



HOW WE SAVED MOTHER MILK

a story

by

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The listing on the Jobs board at School was "Market Control Department of the Mistville Star-Tribune." "Market Control" sounded formidable though the only stated requirements were a college degree and a car, but I applied, encouraged that my studies in English would surely be a leg up in newspaper work. In fact the Director seemed less interested in this than my suit and tie, which fortunately I always wore not only to weddings but also when looking for a job. Living in a suit and tie all day proved easier than I expected, and even easier after I bought a second suit and had the old one cleaned and pressed. Ties lost all terror once I learned the four-in-hand; I owned seven, all good as new except the one my father knotted before I went away to college.

It was exciting to be a newspaperman, drinking coffee in the cafeteria listening to reporters tell how the mayor was drunk again yesterday and a bank president sent his secretary to Mexico to have the baby, all the inside scoop laymen miss. I looked forward to transferring from

Market Control to the news side, a plan I confided to my fellow workers, a plan I learned had been theirs too, both being English majors, until they found one might more easily change armies during a battle. I soon saw for myself it was true, the news side had as little as possible to do with the advertising side. But when I looked into advertising I was surprised and confused to find advertising had as little as possible to do with Market Control. Indeed nothing at the Star-Tribune had anything whatsoever to do with Market Control except the two hundred copies of the Star-Tribune which began our day. One copy was for the Director, whom I rarely saw after he hired me except when he posted morning orders. Three were to fill up time until coffeebreak, headlines to ship news, last of all the crossword. After coffeebreak, we tore up all the Star-Tribunes and stuffed the pieces in envelopes which we carried to the mailroom. These were called tear sheets; as my more experienced coworkers told me, advertisers get a kick seeing their name in the paper, it makes neighbors and schoolaay chums sick with envy.

One of us went each morning on liaison duty to the National Advertising Department, which had much more on its mind than the Star-Tribune and therefore was in an office downtown, the Dark Tower as we English-major Controllers called it. The National office listed newspapers all over the country and had a teletype which sometimes went

dingalingling and made everybody jump. All that came through were jumbles like somebody back east had a seizure and fell on the keyboard--and I learned this was sometimes the case--but it tipped off Mistville there'd be a letter along in a couple days and they'd better start sweating.

Liaison was emptying the National box in the mailroom and driving downtown. Possibly some arrangement could have been made with the post office for direct delivery if it weren't for civil service; a smiling mailman calmly making appointed rounds would have been out of place amid ankledeep carpets, whispering secretaries, noiseless typewriters, acoustical mahogany panelling, and a live teletype that any second might go dingalingling from New York. We Controllers wore suits and ties and had college degrees and clean fingernails and respect, for though we were hidden away in the Star-Tribune next to the presses we didn't work for the paper, we worked for National. They were our bosses, all of them.

The Chief was no problem, he had too many of his own, five when I came and later six, all account executives. Two in particular he watched so closely, one eye to each, I doubt he ever focussed on a Market Controller, or knew except in a general way they existed, like wallabies. Nor was Number Two Exec a problem, only a puzzle: did his sharing Chief's private office mean anyone seriously



considered him heir apparent or was his function to drive away silence on those bad days when Chief was sitting with both hands atop his desk, holding it to the floor?

Aside from mumbling to himself all day long Number Two had <sup>these</sup> accounts no other exec wanted, which is to say none. Or rather, one. Shortly after I came to Market Control, with winter close behind, New York dingalinged a plot to increase the aspirin yield. Once a week we Controllers toured drugstores counting aspirin. A sharp drop in aspirin stock would mean people were catching cold and bang, the Star-Tribune would smear them with ads saying for heaven sake go buy more aspirin. Number Two couldn't sit still on aspirin day, he talked to himself out loud waiting to hear how people were feeling. It was a fine scheme, beneficial for aspirin, Star-Tribune and also people, but druggists were blind to the big picture, always sneaking in more stock or moving it around without telling us. Just once did it seem perfectly safe to push the epidemic button, the week we all three had colds, but with New Years on the weekend aspirin was full up. Number Two lost interest in Mistville disease, slowed to the old mumble, but never mumbled quit so we continued weekly aspirin reports, only we gave up touring drugstores, they confused the count.

Sunday Supplement Exec had, aside from Chief, the only private office and secretary. Sunday Supplement was very

big business, fully deserving special dignities, though it was in fact a sinecure, the entire package shipped intact from the east and except for one account entirely sold in the east. However, that one account was, and had been since the Great Fire, Mother Milk all over the entire back page in three colors. It was Mother Milk that opened the Mistville National office, the exec who signed Mother Milk became the first Chief of the Dark Tower.

Sunday Exec, who studied to be a Jesuit but found there wasn't enough money in it to support a family and entered the Dark Tower instead, was a man of keen intellect and immense energy, neither of which he spared. When I came he was, indeed, carrying the load of two ordinary execs. Something had happened to the Liquor Exec before any of us Controllers came. Nobody would talk about it, or even mention his name, much as primitive peoples avoid uttering names of the dead. The post had been empty for months, the duties voluntarily assumed by Sunday Exec.

In addition Sunday Exec spent every possible moment developing charts showing the Star-Tribune was the only paper anyone in Mistville read, the Second Paper -- which wasn't the name on the masthead, merely a statement of fact -- was used exclusively for starting fires and wrapping fish, except by students of the funny papers, who of course have no money, being children or under confinement. The larger circulation of the Second Paper was the predictable



effect of a damp climate and excellent fishing, Second Paper gave more pages for a nickel, and was in fact too heavy for any but athletes to conveniently carry. The bulge in advertising was exactly why smart money chose the Star-Tribune where ads could be seen. Anyway the Second Paper published in the evening when everybody is playing cards or watching TV or having a family row because it was such a stinking day. The Star-Tribune published in the morning when everybody is happy, wives because the old rummy and the brats are out of the house and now they can girdle up and go load the charge accounts with all those good things advertised in the Star-Tribune, husbands because the job will be a dirty drag by afternoon but the secretaries in the office and all those good things advertised in the Star-Tribune look great after gagging down cold eggs and black toast with old ugly across the table bitching about last night like 2 AM was the crack of dawn.

Sunday Exec was a man of broad vision, a student of Great Books, and well do I remember one of my early afternoons in Market Control, we Controllers at our adding machines grinding out raw material for charts, when Sunday, sensing our backs were aching and eyes blurring and fingertips pulsing and spirits failing, interrupted with a beautifully-phrased monologue on the long view of Market Control and life, how someday we would be execs in some Dark Tower of the world, guiding young Controllers in our path, and so on through the ages.



Sunday Exec was a man of deep humanity, dreaming of the day when the ape and tiger in mankind could be allowed to die; it was no fault of his each new red, white and blue chart drove Chief into his office, where he sat holding down his desk listening to Number Two mumble until until he felt well enough to chew out Appliance Exec.

Not that Appliance Exec had done anything wrong, he never did anything. He was a small, quivering wreck in a world of gorgeous women he dared not attack, so enervated by lust the wildest swing of a handbag would have laid him out cold. But Appliance Exec was not born to be pitied. Execs in a playful mood intercepted mats mailed from the east and put them straight through, his morning fit of shakes on finding an unexpected appliance ad started the Dark Tower day with a welcome chuckle. He tried to keep pace by requesting twice as many tear sheets as all the others together, requests instantly forgotten by both him and us. When time hung heavy we sent without explanation great stacks of entirely irrelevant ads, they upset him so, thinking he'd dropped the ball again and was nearing the final dingalingling.

Grocery Exec was very big at the Dark Tower. Not sharp like his predecessor Sunday, but big, so big Chief's stomach knotted at the sight or taste or smell of food, any food, or a food ad, and that's why his ulcer defied the best medical minds in Mistville. Grocery Exec enjoyed surprising Chief with new accounts he'd been pitching in secret for months, after which Number Two frequently took Chief home in a cab. Grocery

Exec was very big in Market Control too when I first came; the Director was a cousin or something of his wife and when Sunday was busy with Liquor we did little but Control Groceries.

We Controlled Groceries with Surveys and Promotions. On Surveys we asked the grocer what brand of dehydrated cabbage hearts sold best. Grocery took the Survey to Brand X and showed how Brand Y had a slight edge and Brand Z was coming fast but with the Market so delicately balanced one push would give X the whole smear. Brand X was slathering to blast Y and crush Z but wondered about Second Paper, whether it didn't get into a few homes. Grocery, a protege of Sunday, patiently explained publishing intricacies a layman couldn't be expected to know, how Second Paper merely cluttered up porches with wads of newsprint, not the same thing at all as Controlling the Market. And if Brand X was confused by the concept Grocery paraded Controllers in suits and ties and when Brand X eyes glazed Grocery said what a shame Y and Z were swindling Mistville with their lousy so-called cabbage hearts, with the right schedule he'd consider it a public service to send his troops into the crusade for free and Brand X forgot all about the Second Paper.

Then we went on Promotion to convince grocers they must immediately clog their aisles with mass displays of Brand X and cover their windows with Brand X banners and

and ship Y and Z back to the jobber. When we placed a banner, like say over a wall water-stained in last night's storm and the plasterers busy until tomorrow, we took a picture, including the grocer if he'd stand still, and smiling if possible, though it's no cinch finding a smiling grocer what with all the salesmen for Brand X, Y and Z and then Controllers of all things. Aside from burning down the supermarket across the street the only sure way, short of outright cash, for a salesman to get a smile from a grocer is bringing along the Regional Division Vice-President who wears a \$250 suit and means a free drink and maybe even a steak sandwich.

After Promotion, to trigger the renewal, came the Closeout, a handsome folio of expensive art paper sprayed and brushed by our Artist, crammed with tear sheets and also the letters and postcards we wrote warning grocers of the crowds about to come screaming for Brand X when the Star-Tribune hit the street, and any photographs we'd managed, with patience one could sometimes snap just as a grocer spotted a \$250 suit and it certainly didn't matter if it was Brand Y.

Sunday, when he was Grocery, revolutionized Market Control, eliminating the effort formerly wasted Controlling each Mistville grocer individually. As the map on our office wall clearly showed, the Mistville Market broke naturally into three parts, the North, South and East Controls,



one for each Controller, West could be conceded the Second Paper, being mostly salt water and ferryboat rides very expensive. The strategically-located, carefully-selected red pins were our Thermometers, the pivots of Mistville; in Control of Thermometers lay Control of the Market.

Controlling Thermometers demanded patience, tact and imagination for some grocers failed under strains of leadership and wouldn't talk to us. However, we did not fail or lose Control, despite the increasing pressure of those early days, Sunday frequently deep in Liquor, Grocery growing visibly bigger each passing week. Sometimes we went out with five or six Surveys and several Promotions, a very full day for even a single Thermometer, assuming we could have Controlled him completely, strapped in a chair and locked in a refrigerator beyond rescue by clerks and butchers and salesmen for Brand X, Y and Z. But as Sunday often said, our resources must grow with our responsibilities if we aspired to the Dark Tower, and we found his Thermometer principle could be extended; just as a hundred grocers looked to one Thermometer for leadership, so in each of our Controls there was one Thermometer of Thermometers conveniently located for picking up bread and baloney and beer on the way home for lunch, or in fine weather, a picnic in the woods.

It was the coming of TV that changed our way of life, as it did the entire newspaper industry. The Dark Tower had



the dingaling straight from Superchief that the parlor peepshow would not survive the long haul as an advertising medium. However, accounts were edgy from being trailed by the known criminals TV employed as salesmen, groceries in particular always spook at shadows and squeeks. On advice of a dingaling from New York the Dark Tower bought an afternoon half hour, and told its friends that until the novelty wore off and the big picture got back in focus they would be given free spots--they certainly weren't worth money--as a bonus for buying real advertising, printed on paper, and this merely one more service Second Paper was too cheap to offer.

Grocery, of course, thought it was a grand idea, he grew very big indeed, and we briefly were in such a fury of Control we could scarcely get into our office for another load of questionnaires and banners. But then arose the matter of expense. It pained the innermost soul of the Star-Tribune to buy TV time, even though it was a trade deal, no cash changed hands. But it cost actual money to tack together a kitchen and litter it with Star-Tribune groceries, and hire a pretty girl to ask "what are Brand X dehydrated cabbage hearts good for?" and the motherly type who said "Brand X dehydrated cabbage hearts make such crunchy fudge. Here, try some." and the pretty girl "Mmmm. that's very good, where can I buy Brand X dehydrated cabbage heart?" and motherly "Why you can buy Brand X dehydrated

cabbage hearts at any grocery store, try some tomorrow, only a few pennies a serving and also tangy with those crispy Brand X pickled sausage skins we like to put in Daddy's lunch pail these sunny spring days, another fine product advertised in the Mistville Star-Tribune," and pretty, "I certainly will pick up Brand X dehydrated cabbage hearts tomorrow and also those crispy Brand X pickled sausage skins which are advertised in the Mistville Star-Tribune, watch for a special free offer in tomorrow morning's Mistville Star-Tribune."

Expensive professional actresses like Motherly and Pretty ran the budget sky high but even if they could be talked down in price it wasn't worth taking the chance, not with the whole Brand X family so interested in the acting careers of Great Aunt Motherly and Cousin Pretty. It was Sunday who saved the Dark Tower from the fear of a dingaling, suggesting firing the announcer and having Grocery give the commercials, such a happy thought that Number Two had to take Chief home in a cab, hysterical. Grocery was in the same condition but Sunday expressed great confidence in his ability, saying he would doubtless find it a welcome change from constant Surveys and Pitches and Promotions and Closeouts. Sunday, in giving us this big picture, said we Controllers would doubtless be glad to have more time for charts, the foundation of all advertising.

For a fact, Surveys and Promotions fell off to nothing, Grocery hadn't the courage to face accounts, not even Brand X,

which thought the show was swell. There were the floor directors smirking when he stumbled over a hard word, cameramen whistling behind his back after the producer forced him to use makeup, and then the speech and grammar teacher treating him like a backward child. There Grocery was at the end of the program, all alone staring into the great eye that stared back, the large wheel slowly turning and as each product appeared Grocery said "folks, here's another great product," and squinted to see what it was and out behind the blinding lights someone was snickering, and he knew it was Mistville snickering. There was no escape. There was only one TV station in Mistville and few TV sets but around every one of the big new seven inch screens neighbors, relatives, friends, chance acquaintances, gathered in dark silence to watch test patterns or snow or Grocery or anything.

Not that Grocery considered himself ugly, perhaps he did lack Sunday's education and tailor but the girls back home liked him pretty well, there were some of those hayrides-- well, Grocery never finished about the hayrides, but the wink was enough. Once he got used to people staring at him on the street it wasn't so bad, it was actually pretty good, and when little kids began asking for his autograph and did he know Roy Rogers, he realized show business was in his blood, he had to wear colored shirts anyway because as he explained to everyone white looked grey on TV, there was



no reason he shouldn't wear checked suits and tan shoes and have a manicure with his haircut. In a few months Grocery was bigger than ever.

Grocery mastered TV, it was Liquor that became a problem. Sunday had been handling Liquor very well for over a year, spending a great deal of time at political party headquarters, the ins to see the local distributors, the outs to see those who would be the distributors if they won the next election, inasmuch as Mistville controls liquor through the democratic process. Chief was constantly proposing candidates for Liquor but none survived Sunday's interrogation. Liquor and its steady association with men in high places needed most careful handling, the wrong man could do great harm with Liquor. Thus argued Sunday, with allusions to old Liquor we Controllers did not understand, except in their effect on Dark Tower execs, the sudden blanching, the quick sidewise glancing into corners.

Whatever the rewards of Liquor, it was not Sunday's first love. There was the week he sent us a bundle of statistics to be ground up for a chart, he sent the bundle on Monday and called every day, and every day we were Controlling Groceries, and Sunday came to us on Friday, examined our Surveys and Promotions and Closeouts, visibly saddened thinking how many charts all this effort could



have produced.

The very next week there was a new Liquor Exec, and a dark horse candidate indeed, a former Controller who stopped by the Dark Tower on his way through town to say hello to Chief, whom he had known when he was Sunday, and Sunday, whom he had known when he was Grocery, and Auto, who had always been Auto, and Buggy before that. And no sooner had Liquor cleaned out the Surveys and Promotions and Closeouts Grocery had been storing on the unused desk than Sunday proposed, and Chief concurred, that Grocery was doing a marvelous job on TV, but was <sup>carrying too heavy a load</sup> /and should therefore turn over soft drinks to Liquor. Soft drinks required little time but constant vigilance, watching the news side smart alecs to see they didn't print anything about lawsuits over mice in bottles of Coca Cola. Sunday, showing around the Dark Tower the little billings chart he'd made in his spare time at home to give Liquor, as a new man, a sense of perspective, was careful to point out the precipice on the Grocery line did not actually represent lost business. Liquor told us about the chart, he was lonely and needed someone to talk to, but much of what he said made little sense to us, he spoke of hunters who did not finish their kills, how dangerous to an unarmed tourist a wounded lion could be, or even a wounded jackass, and there was a classical

allusion which as English majors we only partly understood, something about Janus.

Liquor staggered Grocery; Auto knocked him flat.

Auto was a mild old man who had seen Chiefs come and seen Chiefs go, almost since the Great Fire, and he remembered their faces less vividly than the hubcap on the 1921 Marmon. Auto sold nothing, New York and Detroit shipped the mats and his principal task was to check spelling of local distributors' names, a relatively easy matter since even auto distributors spell their names about the same one year as the next. However, one manufacturer had two separate and equal distributors who hated each other. Both had to run on the top line of the signature in the same size type, which was no problem, but both demanded the left-hand spot, which was. Many years ago they agreed in principle to a compromise alternating the prized position but neither could keep track from ad to ad and always thought the other crook was paying off Auto. Aside from this Auto lived a life he would not trade for Chief or even Superchief, the New York dingalingling, every weekend driving one new model or another to some fishing resort and after his hangover was better writing a bylined article how enthused he was over the new model, how smooth on the road and like gunpowder under the hood and also the fishing was great.

But with age the pressure was withering Auto, sometimes he could scarcely enthuse even at a private sneak preview of a major model change, sure and swift way to a dingalingling. Year after year, at every Dark Tower conference, Auto asked if there was any new printing technique for getting two lefthand spots on the top line of a signature. It was from old habit he repeated his question that last time. He didn't understand what Sunday was saying about a bright young fellow who went dancing once with a sister of Superchief's receptionist until Sunday explained why a girl secretary wouldn't do for Auto, there would always be bad language over the lefthand spot, such bad language and so loud it would be best to partition off the two of them, though a private office was impractical on Auto's inside corner. Auto's assistant told us all this when he first came, he was a cheerful youth then, and friendly, we were sorry to see him retreat so completely into the dark, airless corner behind the partition.

Why he retreated we could guess. Liquor, flitting through Market Control one day, made a cryptic remark about famous stars out in the open where visitors couldn't tell them from the rapists and soft drink thieves. And as for us, our major work in progress was a series of red, white and blue grocery charts which Sunday was confident would deliver Grocery from his soft drink chasm.



It was doubtless being one of the few local stars that deranged Grocery's perspective, most TV then came in a can from the east. Certainly he did not grasp Sunday's extended hand, Sunday who gave him his early training, sponsored him as Grocery, encouraged his TV career, lightened his account burden, and now was laboring to bring up his billings to save him from a dingaling. Instead <sup>Grocery</sup> virtually moved into Market Control, was waiting when we arrived in the morning to send us Surveying and Promoting, leaving behind Sunday's reams of unmilled statistics. And on TV day we were all down at the station loading groceries on the wheel, going out to buy more to replace those stolen by apprentice directors, unloading groceries from the wheel, and when Grocery had to pick up his wife driving home Pretty, who was more talented than we suspected, we asked if Grocery wrote her script and she said no, she made it up all by herself.

Sunday was progressing so slowly with his new charts he summoned to the Dark Tower our Director, who proved under inquisition to be several mental levels below Appliance, who for a short time lived high chewing out the Director over missing tear sheets, until the Director vanished and even Grocery didn't know where, or didn't care to say. Fortunately Sunday knew a young man who had just arrived from New York, a brilliant fellow with a fraternity brother



who was married to the sister of a lodge brother of Superchief. Sunday moved into Market Control to personally supervise training of the new Director, and we Controllers lived at our adding machines, it was a superb series of charts, they would rocket Grocery from the soft drink chasm.

Grocery did have to sacrifice all but one Controller for his TV show. I happened to be the first with the solo duty, and Sunday was so eager for me to finish a column of figures I was late at the station; a floor director had already loaded the wheel, which was nice of him. Pretty asked if I could leave before the show was over so she needn't impose on Grocery. Therefore when the camera left the wheel and Grocery was alone with his thousands of fans, telling the folks what great products they all were, I began unloading. Possibly it was haste but the wheel had never before seemed so tippy, I lifted one little package of dehydrated cabbage hearts and two hundred pounds of assorted groceries and one huge wheel crashed all around Grocery, and the second camera unit lost control and knocked down a kitchen wall and the audio man fell off his high chair and the loose crane mike swung by Grocery narrowly missing his head and the nice floor director in convulsions hit a switch and blew the station off the air and the switchboard was jammed with calls, which hospital was Grocery in and was he dead and who done him in and

could they send him flowers and candy at the jail. Perhaps worst of all, among those in hysterics was Pretty, whose smile gave Grocery that hayride look. I didn't think it worthwhile returning to the Market Control office but Sunday brushed it off, accidents will happen, and complimented me on my addition.

What happened next? How? We Controllers were never to know. Liquor flitted by on his way upstairs to the newsside, mumbling about Coca Cola nice, mumbling strangely like Number Two, in his eyes the unmistakable look of an exec who hears, far off in the distance, a dingalingling. We could only guess, but with some accuracy. After all, weaklings don't become Chief. The doctors couldn't see how he kept going without a stomach. But with Number Two mumbling and Appliance to chew on Chief was not utterly without resources. Though his best energies were spent becoming Chief, though he had been firing and falling back, firing and falling back, he was never crushed in open battle. Sunday was the victim of his own victories; his masterpiece, his series of grocery charts, delayed him overlong at Market Control while Dark Tower invalids grew strong enough in peace to make common cause.

A stunning day it was when our bright young Director, Sunday's Director, scarcely out of Sunday's sight since he came, left us to become Assistant Grocery Exec, <sup>not secretary, not assistant, but full Assistant Exec.</sup> (the only

one in all the Dark Tower. To make room Liquor had to push his desk so close to Appliance their swivel chairs were constantly colliding, and one could visualize how simple it would be to partition off Grocery and Assistant Grocery, and perhaps even the teletype, and unlike Auto's partition this one would have outside windows.

Apparently it began with a Coca Cola mouse the news side slipped in while Liquor was with the governor, not his fault surely, but as Grocery said while telling us we wouldn't have TV duty anymore, he and Assistant Grocery would make darn sure news side didn't get away with it again. Oh yes, one more thing, Assistant Grocery had learned so much about charts as Director Sunday, who had been driving himself far too hard, could be relieved of the grocery series.

Where was Sunday? Trying to awake, thinking it was a bad one but no worse than many another nightmare? Such as those when old Liquor was getting big? Grocery introduced our new Director, son of a childhood pen pal, and undertook to train him personally.

Italian farmboys watching from a hilltop Weif troops loot a Weiblingen town, islanders watching from palm trees aircraft carriers launch planes and dodge bombs, Roman soldiers watching Jews crucify Jews, Americans watching from under speakeasy tables gangsters and prohibition agents



shoot it out, Phoenician eunuchs watching the Rape of the Sabines, so were we Controllers.

But the morning Sunday tottered into Market Control our Director scurried out to save his reason, and we Controllers dropped our Star-Tribunes, crosswords unfinished, overcome by pity and terror.

All before were mere disasters. This was ruin. Mother Milk was not renewing. Mother Milk, which gave birth to the Dark Tower, Mother Milk, the only Supplement account originating in Mistville, Mother Milk, the three-color full-page back cover of the Sunday Supplement since the Great Fire. The mind could conceive the ocean without water, the Mistville sky without clouds, but not the Sunday Supplement without Mother Milk in three colors. Take away Mother Milk and Sunday would expire in one long never-ending dingalingling.

How could it happen? Why? No Sunday had ever done more than have lunch with Mother Milk once a year and listen to stories of their first cow and how it kicked over the lantern and started the Great Fire and burned down all the other cows and how in gratitude they signed with the exed who was out there in the middle of the night milking the cow, surely the Greatest Chief of them all. In Market Control we had a standing order, on parchment yellow with age, for Mother Milk tear sheets which we faithfully stacked in a closet and forgot, tear sheets bored Sunday, and in any event



the ad had not changed since the Great Fire.

Why, of all the Sundays, should it happen to our Sunday? Why should Mother Milk write the letter to Chief, why not Sunday? Grocery was sympathetic, they were all sympathetic, Chief saying perhaps Grocery was right, with Assistant Grocery he could lighten Sunday's load by taking over Supplement groceries. And Grocery telling Sunday his friends at Mother Milk were planning a big campaign in the daily, possibly he could convince them to keep the Supplement, though they certainly were excited about TV, what with her just now out of acting school. The whole Mother Milk family was eager to see how Cousin Pretty made out, they were sure she'd be better than the old Pretty.

Were we so very wrong to abandon our traditional neutrality? Sunday, who alone in the Dark Tower saw Controllers and Execs, like caterpillars and butterflies, eggs and eagles, as two stages in growth rather than separate species, described his gracious wife and her work with orphans and his son doing so well at Yale and his lovely daughter who sang like an angel and was going to Italy to study and his thoroughbred Labrador retriever and his Boy Scout troop and dahlias, he won prizes for his dahlias, and then there was the bank, when he defaulted <sup>on</sup> his huge mortgage the doors would snap shut and all those widows would be penniless in their declining years.

It was a day that gave us great satisfaction in having the Market under Control. Sunday we sent home in a cab to lie down in a dark room, resting for his dinner with Mother Milk. We called Artist from school and set him to work with art paper and scissors and brushes and paste pot and spray gun. South Controller dug in the files for old letters that with a word changed here and there could apply to Mother milk as easily as dehydrated cabbage hearts and decongestant toilet tissue. North and I searched the closet--and felt a chill at the heart, for the Mother Milk tear sheets had vanished. But Controllers know secret places revealed to no Director, we scavenged the Star-Tribune for old Supplements and ripped them up with pride in our sure, swift skill. Then, leaving South cutting stencils and mimeographing letters dated back through the previous year, and Artist spraying and snipping and pasting and painting, North and I went forth into the Market seeking smiling grocers and mass displays.

There were no mass displays. Despite millions invested in Sunday Supplement three-color back pages few grocers stocked Mother Milk. The label on the can hadn't changed since the Great Fire and though in citizens of great age, such as the Mother Milk people, the woodcut of a pioneer woman stirred memories of young family life, in their children it stirred memories of chilblains and sulfur and

molasses and no games or laughter on the Sabbath, and in their grandchildren it stirred nothing at all, they never saw it in the supermarkets they patronized in shiny new shopping centers. North and I wasted no motion, we drove directly to sections of the Market where pensioners live in great numbers, and to supermarkets where we weren't known, not Thermometers, chain outlets with policies against being Controlled. Perhaps it was the way we wrote down their names so carefully and checked the spelling, but the grocers seemed to think their pictures would run in the Star-Tribune; certainly the effect excelled a brace of \$250 suits, we had to ask them to tone down the smiles or nobody would believe they were grocers.

We built some of the largest mass displays ever seen in the Mistville Market, taking care in camera angles that dogfood and vegetables and Brand X, Y and Z milks did not show through the facade of Mother Milk. We draped banners proclaiming "Advertised in the Star-Tribune Sunday Supplement," stuck a can of Mother Milk in the grocer's right hand, a Sunday Supplement in the other. Afterward, just as we'd promised the grocer, we put all the cans back where we found them. When the smiling grocer -- once started they wouldn't stop -- asked what day his picture would run we said, on our way out the door to the next target, <sup>that</sup> the decision lay with chain headquarters. That was another



assumption the grocers made, that we had cleared with headquarters, which perhaps is the origin of the saying grocers have nowadays, "never smile until you feel the drink hit your gut."

It was, of course, the enormous mass displays and the not quite incredible smiles that clinched it as the finest Closeout, the Classic Closeout, in all Market Control history. Sunday said Mother Milk was deeply impressed by the pretty art paper and tear sheets and letters and postcards but when they saw the mass displays and smiling grocers they could scarcely master their feelings, they hadn't realized there was that much Mother Milk in all of Mistville, and there wasn't, but before they found that out they were on the line for another year of three-color full-page back cover of the Sunday Supplement.

A lesser Exec, a Grocery or Appliance, would have insulted us as menials with some such crude gesture as a fifth of whiskey; we valued more, much more, Sunday's simple, sincere thanks on behalf of himself, his gracious wife, son at Yale, lovely daughter with voice like an angel, thoroughbred Labrador retriever, Boy Scout troop, prize-winning dahlias and all those little old widows.

The campaign concluded in the brilliant style of the young Napoleon, but beyond our view. The arrival at the Dark Tower that morning of Grocery and the others we could only

imagine. The first hard news came from Liquor, flitting by Market Control mumbling there was a mouse in a Coca Cola bottle and he had to get upstairs and kill it before it got out on the street. Several days later we had a new Director, a bright young fellow who had a close friend who once flew across the country in the same airplane as Superchief. We never knew him well at all. He returned from his first Dark Tower conference with a serious expression. Grocery had reported, to the shock of all, that his friends at chain headquarters said the mass displays were illegal and so were the smiles of the grocers. The Dark Tower was sorry, but crooked Controllers could, in time, corrupt the entire National Advertising Service. Fortunately for the Market, which allowed even briefly out of control, might have been permanently damaged, Sunday knew three young English majors with cars and suits and ties, and all were in school with a nephew of Superchief's butler.

One afternoon a year later, while sitting in a tavern with one of the big new eleven inch screens, I watched TV and Grocery wasn't there, and neither was the wheel or kitchen or Pretty or Motherly. There was a cartoon instead which I enjoyed very much. I notice Mother Milk is still on the back cover of the Sunday Supplement, three colors, full page, though the last time I saw a can of Mother Milk

was several years ago in an old town east of Mistville, a fascinating but distressing area, aged men and women after all these decades still expecting the mines to reopen momentarily. Personally I take the Second Paper, a heavy load to carry home but excellent for starting fires these damp days after I've unwrapped the fish and read the funny papers.

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