

Perhaps the most unfortunate outcropping of this, our "gimmick" age, is the fact that we expect a bargain, a bonus, a "special offer". It is the modern standard of merit.

"What! Nothing free? No saving? Well then, why buy it?"

As a result, a product, to gain any recognition has to be "Nationally advertised", "unconditionally guaranteed" and, of course, acclaimed the most significant development since one or another of the greatest discoveries of mankind. Simple everyday items such as tooth paste and soap are accredited phenomenal, even magical, powers. They contain numerous "secret ingredients" each bearing a scientific, awe-inspiring name which is always "exclusive" to the particular company placing it on the market.

Let's take a long, evaluating look at this "gimmickery", this sensationalism, this institution of our day. Has it not become ridiculous? It has become so much a part of our everyday life, so widespread, that it is accepted. But, stop and look at it. Surely we aren't gullible enough to be taken in by all this nonsense! Why then, should sales promotion "gimmickery" and double talk be such an established feature of our day? Advertising is necessary, yes, and a great asset to our economy. Wouldn't it be refreshing to be relieved of this high pressure, inescapable brainwashing and to see advertising in it's proper place once again?

FRANK FOWLER, '63—

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## JUDAS

From the village to the far horizon the land was bare, burnt by the sun, smoldering with the violent passions of an unconquerable people. It was a country where men hated or loved savagely, where they had only three things in common: they venerated God and the saints, they respected their dead, they lived oppressed by the leaden heat of the sun beating down on their heads. Between the two factions of the population there was mutual dislike. But they did agree in their antipathy towards two people, Agustin and Maria.

Agustin was the town's blacksmith, a surly creature if there ever was one. He had a thick crop of black hair, eyebrows set in a straight bushy line across his face, a face eroded by decades of hardship and black eyes from which life had been washed away. The townspeople came to him only for his professional skill, or whenever they needed money. Today, under the appearance of poverty, Agustin concealed a small fortune, for he asked exorbitant interest rates and felt no qualms in bleeding his countrymen to the last penny.

When it came to Maria opinions were somewhat divided.

In years gone by, she has been strikingly beautiful. But, penniless and hungry, Maria had peddled her beauty to the highest bidder. Today, she walked the streets, a veil over her head, her eyes downcast. She was called "The Cat" by the fiercer tongues and simply "That Woman" by the more charitable ones. The men still called her Maria, and some even sought her favour, in a town where a man was stabbed for as much as looking at another's wife, where a woman was an outcast of her own sex if, like Maria, she lowered herself.

Maria stood in the deserted street watching Augustin strike the iron, following with her eyes his massive arm rhythmically swinging the hammer, slowly shaping the formless metal into something beautiful. She alone saw some good in Augustin. She could not say what, but it was there, hidden under the rough, cynical exterior of the man. Suddenly Augustin looked at Maria, his black eyes taking swift inventory of her, of her left hand that held her veil in place. His eyes were sunken but not enough to hide the cold acquisitive gleam that shone from the darkness.

"What are you doing there? Can't a man work in peace without the likes of you hovering around?"

Maria felt uneasy and started to move away.

"You. Come over here," yelled Augustin after her. "Well? Where is it? Hand it over," he added once Maria stood in front of him.

"I haven't got it. I can't pay you back yet."

"Good! I'll just get a better profit from you," Augustin became almost gentle. "In the meantime give me a kiss."

Maria shied away from him.

"Well! You getting squeamish now? I thought kissing men was your profession."

Maria turned her clear gaze at him, put her small hand on his cheek and walked away.

She walked quickly trying to draw away from the obscenity of Augustin's persistent gaze. Once around the corner she felt free and took her slow, selfeffacing stride.

She came to Jose's carpenter shop and took a childish pleasure in the pieces of wood and shavings on the floor. Jose would let her come in and amuse herself with the scraps of his work. Maria could sit on a stool handling the little blocks and looking at Jose, a gentle, unpretentious man, and be happy for a day.

"Jose!" she cried, "Jose, let me in. It's me, Maria!" She waited at the door expecting the thin-faced Jose to come and let her in. But all was quiet. Only the shavings rustling in the breeze that blew through the open window and the soft purr of the cat lying on the table broke the silence within.

Maria turned away. The afternoon was heavy with that oppressive heat that silences all noises. It rose in a solid haze from the parched earth.

The village slept till the sun had run its course and was descending in the west in a blaze of color and glory. A light, balmy breeze arose shedding some coolness over the land, ruffling Maria's veil.

The first dog appeared and followed her down the street until it saw Salome coming towards them. When the village woke, Salome was usually the first up and around, since she wanted also to be the first to gather any item of gossip.

"Body and soul!" shrieked Salome. "My day is ruined. You're worse than a black cat for luck and just as low."

Maria said nothing. The words had the effect of a red hot shaft, but she was used to them . . . and then she was not alone. The dog had joined her again.

She descended the street that coiled around the whitewashed houses, plunged down a small hill, and finally brought her to the deserted piazza in the center of which stood a great stage. And, on the stage, a man she recognized as Pascual, the local barber, sometimes surgeon and, once a year, stage manager, producer, director, and actor. He was, perhaps, the best "St. Peter" the town had seen in many a year. His was a face full of frankness, seasoned by years of labour, now fringed with white.

"Pascual, I must see you. It's important."

Pascual took a quick look around. To be seen speaking with Maria was not safe, especially with a gossip like Salome in the town.

"What do you want"?

"It is Jose," she said.

"Well"?

"I'm afraid he can't come. He is sick."

Pascual felt a chill sweat in the palm of his hands. "How do you know?" He inquired.

"You know I go to his shop to watch him work," she explained. "Well, today I went and called. There was no answer, and then, there is the cat . . ."

"What about the cat?"

"It always hangs around Jose, even at night. But he does not like it to be in the room if he is sick and so he closes the door."

Pascual was silent. He scratched his head, completely at a loss what to do or think.

"Do you realize what you have said?" he asked her.

"Yes, I do. But you have not to worry. If Jose can't do it, Agustin can". Maria had spoken quickly, unabashedly, trying not to let the words sink too suddenly into Pascual's simple mind.

She looked at him with clear, unwavering eyes that plainly said she was speaking the truth.

"He knows the lines," she continued, "He always wanted the part, so . . . Trouble is, who will be Judas?"

"That's the least of my worries," cried Pascual, by now complete master of the situation.

Running back to the blacksmith's shop, Maria collided with Salome.

"Jose is sick," she panted, "Agustin will be . . . Jesus."

Salome stared at her still running up the hill. This was news and no one could spread it better than Salome! She would give that old miscreant Pascual a piece of her mind for choosing that vassal of Satan, Agustin, for such an exalted role. First she had to take time off to be thoroughly shocked and to work herself into a holy rage. This done, she marched off to the piazza and Pascual, filling up her ranks with outraged women on the way, and preparing an attack en masse on the unfortunate man who, blissfully ignorant of the impending assault, was putting the finishing touches to the stage.

Meanwhile, when Agustin received the news of his being chosen for the part he knew he was faced with a situation almost impossible to cope with. He was rough, cynical, uncouth in his manners. Now he had to make a decision, change his personality even, and that was not to his liking. He did not have the confidence Maria had in him.

"They want me?" he asked.

"Yes, Don Agustin. I told them you knew the lines."

"You did, did you?"

"You do know them?" she inquired nervously.

Augustine nodded.

"Tonight we will practice, Don Agustin, for tomorrow is Good Friday. We perform tomorrow for the village and after we will go to Mass. You too."

From a distance came the staccato beat of tramping shoes accompanied by shouts. Agustin and Maria clearly made out the characteristic sway of Salome's gait. She walked at the head of the women of the village, her thin lips set in a bitter curve below a pinched bony nose that twitched violently whenever she inhaled. Beside her ran Pascual gesticulating and crying out in a vain endeavor to pacify the irate lady.

"He must do it . . ."

"Bah! I'd rather do it myself than let that renegade Judas defile the figure of Christ!" she raged.

"Salome, he knows the lines," pleaded Pascual.

"Pascual, you're a fine barber and a good actor," she began in an ominously mild tone. "Besides that you're an ass. You don't know people. I DO!" she thundered, "and this . . . this . . . well, he shouldn't be seen with decent folk, let alone play Jesus."

Pascual's temper snapped.

"Salome!" he cried, grabbing her by the arm, his voice trembling. "This is my affair. Get away from here and take your mercenaries with you."

Salome wheeled at him, her face contorted in an ugly grimace, the veins in her neck swollen to a dark purple.

"Damn you, Pascual!" she spit out. "A curse on your head to allow this vassal of Satan to play Jesus."

She drove the staff she had in her hand into the ground and tramped away in a flurry of black lace, dishevelled hair and imprecations.

There was a long heavy pause. Maria, who had retreated to a corner of the forge, during Salome's outburst, emerged slowly, very pale and trembling. Agustin scowled at the departing woman. Pascual shifted from one foot to another trying to calm his nerves. He coughed uneasily.

"Agustin, I hope what Salome said does not influence you."

The blacksmith looked hard at Pascual, his thin lips parted just enough to let the words slip out.

"Pascual, she is right. You are an ass. True, I want the part. But now . . ." A thin line stretched across his mouth. It took Pascual some time to realize that this singular grimace was meant for a smile.

Maria lunged forward, tears running down her cheeks. He had refused.

Agustin lumbered vaguely into the house like a man not fully aware of what his last words meant.

"The play is lost," moaned Pascual. "For the first time in twenty years there will be no play."

A gentle wind swished through the trees. A lonely man stood in front of a dark stage, thinking.

"Tomorrow it will be empty. Empty." His voice sounded strange, choked by sobs. "Empty."

A light tap on the shoulder made him turn abruptly.

"Agustin, is it you?"

"Pascual," said a man's voice, "I will be here tomorrow."

Agustin turned and disappeared among the shadows while Pascual felt a wave of exhilaration run through his veins.

"Tomorrow you will come to life," he exclaimed to the stage, "Tomorrow. On Good Friday."

## II

Preparations for the play were not carried out with the usual deference manifested by the actors towards the principal player. Agustin was helped into his long flowing robe and made up to look as close as possible to their conception of Jesus. The small beard was already there. The eyes, Agustin's cold hard eyes, were accentuated by a more disturbing expression than before. Agustin himself was uneasy, and kept walking back and forth like a caged lion.

"Go now," said Maria's voice behind him.

Agustin stepped on the stage and was at first dazzled by the lights. He sensed a feeling of hostility in the audience.

"Go," whispered Maria from the wings, "Your first words are, **"Blessed are the poor in spirit . . ."**

Agustin sat on the small elevation in the center of the stage.

**"Blessed are the peace makers . . ."** He turned to Pascual and for the first time the words had meaning to him. **"Blessed are you, when men revile you, and persecute you, and speak all manner of evil against you . . ."** He stopped. He thought of Maria. He thought of Salome, of the way she had spoken the previous day.

Agustin took an exceedingly long time to finish. He spoke with his eyes staring ahead of him, expressionless, vacant.

The rest of the play went on smoothly. There were no mishaps. But it did not move the audience. Something was missing, something essential, something that would stir the people to attention, assault their imagination. The play was nearing its end and that "something" had not appeared.



Maria watched Agustin from the wings. He was playing the part in a coldly mechanical way, not impassioned like Jose. He lay outstretched on the couch, his feet hanging out. She watched, lost in thought, oblivious of everything until somebody pushed her onto the platform.

"Maria! Pay attention! You go on now."

Maria picked up a jar, set it on her right shoulder, and moved towards the couch. Once there she knelt and performed her ritual of cleansing. There was a commotion on the other couches, as the script demanded, a lot of shocked expressions, exclamations of disapproval.

"Simon, I have a word for thy hearing," said Agustin.

"Tell it me, Master". answered the actor playing Simon.

"There was a creditor who had two debtors; one owed him five hundred pieces of silver, the other fifty; they had no means of paying him, and he gave them both their discharge. And now tell me, which of them loves him the most"

"I suppose that it is the one who had the greater debt discharged," answered the actor, unaware of the impression that the words just spoken by Agustin had made on the smith's mind.

He turned towards Maria and for a few moments was silent.

"Great sins have been forgiven her for she has great love"

Agustin bent over Maria. His eyes suddenly blazed to life. They shone with intense emotion.

"Maria", he whispered, "Maria."

He placed his hand on her head very gently.

"Maria, forget your debt to me. Forget the money. I also have found my heart today."

Maria looked up, her eyes riveted on the smiling face of Agustin. It was the first time she had seen him smile.

"Forget, Maria," he repeated.

"Yes, I will forget, but I will remember you Agustin."

She rose quietly and left the stage, her hands over her face, her body shaking with sobs.

A wind of emotion swept over the audience. Near the end of the play that "something" had taken place electrifying the villagers into rapt attention. One of the women nodded vigorously.

"Who said Agustin was fit only to shoe horses?"

"I did," hissed another behind her.

"Then you are a liar and a blind one at that. Just you look there," she motioned to the stage where Agustin was magestically disappearing into the wings.

### III

It was a strange Jesus that the villagers were seeing. On the cross was not a man such as popular piety pictures the Saviour. Agustin was a huge man. His outstretched arms seemed almost as thick as the arms of the cross, his legs, like two doric pillars, stood hard against the wood. His chest heaved at each breath. He was a man to admire and to fear. Up there on the cross his whole body breathed forth the herculean strength that was in him.

"My God, my God, Why Hast Thou forsaken Me?"

His voice thundered through the night like the bellowing of a wounded bull.

Agustin bowed his head. He closed his eyes and then, suddenly, he snapped to agonized attention.

"Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit!"

A peal of thunder crashed and re-echoed through the valley and hills filling the air with a rolling torrent of sound. A flash of lightning seared the night, ripping the darkness.

It was all over now. The curtain hid from view this new Christ upon the cross. A woman wept softly in a dark corner.

—RICHARD PATTEE, 60

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### THE STRANGER

"That's strange", rumbled Dr. Strombast, the Sultan's late. Oh yass, he's bringing some young fellow that impressed him . . . Oh well". With this, our very distinguished physicist dismissed Dr. Ali Makeesh, the leading mathematician of our time—and of course our visitor. I must admit though, that I was curious; Makeesh was kindness personified, but he did not impress easily.

We were waiting in the main room of the Roger Bacon Club, just off the grounds of the Institute. There was Strombast, enthroned in his easy chair; beside him sat Prof. Clark, a great man, both in and out of biology. Across the fireplace from Clark sat Jenkins, small and intense. He had no formal scientific training, but he knew more about the inner structure and activity of atoms than anyone. There were two other scientists, Clement, the volatile French psychologist, and another man whom I later learned is an astronomer. I am a journalist, but I studied for a Masters at the feet of Dr. Makeesh, and we kept up the connection.