were a brilliant green, were now just a soft grey, as a layer of dust and neglect disguised the true beauty that lay beneath.

It was Louis, who worked the arc welder and had three missing fingers and a bad case of psoriasis, who suggested they just throw the damn thing out. It was depressing to look it, and besides, it must be teeming with disease, like an inflatable Bounce House at five-year-old's birthday party.

But, Wallace from the mailroom, who sported a pair of bowed legs and a set of sideburns that stretched well beneath his chin, had a better idea. An office pool. If Tina would just stop watering it, they could put a little money on the day it would finally go "belly-up". But, Tina wasn't having any of it. Until of course, the pool reached forty-five dollars. That would cover the cost of a new set of fingernail veneers and a hair extension, so she was "all in". And so it began. On the seventeenth day of February of that year, the little office plant that sat high upon a shelf in the dimly-lit break room of Cabinets & More, was left to fend for itself.

Three weeks would pass, and nine of fifteen employees would be eliminated from the pool, before the plant started showing any signs of giving up. Its leaves, which once pointed upward toward the sky and supported the weight of a drop ceiling, now hung heavy towards the floor. Its once brilliant color started to fade, turning a pale yellow, like the eyes of an aging alcoholic.

When another two weeks passed and the plant still stood defiant, Roger from Sales with a bad comb-over and a fake Rolex watch, decided to speed things up. He propped himself atop a refrigerator filled with half-eaten lunches covered in various stages of decay, and removed the fluorescent tube that gave the little plant hope. And two days later, when the plant's leaves started to fall, you could hear cheers erupting from the break room each time a leaf would hit the linoleum floor.

When the first day of Spring rolled around, with the little plant still gasping for life, Louis was officially eliminated from the pool. But, that's when he decided to take matters into his own hands. He dug deep into the pocket of his overalls with his two good fingers and produced a butane lighter that he used to ignite his torch. And even though Tina warned him that he would lose his job if he set the plant on fire, she was wrong. It was actually the sprinkler head, hidden behind the plant's only remaining leaf, that ultimately did him in.

The "Great Flood", as it was referred to from then on, closed the shop for an entire week, as a response team from "Servpro" struggled to clean it up. And a funny thing happened after that. When "Servpro" finally left and the staff from Cabinets & More returned a week later, the little plant in the corner that was once one leaf away from death, had sprung back to life. Nourished by the "Great Flood" and a new set of lights installed by the team from "Servpro", a single white flower had emerged and proudly presented itself towards the light.

After a little research by Martin in IT, who had a diamond earring and a fungal infection, it turned out that Horace and Margaret were both wrong. It wasn't a Rubber Tree or a Fig at all. It was in fact, a Shamrock Plant.

Horace built a plant stand out of solid oak, the very next day.