

Parabolic Turns

by Matt Rowan

There was a man dressed in stately attire. His name was Abacus, which maybe you find strange, but then keep this in mind: it is, after all, just a name.

He was eating a sloppy meatball sandwich. It was probably brimming with meatballs, because he often ordered extra meatballs when he would order a meatball sandwich.

Occasionally, very occasionally, he would spill a meatball onto the ground where a scavenging city creature, a squirrel, a pigeon, perhaps even a rat, could get to it and be rather well fed. But he was usually very careful to make sure the entirety of the sandwich (all of the meatballs and everything) ended up in precisely the spot it belonged -- his mouth.

A spirited fellow chimed in, once, at the midpoint of Abacus' career, "Sir! I wanted to inform you, because I worry about the environment, sir, that you have in fact spilt a lot of what you are eating onto the ground. That is called littering. I hope you understand that I only mean well in calling you out about your littering. I want what's best for the world at large."

"Most of what I've spilled is edible. The rest is wrappers that make up so little of the harm we do to our environment," Abacus replied.

But the spirited fellow was vehement and persisted. "Sir, I must insist you clean up after yourself. I'm doing this for the environment. I don't want anything bad to happen to the environment. Ever. I want it never to happen."

"Leave me alone. I'll discard my trash wherever I've trash to be discarded, even if that's not in a proper receptacle." Abacus defied the spirited fellow. He noted the man's spiritedness but downplayed it by noting that he, Abacus, was indeed far more stately dressed.

"Then I should be the one to stop you." And at that the spirited fellow and Abacus had a terrible row, till finally the spirited fellow's face was smashed with a rock, and he ran off cowering in pain.

Abacus was somewhat relieved to have beaten his determined opponent. The spirited fellow's tie was blue, like that of a peasant. Abacus would remember it.

Later, many months later, Abacus was walking near an intersection where he was surprised to see a car crashing -- an odd parabolic turn leading its driver to hit and dislodge a fire hydrant, water from the hydrant become a geyser like you'll see in films. Abacus' dropped his trash on the ground, surprised. He thought about bending over to retrieve his trash but then decided he would not.

"I am back, sir. Good sir," said that spirited fellow with the blue tie. He was wearing a cast on his arm from what Abacus assumed was an unrelated injury. "I'm for round two. Are you, sir? Are you going to pick up that trash?"

"You're trash!" Abacus shouted, proceeding to beat the man with an incidental log he'd found near his littered trash.

There would not be a "round three," because this time Abacus beat the spirited fellow to death, strangling him with his blue tie for good if horrible measure. It was never discovered that Abacus was the murderer, though the spirited fellow's corpse was eventually found and reported to the authorities.

