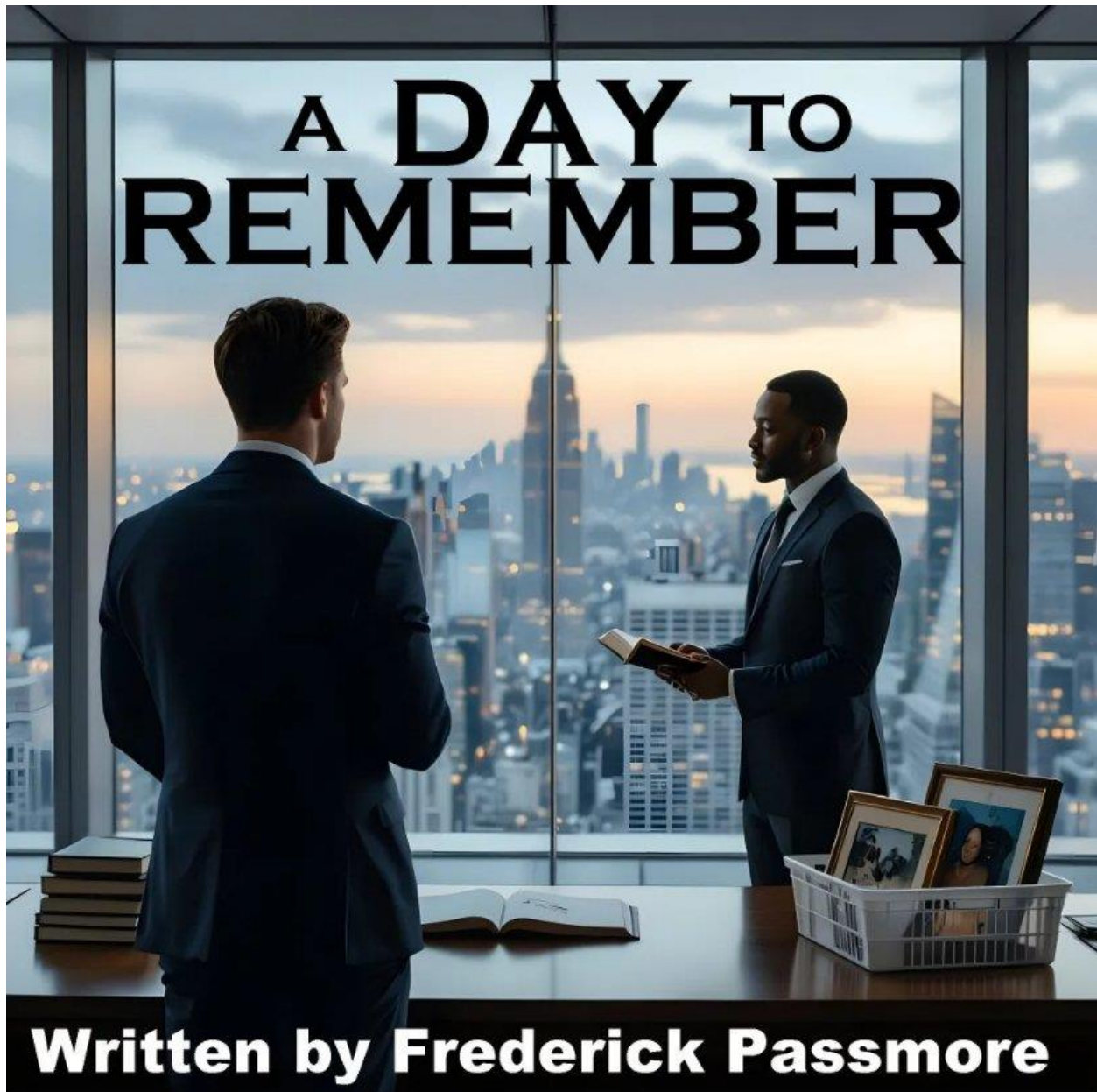




A Day To Remember

A Short Story

by Fred Passmore

Adapted from the original sketch, copyright 2002

The two men stepped into the office together, both in dark business suits, both carrying black vinyl folders. Morning light poured through the tall windows of the high-rise and washed across the skyline far below. Mike let his folder drop onto the desk with a dull slap. He did not sit. He walked to the glass and stood looking out over the city as if he might never see it from this height again.

Jeff settled into the guest chair beside the desk and waited, watching him with an easy, expectant air. After a moment, Mike spoke.

“You know, when I came in today, I never dreamed this would be the last time I’d be standing here, looking out this window over the city.”

“Hey, man, I’m sorry about the way it turned out in there,” Jeff said. “I had no idea what would happen in that meeting.”

“Oh, really?” Mike turned from the glass, the doubt plain in his voice. Jeff rose and came to stand beside him at the window.

“I find that hard to believe.”

“That I’m sorry, or that I had no idea?”

“Both.”

Jeff put on a wounded look and laid a hand over his heart as if the words had actually stung him. “You cut me, man.” Then the hand dropped, and the grin came back.

Mike moved to the desk, reached underneath it, and drew out a stackable plastic crate. He set it on the blotter with a quiet finality.

“I had the distinct impression that everyone there was just waiting for me to object to the nature of the campaign.”

“Which you did. That’s why I didn’t tell you earlier. I knew you’d never go with an ad like that, but I gambled that once I pitched it, they’d love it. And they did!”

“And I look like a relic that *not* only doesn’t know what his department is doing, but an uptight moralist out of touch with the times.”

Jeff spread his hands. “You are.” A sharp look from Mike made him try to soften it. “Look, Mike, everyone here respects your stand, and your talent, but with the sales drop caused by your ‘family friendly’ approach, you became a liability. You were gone before you ever went into that meeting this morning. You were the only one that didn’t know it.”

“I’m sure that you’ll fit their needs quite nicely, now that you’re the new head of marketing and ad development.” Mike began taking items from the desk and placing them into the crate, slowly, as if each object carried a piece of the years he had spent in that room. “And I’m clearing out my desk, while a security man waits outside the door to escort me out of the building.”

“Hey, I don’t want you leaving with hard feelings. I didn’t engineer this turn of events. Nature just took its course. You know, the survival of the fittest.”

“Which is another way of saying I’m a dinosaur.”

Jeff shrugged. “Well... look at the bright side, one day you’ll be a rich oil source!” He dropped into the chair behind the desk that was now his, leaned back, and put his feet up on the edge.

Mike’s voice lightened a little. “Believe it or not, I am looking on the bright side. It’s for the best, really. I know they’ll be happier with you. I hated having to constantly weigh my convictions against the need for an advertising edge. This is a relief, in a way.” He lifted a framed photograph of his wife and children, looked at it with a quiet, affectionate stillness, and set it carefully into the crate.

Jeff took his feet down and leaned forward, the easy grin gone, replaced by something closer to disdain. “I don’t believe it. Here you are, fresh out of a job with a wife and two kids to support, and you’re acting like you’re happy about it. You’re not for real, man.”

“I didn’t say I was happy about it. But even though I’m out of work, I’m not out of God’s will. He has a reason for even this. I don’t know what it is just yet, but I trust Him to work it out for my good and His glory.”

Jeff shook his head. “You are such a piece of work. You’d deny reality itself to justify this so-called faith of yours.”

“I don’t deny reality. And I don’t have to justify anything. But reality is what God makes it, and He’ll justify me when it’s all over and the dust settles. My vision is higher than what seems to be a disaster right now. I’m looking beyond it to see the ultimate destiny God has planned for me.”

Jeff stood. He planted his hands on the desk and leaned toward Mike. “Sorry to burst your bubble, but the truth is, your faith cost you this position by preventing you from doing what was necessary to stay on top of the heap. A lot of good it’s done you.” He stepped back and spread his arms to take in himself, the office, the whole sudden change of fortune. “Look at me. Here I am, a self-admitted party animal, I’m juggling three women, I don’t even believe in God, and I’m doing better than you! You got fired and I got your position and a hefty raise to boot. If there is a God he doesn’t care about the little stuff you obsess over. He doesn’t even care about the big stuff! If he did, why does bad stuff happen to good people all the time?” He snatched a newspaper from the desk, snapped it open, and held it up like evidence. “This tells me there’s no God.”

Mike opened a drawer and drew out a Bible. He looked at it a moment before he answered. “And you’ll throw that away at the end of the day. This, on the other hand,” he said, holding the Book up, “has outlasted all its critics and will last forever. This tells me there is a God, and that He cares for His creation. He has a plan, a wonderful plan, and I’m part of it.”

“Good for you. I want no part of it. I have my own plans, and tonight I plan to par-ty!” Jeff danced a few loose, triumphant steps across the carpet.

Mike set a last item into the crate. “Jeff, I may never get another chance to tell you this. Bad things can happen to good people the same as everyone else. But those who know Christ have someone to turn to, someone that cares, when they do. You don’t know what tomorrow may bring. You don’t even have a guarantee of finishing this day out alive. The Bible says, ‘Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. Now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation.’ Accept Christ into your heart, like I have... and you’ll be prepared for whatever comes your way, good or seemingly bad.”

“Ain’t nothing coming my way but good times.”

Mike walked around the desk with the crate under one arm and stood in front of Jeff. “I’m truly happy for you, Jeff. But I’d be happier if I knew that you were going to Heaven.”

Jeff stood as well and faced him. “That sounds like a threat.”

“Not at all. Jeff, when your world comes crashing down, you’ve got to have a foundation that is eternal. Sooner or later everything we are, and have done, is going to be tested by fire. Is what you’re doing with your life every day, something you’ll be proud of when you stand before the Lord?”

Jeff turned away, as if to hide the discomfort that had come into his face. He walked to the window and looked out over the bright morning city. “I admit I’ve done things that I’m not proud of. We all have. But I’m not a bad guy. I’m just like most everybody else I know, trying to make it in a world that has it out for you. God, if he does exist, must understand that. He’ll take it into account. I can’t believe I’m going to hell the same as Hitler or somebody like that.”

Mike stood a little behind him and to the side, watching the other man’s reflection in the glass. “You don’t have to go anywhere. Sometimes hell comes right up behind you, out of the blue, and swallows you down without warning. Anyone living without God and His guidance is fair prey. No-one is safe, anywhere.”

Jeff was silent for a moment. Then he said, “Look at the city out there. It’s a beautiful morning. I’m having a great day, and nothing you can say can ruin it for me.” He turned back. “Go home to your wife, Mike, and try to explain to her why you’re home early. Maybe God will help you. I’ve

got a lot to do as the new head of marketing. And I've got plans to make for tonight." He held out his hand. "Goodbye. Thanks for the sermon."

Mike took the offered hand with open regret. Then he walked out the door with the crate under his arm, leaving the office that had been his.

The moment he was gone, Jeff looked around the room and smiled. "And thanks especially for this beautiful office!"

He went to the desk, picked up the phone, and punched in a number, grinning as it rang.

"Hey, Shonda, it's Jeff."

He listened, nodding.

"Good. How are things way down there on the 85th floor?"

Another pause. His grin widened.

"Fantastic! Listen to this news flash... you are now talking to the new head of the Big Apple Electronics Marketing and Advertising."

"Yes!"

"Thanks! Yeah, it worked out just like I planned."

He listened again, already tasting the evening. "Well, the first thing I'm doing is getting together with some friends to celebrate after work. Want to join us? My treat."

"Great! Let's meet downstairs at the North Tower Lounge in the lobby at 5:15. After that, who knows where we'll end up?" He glanced at his watch, still smiling. "Look, I've got a meeting with the department heads in a few minutes. Word of my promotion is already spreading like wildfire through the Trade Center."

"Okay, see you this evening."

He hung up and clapped his hands together once, sharp with glee. "Yes, Jeff old boy, September 11th, 2001 is definitely going to be a day to remember!"

He looked around the office one last time and grinned. Then he walked out, leaving the morning light on the empty desk, the newspaper, and the city shining far below.

— *The End* —

Author's Theme

You can't judge a situation on the face of it by the obvious results. Only by having faith in the Lord and a relationship with Him can we be certain that all things will work together for our good. Any elevation or victory of an unbeliever over the believer is temporary at best, and will not profit them for long, as the Lord will justify His children and show the ultimate end of those who refuse to listen.

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Adapted from the original ministry sketch of the same title.