

Here's an Idea: You Solve My Problems and I'll Solve Yours

By George Cunningham

Do you remember that old film, *Strangers on a Train*? This is the movie where two strangers meet on a train. One of them has a nasty and unfaithful wife he wants to get rid of and the other wants to bump off his own father. So they discuss this plan in which they would each kill each other's problem person so they could both have alibis if the police suspected them.

Of course, the whole thing begins to unravel when one of the parties goes through with the plan and the other one backs out after the evil deed is done. But the idea of people working together to solve each other's problems is not a bad idea – as long as it doesn't involve murder and other illegal acts, of course.

I have been thinking about this because I realized that I am quite good at solving other people's problems. It doesn't matter what kind of problem it is. Whether people are in debt, are unemployed, having marital problems, have out of control kids, or are just stuck in a rut, I seem to be able to come up with a quick and easy plan to help them straighten out their lives.

Go on a diet, demand your rights, exercise some tough love, don't buy things you can't afford, redo your resume, focus on what is important to you, and use lemons to make lemonade. Whether it's a practical plan, a motivational pep talk, or a new perspective, I have all the answers.

Unfortunately, I'm not nearly as good when it comes to my own problems. Even if I come up with a plan for myself, I am terrible about implementing it. I often lose my motivation, especially on Mondays, and any new perspective I come up with seems suspiciously like the old perspective I left behind.

What I really need is to meet my own stranger on the train. I'm not looking for somebody to help me bump off a troublesome wife. But maybe if I met such a stranger I could solve his or her personal problems, since I am so good at that, and he or she could solve mine.

And we would both probably enjoy it.

File for divorce, I might say to her. He doesn't appreciate you and frankly you could do so much better.

Just cut down on the sweets and get some light exercise, she might reply.

It wouldn't hurt you to cut out some sweets as well, I might say.

Maybe I happen to love the big guy, who also happens to be the father of my children, she might reply.

Well maybe you are just happy sitting there being ignored while he watches grown men on the television chase up and down the field after a ball, I might say. And then I

might add that it also wouldn't hurt you to get off your butt once in a while and get some light exercise yourself.

I think that when the train pulled finally into the station, we would probably have realized that our problems weren't nearly as bad and we may have thought when our journey began.

Best of all, we'd never see each other again. And nobody has to die.

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