

## BRONX JUSTICE

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By James Collins

Wow! Today they assigned me to sell hot dogs. This is a chance to make some real money. As a 17-year-old Hustler, working Yankee Stadium I had just graduated from carrying peanuts or a 40-pound tank of soda, to the enviable job of hot dog vendor. I was dressed in my all white uniform with the white kepi hat making me look like a French foreign Legion escapee. I now had a 4-foot wicker basket containing a small metal casing with three dozen hot dogs in boiling water and the sides of the basket overflowing with buns. A small jug of mustard was in the corner. Hot dogs sold for \$.75 apiece and with 11% commission, you made about four dollars for every tray you sold.

Today the boss told me to sell in the mezzanine but the home office was down on the ground floor. This meant that with a tray of hot dogs I had to go out of the office, run 40 yards to the ramp, and then run up the ramp to the mezzanine. This is the seating area above the lower box seats. Off the upper level of the ramp at regular intervals were small ramps, which took the spectators out to their seats in the mezzanine area. My strategy was simple. The tray weighed about 30 pounds and you wanted to work with it on the ground. To maximize your sales you went to an area where two lanes crossed so that people can reach you from different directions and you did not have to move. This was where I headed. It was the second inning of the game and the majority of the people were in their seats. The ramp was empty and I was running.

I could hear a deep booming voice hollering up ahead of me.

“Give it back! Give it back! Give it back to me! Give it to me now!”

As I rounded a turn in the ramp, I could see ahead and the loud demands were coming from a massive individual. This man looked like a gorilla. He was at least 6’4” tall and weighed in excess of 300 pounds. There was no fat on this man. The muscles of his arms and his chest bulged beneath his shirt and it appeared that he had no neck. First, I thought he was a wrestler, then a fireman, then a longshoreman, maybe a bodybuilder. However, these were all passing thoughts, the final impression was just like the first. This man was big. He was strong. He radiated energy and anger. His face was bright red with his exertion and his yelling. He was mad! His back was to me and he was still hollering his demand.

“Give it back! Give it back to me now!”

Then I noticed his right arm extended out over the box seats while his left arm held on to the vertical metal girder for balance. In his right hand, he held the lapels and shirtfront of both a jacket and shirt belonging to a small man. The small man was inside

**the shirt and jacket and dangling over the box seats 25 feet below. He was terrified. He was screaming. He was crying. At the same time, he was flailing his arms and legs trying to grab onto anything. However, he was at least four feet away from the structure flailing about in the air while all the people below were looking, pointing, laughing, and screaming.**

**The gorilla was shaking the man hanging off the end of his massive arm. He was not gentle. He was forceful and vigorous. The victim stopped flailing, grabbed onto the massive arm, and tried to get into a fetal position. Now the gorilla was shaking a blubbing blob on the end of his arm.**

**I heard racing feet pounding on the ramp coming up behind me. I turned just in time to spot two rent-a-cops, one slightly behind the other, racing to the scene of the commotion. Twenty feet behind me the first cop spotted the situation and yelled,**

**“Oh my God! Forget about this. Let’s get out of here.”**

**Without missing a beat, the first cop made a U-turn followed by his partner. They increased their speed as they ran down the ramp to safety.**

**The blob on the end of the arm now started screaming and blubbing at the same time.**

**“Stop! Stop! Stop! Please stop! I’ll give you what you want. Put me down so I can get it out of my pocket.”**

**With that, the gorilla stopped shaking the blob. He pulled them in from the space of the occupied over the mezzanine and stood him on the ramp. The blob had wet himself. The stain and the smell were overpowering. He reached into his side pocket and withdrew a brown wallet, which he handed to the gorilla.**

**“You should not have picked my pocket. Never do that again.”**

**The gorilla seized the little man again and slammed his head off a concrete wall. The small man crumpled and lay on the ground. The gorilla put his wallet back in his pocket turned around and walked down the ramp. I picked up my hot dog basket and resumed my working day. Street justice in the Bronx triumphed. There was no arrest, no imprisonment, no long court case, no lawyers, just swift justice.**

**The pickpocket should have paid attention to the old Irish proverb. If you take the wrong hat from a meeting, make sure it does not belong to a big man**

**THE END**

