

An Executive Decision

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I'm not going to lie. When I sat down to eat breakfast this morning, and had to make the impossible choice of whether to use the last dregs of milk for my coffee or my cereal, I was fairly confident that would be my most important decision of the day. I did not, in fact, expect to be the one holding the gun in a standoff between my boss and a clone assassin bent on killing him and assuming his identity. Let's just say today was a bit more interesting than usual.

The first 8 hours at work were the usual boring affair. Unfortunately, my boss had been on my case to finish the Westfield report by tomorrow, so I ended up staying late so I could finally get him off my back. The building was basically deserted by the time I got up to go deliver the report. I thought there was a decent chance Mr. Wallace would still be in, given that "working late" gave him the perfect excuse to laze around and avoid having to talk to his wife.

My hunch was confirmed when I saw that there was still light filtering through the frosted glass of his coveted corner office. I nearly dropped the report, however, when I heard a crash and a cry of pain from inside the room. At the time, my leading theory was that he'd had just a little too much from the bottle of Jack Daniels he kept so expertly hidden behind the stack of untouched books on his filing cabinet. As you've probably figured out by this point, this theory was not correct.

I walked into Mr Wallace's office, expecting to see him staggering about, the smell of whiskey on his breath. Instead, when I opened the door, I saw Mr Wallace wrestling with himself on the floor. I don't mean that he was flailing about on his own, or engaged in some sort of deep, metaphysical contemplation. On the floor in front of me, struggling desperately with one another, were two men who looked exactly like Frank Wallace, Executive Regional Director of Business Assets. This was, unsurprisingly, quite surprising.

I'm not 100% sure where the gun came from, or how it ended up in my hand. Presumably, it had been brought by the clone assassin, though it's possible Mr Wallace just so happened to practice his second amendment rights on a daily basis. As for what lead me to pick it up and level it at the scuffling Mr Wallaces, well, it just sort of seemed like the thing to do, given the situation. Plus, holding the gun put me securely on the list of people it would not be pointing at.

The Mr Wallaces eventually noticed that one of their subordinates had a pistol leveled at them, and put their frantic tussle on hold. "Henderson! Thank God you're here!" one of them exclaimed, "This lunatic just burst through my window and started trying to kill me! Shoot him, quick!" "Wait!" screamed the other Mr Wallace, "Don't listen to him, *he's* the clone assassin! He's trying to trick you!" I sighed. I could tell already that the Mr Wallaces weren't going to make this easy for me.

“Listen, Misters Wallace, this isn’t getting us anywhere,” I said. “Tell me something only the real Frank Wallace would know.” The two identical men turned to look at each other, brows furrowed in thought. “I was born at St. Leonard Hospital, at 4:32pm” said the one on the left. “Anyone could have looked that up!” countered the rightmost Wallace, “The real Frank Wallace would be able to tell you that my wife’s middle name is Petunia!” The left Wallace scoffed. “That proves nothing! For all I know, she’s in on this! Only the true Frank Wallace knows that I wet my pants in front of my entire third grade class when we were giving speeches!”

The Executive Regional Directors of Business Assets looked at each other embarrassed for a minute. I sighed again. This whole exchange probably would have been more useful if I’d actually cared enough about my boss’s life to bother learning any of these delightful tidbits of information before now. “Ok, let me revise my earlier statement,” I interrupted, “tell me something that only the real Frank Wallace, *and I*, would know. Last month, at my performance review, what was the reason you mentioned for the raise you gave me?”

The Mr Wallaces looked at each other again, clearly struggling to think back to that particular day. Finally the leftmost Wallace spoke up: “It was because of your hard work that helped land us the Charlesworth deal, right?” “Aha!” exclaimed the other Wallace, as his face lit up. “Well played Toby, the clone fell right into your trap! I didn’t give you a raise last month! Quick, now that you know which one of us is real, shoot the clone!”

I wasn’t entirely prepared for how loud the gunshot would be. It echoed through the deserted office as the unlucky Mr Wallace crumpled to the floor. I tossed the gun back to the remaining Mr Wallace, and gestured towards the body on the ground. “You’re cleaning that up.” I told him. He gave me a puzzled look. “Not gonna to lie, Henderson, I was pretty sure you were about to shoot me for a second there.” “Why?” I asked, “Just because you’re the clone?”

The clone looked even more puzzled. “Look, *Mr Wallace*,” I continued, making little air quotes with my fingers, “the real Frank Wallace’s been my boss for the last twelve years, and he couldn’t even remember my name. It’s Tony, Tony Henderson! Is that so hard to remember? I’ve been overworked and underappreciated by him for too damn long, so I figured I’d give someone else a chance to try being Frank Wallace.”

The new Mr Wallace shrugged. “Works for me, Tony. I trust you won’t go mentioning this to anyone, right?” I laughed. “Why, did you think I would tell people that I shot my boss, and that he’s been replaced by a clone? That’s ridiculous. Besides, why would I want to hurt Mr Wallace? He just gave me a 7% raise for all that hard work that I did, helping us land the Charlesworth deal.”

We both smiled. I was fairly confident that I’d handled that particular decision pretty well. Well, better than the milk crisis, at least.