

The Architect

(A Short Story by T. U.-P.)

At the annual Moorsted Architectural Design Gala, two members of the prestigious Anchor-Smythe Design Firm wait anxiously for one of the keynote award recipients from their firm to arrive.

“I called Tommy at least ten times and I’m not getting any responses. Something really bad must have happened.” Lead architect Antoine Smythe says to a firm associate.

“He’s due to speak in about ten minutes! There’s nothing that would ever get in the way of receiving this award to Thomas. He said to me two weeks back that he was really looking forward to finally being awarded a bronze pillar for lifetime achievement.” The young drafting technician says to his superior.

“He told me he was planning to make a pitch for the Derwent campus commission in his speech. That commission means everything to our firm this fall when the contest closes for the big revitalization and re-design.” Antoine Smythe adds.

“The clock is ticking... We may have to go up there and make an impromptu address on his behalf... It would be a real shame if he misses that chance to finally be awarded that trophy... A lot of people at this gala were counting on him being here in person.”

Ten minutes later, the host of the gala steps up to the mic to introduce the award winner for design innovation and sustainability.

“Let’s cut to the chase... It is my great honour to introduce our much deserving annual winner of the Bronze Pillar Award for lifetime achievement... Without any further ado, ladies and gents... One of our own locals of Moorsted... Mr. Thomas Anchor of the Anchor-Smythe Design Firm!”

After a lengthy and raucous applause, the room suddenly falls silent with folks looking at the tables for the missing award recipient. Awkwardly, Antoine Smythe gets out of his seat and walks over to the centre aisle to access the stage and podium.

“My apologies... My dear colleague Thomas Anchor was not able to be here in person to receive this incredible lifetime achievement award. I, Antoine Smythe of Anchor-Smythe will accept this on his behalf...”

After improvising in his short address, the other lead architect is handed the Bronze Pillar, raising it in the air to a slightly disappointed crowd of attendees, clapping politely as he leaves the podium.

The following workday, confusion and disarray prevail in the Anchor-Smythe office with Thomas Anchor now reported missing by his wife and family.

“We may lose the Derwent commission to one of our rivals. It seemed like the deal was in the bag the way that the gala awards were set up this year. We still need the last few

elevation drawings from Thomas, along with the 3D rendering he said he was toiling to get just right for the contest.” Thomas’ partner says to his group of technicians.

Three weeks later, without any key design content from Thomas Anchor, the firm submits their design proposal for a small section the twelve-hundred acre campus. Instead of getting a call back confirming the winning entry for the contest, Derwent opted to award the commission to the up-and-coming Forest & Twain firm. Feeling dejected about losing to a new rival, Antoine Smythe calls a late-night meeting for his design staff.

“So you all heard the news... Without Thomas on our team, we lost the commission to Forest & Twain... I made an appeal to Derwent explaining that we may have to look for a new key partner in our firm to replace Thomas, given the mysterious circumstances of his disappearance.” Antoine Smythe says to his design crew.

“We were so close to winning here. I was really looking forward to seeing Thomas’ rendering. He said that the site and the final design solution comes after studying it from every angle... No one has a 3D rendering quite like Thomas Anchor...” A drafting expert adds.

“I told Derwent that I was curious about the winning design... I also told them I could give them some feedback on the site that we’re still very much passionate about...” Antoine Smythe adds.

“Can you xerox their plan and elevation drawings back to me? I want to know what we were up against.” A female drafting technician asks.

“I’ll send these your way when I get access to them through Derwent. Forest & Twain didn’t really want to share their winning entry with us.” The lead architect answers.

A week later, after getting the architectural drawings from Derwent College, Antoine Smythe is baffled by some of the incredible design details drawn by the mysterious Egerton Forest. Perusing the details of the upper atrium of one of the student learning centres in the heart of the campus, Antoine Smythe flags a detail in the glass structures themselves.

“Check this out Arianna! Can you believe the clerestories in this elevation drawing! This seems like a trademark of the Tyndall Fellowship! Only Thomas Anchor draws clerestories like these! This could be plagiarism!”

“You think so? You know what I’m noticing? I can’t help but wonder if anyone other than Thomas can draw that signature honeycomb pattern in the dining hall area right over here.” She says pointing to a small area of one of the fine large sheets of precise drawings.

“That’s true as well! Dr. Tyndall would be rolling in his grave if he ever found out that one of his very best apprentices had gone missing with their very drafting details being copied by a rival firm!”

As Antoine Smythe and his small crew continued to study the winning entry for the Derwent campus commission, the scene shifts to the lower depths of a stark basement in a suburban part of the Greater Torino Area. Shackled to his chair with a large drafting table in front of him, Thomas Anchor defiantly has his concealed face resting in his arms after being pressured to work for several hours on a new large-scale public commission.

“Wake up, Mr. Forest! This drawing has to be done tomorrow, or else...” A tall and stocky man wearing a face covering says to the ailing architect in captivity.

“I’m not Egerton Forest! I’m Thomas Anchor! I demand to be released from this god-forsaken place!”

“Here are some of the topographical maps of the Torino Zoo site. Now get to work!”

Forced to work for another eight straight hours, the exhausted architect delivers his geodesic dome drawing of the private enclosure. Soon, one of his captors takes the valuable drafts of plan and elevation details and stamps it with the seal of the Forest & Twain firm.

“Get some sleep! I want your 3D rendering of inside the dome done by tomorrow at 1pm!” The same masked man hollers before walking up the eerie set of wooden steps.

Soon, the sleep-deprived architect nods off in his chair, wondering if anyone in Torino or anywhere else would ever make a connection between his disappearance and the sudden emergence and rise of Egerton Forest of the Forest & Twain firm.’

[The End]