

A fine day in 1929

By Adam T. Samson

Robert lay asleep, hidden under his warm goose-feather blanket. The beams of sunshine are just beginning to bleed through the plush white drapes. The grandfather clock rang six times. He woke from his deep sleep and opened the drapes in the bedroom, as he did every morning. It was a beautiful October morning. He looked down at central park: people of all ages were out walking happily in the park. His penthouse apartment atop the esteemed sigma building on Park Avenue and 55th street smelt of greasy bacon, and fresh baked bread. The only sound was the soft medley of scalding oil.

Robert proceeded to the bathroom to prepare for the day ahead. The bathroom was not large, but very well furnished. He took his green toothbrush out from a drawer under the brown marble counter and brushed his teeth. Then he showered under his shiny gold gilded shower nozzle. After drying himself off he put on his standard work clothing: a perfectly pressed, single-breasted Hart-Schaffner Marx suit. A mist of his favorite Truefitt & Hill cologne and he's off to breakfast.

His servant, Logan, has put breakfast along with *The Wall Street Journal* out on the table. Today Logan made a delightful version of eggs benedict. Thick, smoky pieces of Canadian bacon and a poached egg sit atop a spongy, homemade crumpet. The entire concoction is smothered in creamy hollandaise sauce and some chopped chive is sprinkled on top. "Simply Serendipitous" Robert exclaimed as he bit into the creation.

Robert sat back in his chair and began reading the newspaper. "Is it already the 28th?" he inquired. "Yes, in fact, I think Hoover is supposed to make a speech today" Logan quickly replied. Logan picked up Robert's shiny, white porcelain plate, which

was now devoid of food. Robert stood up and put his favorite trench coat on. Robert is a tall, lean man with big bright eyes. He is in his early thirties.

Robert walked into the elevator with plush red carpet, and fantastic paintings on the walls. Once Robert stepped into the gorgeous foyer of the building Robert greeted the door-man and requested a taxi. The door-man, a man in his mid-forties was dressed in an elegant tuxedo, and had a white leather glove on his hand. His *hailing* style was both elegant and artistic. A taxi stopped within seconds – because of his outstanding performance Robert tossed a sparkly nickel his way. Robert entered the bright yellow taxi: the air was warm and dry, and the seats were of soft leather.

“New York Stock Exchange, Sir” Robert proudly exclaimed.

“You work at the exchange?” the cab driver asked in a heavy accent.

“Yes, I do – I’m a specialist for a premier stock firm. Why do you ask?” Robert said smugly but awkwardly.

“Is everything ok down there? Thursday was a scary day.” The cabby asked in an interrogative style.

“It was merely a minor correction. Thanks to the foresight of Mr. Whitney everything has stabilized; in fact, the market was up on Friday.” Robert defensively responded.

For the rest of the ride the only sound was the scratchy roar of the engine, the sound of people on the street, and the incessant racket of New York traffic. The cabby brought the cab to a halt in front of the New York Stock Exchange; Robert paid the exorbitant price and gave the cabby a very skimpy tip. “I’m not going to let a bad cab ride spoil a perfectly nice morning” he thought to himself.

He walked under the giant grey granite façade and entered the labyrinth that is the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. And he took his seat at his moderately sized mahogany trading desk. Something was wrong, terribly wrong. He had a peculiarly high number of *market open* sell orders. In fact, the pile was as large as Robert had ever seen it. The specialists around him looked dreadfully nervous. They're faces pink and sweaty, their eyes blank and their bodies quivering. They all silently hoped that someone would step in and fix things like they did Thursday.

As the bell rang Robert began executing his sell orders. He searched far and wide for buyers, none were in sight. He attempted to sell his share at far lower than market value. He couldn't even figure out what market value was, the trading volume hit unprecedented levels and the ticker was seriously far behind. Robert had to take wild guesses to sell the little chunks of share he could. The floor had turned into total chaos. It was like being locked in a slaughter house: everyone knew their destruction was inevitable.

Robert's friend Philip pulled him aside. Phil was a middle aged, portly gentleman; his face was pale as chalk. He held a fairly high level within the JP Morgan Company. There was a rumor spreading that the banking giant held a meeting much like he did on Thursday. Phil softly said "they can't fix it this time." Simultaneously the bell rang.

Robert stood inanimately for two and a half hours waiting for the ticker to catch up. He stared blankly at the ticker, and listened to its cacophonous tune. When the loss report came out, he sat, and cried. The losses of the day were the most significant in the history of the stock exchange. He walked home to his beloved apartment. He looked

through his window: the park was empty. The streets were filled with grown men who were silently weeping. Robert knew very well they lost nearly everything; he sighed and thought “what they don’t know is the worst is yet to come.”