

PHARMACEUTICALS

Life is an incurable disease. Abraham Cowley

There is only one illness and one cure. Franz Mesmer

The desire to take medicine is perhaps the greatest feature which distinguishes man from animals. Sir William Osler

The philosophies of one age have become the absurdities of the next, and the foolishness of yesterday has become the wisdom of tomorrow. Sir William Osler

Noah Jacobs was a pharmacist and the proprietor of a pharmacy located in a small town. His one competitor sold mostly non-pharmaceutical products. Noah, on the other hand, sold only medicines both prescribed and over the counter. His customers knew that Noah's one concern was their health and welfare. He inspired confidence because of his gentleness, sedate manner, honesty, pharmaceutical and medical knowledge. His prices were always reasonable. He never failed to extend credit to the needy poor though he hardly ever expected to collect. The owner of the pharmaceutical wholesale establishment that supplied Noah was an old friend who shared Noah's values. The few MDs available were equally magnanimous when caring for the needy and for children. This was also true of the one local hospital.

Noah was extremely popular with the town people. His quiet ways and the gentle and the kind manner he showed everyone were largely responsible. No one had ever heard him insult anyone. He was always ready to lend a helping hand to any recipient, whether that person was rich or poor. He never offered advice unless it was asked for and then somewhat reluctantly. On a number of occasions he was beseeched to run for the town council. Except for one occasion, he always and with humility, declined. He was Mayor for one term only, although he could have kept on indefinitely. Politics were not his 'cup of tea' especially when issues such as

‘A Woman’s Right To Choose and Medically Assisted Suicide’ arose, as they often did. He simply and politely declined to respond when issues such as these arose.

His personal habits were consistent with his character. He was a loving husband and father to three children. The household was steeped with warmth, good humour and especially ‘LOVE’, too rare a quality. He enjoyed reading the great works of literature, listening to classical music and when he had time, taking long walks in the nearby meadows and forests. His love of nature probably influenced him when he chose Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony, (the sixth), as his favorite piece of music. In his practice as a Pharmacist, he knew only too well the role nature can and does play in keeping persons either healthy or sick. He was a firm believer in preventative measures when fighting against disease. As for religion, he was probably an agnostic, although he attended church regularly, as a means of socializing with his fellow town-folk.

Summarily, he was a happy and unperturbed individual who did not seek wealth and popularity. His income was eminently satisfactory for someone with his life style. Unknown to him, all this was about to undergo a drastic change.

He was engaged in his disagreeable weekly chore of bringing his bookkeeping up to date. While he had hired students to do some of the more menial tasks required in a pharmacy, this was one he insisted on doing by himself. He could not afford any mistakes in calculating his taxes.

While engrossed in this task, he became aware that someone had entered the pharmacy. It surprised him, since usually on that day and time of day there were no customers. “Are you Noah Jacobs, the owner of this establishment”, inquired the visitor”?

“I am he. Who are you and what can I do for you?” Noah replied.

“My name is Torto and what I am going to relate is something you will find very difficult to believe. Please be patient and hear me out. I am from a very distant solar system which contains four liveable planets. I am from

one of them. Each of these worlds specializes in certain endeavors. For example, one is in advanced theoretical science, another is in astronomy, yet another is in all sorts of technologies especially communication and transportation and finally one is in the biosciences with particular emphasis on understanding how our organs function and how they respond to various stimuli. My chosen study is how to improve our bodies and our minds. In this regard, we have vastly more knowledge than you do. However we applaud your efforts. Also we are cognizant of your futile attempts to cure diseases, especially those that are a real threat to both your wellbeing and your lives. I have come here to provide you with help. Hopefully, the help will be of mutual benefit.”

Noah could no longer restrain himself.

“You come here unannounced and provide us with an unbelievable tale. What evidence have you shown that you are an alien from a very distant world who has come here to provide us with solutions to our medical problems? Why should we believe anything you have stated or are about to?”

Torto continued. “Please, continue to hear me out and then make your decision. First of all, our technology has provided us with the means to travel through space at Warp speeds. If you wish I can demonstrate.”

Torto instantaneously, disappeared and reappeared outside the pharmacy across the street. Then he abruptly returned.

“Secondly, Noah, I can cure you of any discomfort you are currently suffering. I know that you have symptoms of a malady you label influenza. Let me simply apply this ointment to your forehead. Your symptoms should be gone.”

Noah instantly felt better. “I do not know what you did but my temperature is now normal and the Flu like symptoms I was enduring are gone. While I am still sceptical, please continue.”

“We have recently stumbled on a pharmaceutical product that has amazing remedial traits. It cures everything. It accomplishes this by diagnosing any

disorder and healing it completely. We have tested it on the inhabitants of our solar system with 100% positive results. Now we wish to determine whether its curative properties are universal, by testing it here on the citizens of your world. If it is equally beneficial, then all your medical problems will be resolved. I am willing to try it on you first, if you so desire.”

Noah’s response was somewhat curt. “What you are suggesting is that we should serve as guinea pigs, something that we disdain to be part of. What if your product provides more harm than benefit”?

“That is why I am advocating that only one of you, namely you, try it first. If anything goes wrong, I will probably be able to deal with it, ”

After some reflection and with apprehension Noah agreed to serve as a pseudo guinea pig. The result was as Torto had predicted. Noah’s health was now better than it had ever been. However there was one unforeseen side effect. All physical discomfort and pain had vanished, but so had the sensation of pleasure. In other words, sensory experiences were now quite limited. This appeared to have a profound effect on Noah’s character. He no longer had any feeling of affection for family, friends, as well as for all humans. He had no appreciation of beautiful music, art, literature, poetry and nature. He had lost a lot more than he had gained. He had become an automat, a robot whose behaviour consisted solely of accumulating money and power by manipulating the users of this new drug so that they could become addicts.

He did not realize that he also was being controlled. Torto had been amused by what had transpired after the drug was introduced. He admitted that he had had a moment of trepidation when Noah indicated his resentment at being treated as a guinea pig but was relieved when Noah agreed to use it. What ensued was totally predictable. This world and all its inhabitants had been conquered. Another colony had been added to the Empire that was Torto’s home world. He could not help but muse that humans were both stupid and naïve. As such they were easy prey.

EPILOG: There is a possible different ending to this tale.

Noah's pharmacy, during all the world-wide changes, had remained untouched. Perhaps this meant that a return to its previous existence was possible. As time elapsed this likelihood diminished, as indicated by the following illustration: **Perhaps, perhaps, perhaps, perhaps, perhaps.**

Jack Basuk

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