

A Man, a Market and a Mayor

by Poppy Days

Once upon a time there was a man living in a jungle. He'd been living there for thirty years. He enjoyed living there because he was afraid of people. Sometimes when he had to go to the village he would feel uncomfortable and would not speak with anyone. He wasn't welcomed there because he was "the man from the jungle" that everyone feared.

One day he saw a letter on the ground. It was the letter W and he didn't know what that meant. Many days passed and he always looked at the letter W without knowing what to do with it. It was amazing! He would touch it, smell it, even lick it. He couldn't stop looking at it. The man from the jungle started to think that maybe he should do something with it. He thought that maybe the letter W meant something but he just didn't know what. He started to think that just having it on his own wouldn't help him to figure out what it meant. Then he thought that maybe in the village he would find someone willing to help him.

One fine morning he finally decided to go to the village and ask for help. As he arrived he saw some people looking at him with fear. He didn't understand why they were staring at him but he continued walking. When he saw a woman with a red hat looking kindly at him, he thought that she would talk to him, so he showed her the letter and asked,

"Do you know what this is?"

"It's a W but I don't know what it means," she replied staring at the W.

"What shall we do with it?" asked the man from the jungle.

"I'd say we put it in the market square so that everyone can see it and appreciate its beauty."

"What is beauty?" questioned the man from the jungle with curiosity.

"Beauty is you looking at one thing and having many nice thoughts in your head," she tried to explain.

When they arrived at the market square many people were looking at them. The man from the jungle was carrying the letter W in his hands and the locals were curious about it. A woman with a green hat approached the man from the jungle and tried to touch the letter W. The man from the jungle smiled gently and offered it to her.

Then he walked into the square and placed the letter W in the centre. He looked around and there were about twenty people looking at him.

He sat on the floor and said, "I found this letter W in the jungle. It's b-b-beautiful," and he looked to the woman with the red hat who had helped him. She nodded, assuring him that 'beautiful' was the right word,

"Does anyone know what this W means?" he continued.

"I think it means Waitrose," said a man with pink trousers.

"No, it can't be Waitrose!" said a man with blue trousers, "The letter from Waitrose is green and this W is red... It can't be!"

"You're right, it can't be," said the old man with pink trousers, "Well, then I don't know what it is, but it sure as hell is a beautiful W! I've seen many Ws around here but nothing like this! You don't remember when the letter L appeared in the market square? Of course not! I was just a little boy."

"What happened?" asked the man from the jungle.

"It was a cold, crisp morning and the town mayor had just arrived at the town hall. As he walked up the stairs from the building he saw the letter L on the ground. He was just astonished! He had seen many letters in his life; Bs, Cs, Fs, and even Zs - which are rare for this region - but an L? No way, he would ever have thought he'd live long enough to see an L. He decided to take the L inside and put it in his chest of drawers so that nobody could see it. He thought that if he kept the L it would live forever. But that only

happened to Ls from Levi's. Ls from Levi's are known for eternity and those, my fellows... those are rare. If you're a lucky man, you'll find one L from Levi's in your lifetime. However, the town hall mayor didn't realise that this wasn't an L from Levi's. This was, my friends, an L from Lehman Brothers."

"How didn't he see that?!" asked a lady with a yellow hat, surprised. "Lehman Brothers is grey and Levi's is red! That's pretty obvious!"

"You see, the mayor was colour blind, so he couldn't tell the difference between the two."

"So what happened next?" asked the man from the jungle, wanting to know more.

"Letters need people's admiration to live and keep their colours, and the letter L stayed too long in the drawer losing its colour. When the mayor saw that, he panicked and brought the letter to the market square with hopes that with everyone's eyes the letter would come back to life. Unfortunately it was too late and we lost the only L that we've ever had. The mayor, ashamed and dishonoured by his greed, disappeared that night and never came back."

That evening the old man with the pink trousers and the new mayor threw a party in honour of the letter W and the man from the jungle. Everyone came to the market square to shake hands with the man from the jungle and admire the letter W. The people from the region dressed up in their best suits and the whole market square was coloured with balloons and confetti. A band played popular music and people danced and cheered this new happening.

Obviously the police were still investigating and trying to figure out from which word the W came, but that would probably take time. The village hadn't had a letter case since many years ago and now was the time for celebration. Everyone was happy and enjoying themselves. At one point the old man with the pink trousers grabbed everyone's attention and said,

"My dear friends, I would like to say something regarding what happened here today. If we are cheering and celebrating now,

we owe it to one man," everyone applauded and the old man with the pink trousers continued, "Thank you! Thank you!" he made a gesture to silence the people, "This man," he said, pointing to the man from the jungle, "brought us joy today and we have to thank him for doing that!" everyone applauded and cheered again but now looking at the man from the jungle.

"But," he interrupted in a sad tone, "we also must say sorry because we never treated him well when he came to our village," he looked around and everyone lowered their heads with guilt and embarrassment. The old man with pink trousers continued his speech, "So, the mayor's proposal and also mine is," he looked at the mayor seeking one last approval, then cleared his throat and moved forward, "my proposal is that we offer him the house by the river so that he can live among us!"

There! He had said it. And looking at the man from the jungle he added,

"If he so wishes!"

Everybody cheered and danced effusively around the man from the jungle and the letter W.

Weeks later the police investigation showed that the letter W was from Woolworth's. Soon after an independent commission was formed and claimed that it wasn't from Woolworth's, but from Washington Mutual. This became a scandal because the police always had an excellent reputation for their investigations.

After some more thorough research the police concluded that in fact it was an M and not a W. Several months later, the investigation came to an end and the M was definitively proved to be from Merrill Lynch.

The man from the jungle left the village soon after the party. He decided to hunt Ls and for that he went to another region. Weeks after he left he was already forgotten.

The mayor decided to put a shrine to the M in the market square. People came from all different villages to worship it. Hundreds of thousands of people would walk through the jungle,

damaging it, just to see the M. The house by the river was sold to a travel agency which would bring even more people to the village.

The jungle lost its trees and the village became crowded and dirty. After a while the M lost its colour and got older with cracks on its plastic surface. Years later when the M finally died, all that was left were the remains of an empty market square.

The End

