

## Money Demon

By Dean Blake

**W**e always wanted more than we had. That's why, for a few amazing years, my wife and I passed our credit cards around like the sun passed its sunlight: we bought, and we bought more, and then we bought even more, until one day, when we finally decided to check the mail, we discovered a letter that grabbed us by our throats—debt. Upwards of \$100k.

“This can't be true,” I told my wife.

“It's very true,” my wife said, her shopping bag dropping to the ground.

I swallowed hard. This was serious—my wife never dropped her shopping bags on the ground that easily. “What do you think we should do?”

“Well, we certainly can't just stop shopping.”

“I agree.” That would've been irresponsible.

The next day we Googled “credit card debt specialist” and set up an appointment with the first person we could find.

The credit card debt specialist was a fat old man who smelt like turmeric.

“You certainly can't just stop shopping,” the fat credit card debt specialist said.

“We know that,” my wife sighed. “Anything you can do to help us?”

The credit card debt specialist tried to stand up from his seat, but he was so fat that he



couldn't extricate himself from it. He then tried to reach forward, towards a business card at the edge of his table, but he was so limited in his flexibility that he could only wiggle around helplessly. We watched him struggle for a while.

“Grab that card, will you?” he yelled, his face turning pink.

I grabbed the card and read it. “Money

demon?”

“Yes.”

“You want us to call a money demon?”

“You need to call a money demon,” the credit card debt specialist said, wiping his brow. Thick sweat patches had formed around his underarms and neck.

My wife stroked her chin. “I’ve heard of money demons before. They’re risky.”

“They’re fine,” the man waved her away dismissively. “If you use the money demon wisely, everything will be fine.”

My wife and I glanced at each other.

We left the credit card debt specialist’s office with a lot on our minds, especially since we’d both heard horror stories about money demons in the past.

My wife shrugged. “I mean, it might be different with us.”

“You’re right. It could probably be different with us.” I looked at the business card. “Okay, let me call this demon.”

I dialed the number and the demon picked up in an instant: “Hello?”

“Hello?” I asked back.

“Yeah?”

“I need—”

“Let me guess,” the demon asked, “You need help overcoming debt?”

“That’s correct,” I said.

“You know the conditions?”

“No,” I said, playing dumb.

“Well, it’s easy,” the demon said. “If you want to pay off your debt, you give me permission to

kill one random person overseas, one person you don’t know—someone you’ve never met, and never would’ve met even if they lived. Then, their life will be converted to the money you owe the bank. Deal?”

I looked at my wife, who was nodding. I thought about it for a moment at least. “Deal.”

There was silence on the demon’s end.

“Hello?”

“It’s done,” the demon finally said. “Check your bank statements tomorrow.”

My wife and I were excited. The next day, we checked our credit card statements, and sure enough, all our debts were paid. We celebrated by going out for dinner, and then a theatre show, and then dessert, and then wine. Clean again, we put it all on our credit card.

It took a few months before I was brave enough to check our credit card statement. I raised my eyebrows. “We owe more than the last time.”

“How’s that possible?” my wife asked. She dropped two shopping bags this time. “I thought we’d been pretty disciplined in paying our cards back this time.”

“Nope,” I concluded.

My wife tenderly placed her hand on her stomach. “We need some money to pay for this little one.”

“Shall we call the money demon again?”

“I think we should.”

“You know what?” I asked her. “Why don’t we ask for more?”

“What do you mean?”

**We had so much fun with our first fifty million. We hosted parties, we bought a few properties, we bought a small plane, we bought countless toys for our new baby boy. I even bought thigh implants.**

“Well, you hate your job and I hate mine, but we both love shopping, and we both want to be around for the baby, so why don’t we ask for . . . more?”

My wife smiled, and I smiled back.

“Hello?” the money demon enquired abruptly.

“Hi.”

“Let me guess,” the demon asked, “you want more?”

“We want our debts paid. And we want fifty million dollars a year.”

“That can be done,” the demon said, “but do you know the conditions?”

“No,” I said, playing dumb.

“I get to kill someone in the country you live in. You never would’ve met them, and there is only a small chance that they would’ve met you, much less had a positive impact on your life if they lived.”

“How small of a chance?”

“A very small chance,” the demon said quickly. “And once they die, their life will be converted into a fantastic income of fifty million dollars a year for you.”

I glanced at my wife, who was nodding. “And our debts get removed?”

“Sure,” the demon said.

“We’d never have to work again with that kind of money,” I said.

“Yeah,” the demon said.

“And we can spend more time with our kid,” I said.

“True,” the demon mused.

“And imagine all the people we could help with that money.”

“Exactly,” the demon agreed. “So, deal?”

“Deal.”

There was silence.

“Hello?”

“It’s done,” the demon said. “Check your bank tomorrow.”

We had so much fun with our first fifty million. We hosted parties, we bought a few properties, we bought a small plane, we bought countless toys for our new baby boy. I even bought thigh implants. But it all ran out too quickly.

“We didn’t even have enough for charity,” my wife pouted.

“And it’s only been six months,” I said. “We have no money left until the year resets.”

“I don’t want to have to use our credit card again,” my wife said. “Plus I don’t think our credit cards will cut it for the type of stuff we like buying now.”

“I feel so poor.”

“Me too.”

“I mean, how did we even live without fifty million before?”

“Yeah, how did we?”

“You need to call the money demon.”

I picked up my phone and called the money demon.

“Hello?” the money demon asked instantly.

“Um, hello,” I said.

“Let me guess,” the money demon started.

“You—”

“Yes, we want two hundred million a year.”

“Two hundred?” he asked.

“Two hundred million a year.”

“You know the conditions?”

I looked at my wife, who was holding our baby and nodding. “You get to kill anyone in our city. That person is a completely random person. It can be someone we know, it can be someone we don’t know. But in return, we’ll have the income we want.”

“That’s the deal,” the demon said.

“Deal,” I said.

There was silence.

“Hello?”

“It’s done,” the demon said. “Check your bank tomorrow.”

The first few months were fun. We bought a castle, we bought a bigger jet, we hosted incredible parties, we signed our son up to one of the best schools in the country, we built a couple of schools for poor ethnic people. We were even wiser this time: we invested in Bitcoin, real estate,

futures, art, Silicon Valley startups—anything that could help us grow that two hundred million without having to have to call the demon again. But then a lot of our investments didn’t work out, or needed years to show any real return.

“I want to run for president after we have our next baby,” my wife told me. “For me to become president, and for us to have a peaceful life, I think I need at *least* one hundred million in the next few months. How much do we have left?”

“We have twenty dollars left,” I said.

“What happened to the thirty million we were looking at the other day?”

“We put it into Bitcoin, remember?”

We were in the main hall of our castle. I looked at my son, who needed a new mobile phone for his games, and my wife, who was eight months pregnant, and our servants, who we were paying generous salaries to, and then at the high castle ceiling above us, which needed about a million dollars worth of repairs.

I slumped against my throne. “I mean, how did we even survive without two hundred million before?”

My wife shrugged.

I started fantasising. “Imagine if we had more money.”

“Imagine all the people we’d be able to help,” my wife said, eagerly.

“We’d never have to work again.”

My wife handed me my phone and the money demon’s business card.

“Hello?”

“Hi,” the money demon replied.

“Listen, we need—”

“A billion?”

“Two billion.”

“I see,” the money demon said.

“Per year.” I cleared my throat. “And compounding by two billion each year after that.”

“I see,” the money demon said again.

“It’s just that we really care about the charity we set up, and as you know they need money and—”

“You know the conditions?”

“I think I do.”

“Either you do, or you don’t.”

I looked at my pregnant wife and son. “You’re going to kill one person from my extended family. But—”

“But it will be the one you didn’t like that much anyway,” the money demon interrupted excitedly. “The sleazy one.”

I thought about it for a second.

“So is it a deal?” the demon asked.

I bit my nail. “Deal.”

There was silence.

“Hello?”

“It’s done,” the money demon said. “Check your bank tomorrow.”

It was the best five years of our lives. We were able to completely fund my wife’s presidential campaign, and because of that she became president. We bought a few more castles, we bought bigger jets, we bought three yachts, we bought companies, we bought schools, we bought Bitcoin, we employed thousands of people, we threw money at thousands of poor

ethnic people and smiled with joy as we watched their impoverished little hands guzzle all the money up like starving plants. By the end of these five years we had three children, and we bought those children toys we were never able to have as kids; we put them in classes we were never able to have as kids; we let them see Paris, we let them see New York, we let them see Disney World, and not once—ever—did we tell them we couldn’t afford anything, and not once, ever, did we look at a price tag.

At least, not until I met the father of one of my son’s classmates. This ridiculous man had twenty billion dollars in his bank and was building the first rocket that could travel to the moon. In three minutes. I wanted to build a rocket that could reach the moon in two minutes, but it was too expensive, especially since my wife wanted to buy the Amazon rainforest to protect it from deforestation, and especially since both my wife and I wanted to buy three small countries in the north.

“How much do we have in the bank?” My wife asked me when the kids were asleep.

“Just two hundred million,” I said, rubbing my temples.

My wife took a deep breath. “It’s okay . . . we’ll get through this.”

“I don’t think we can,” I said.

“Yes we can, honey,” my wife said unconvincingly. “Two hundred million . . . I mean, we’ll just have to make a few sacrifices until next year.”

“Three of our companies need bailing out,

we're being sued by one of our old business partners, we've got the salaries of thousands of people to pay, and Bitcoin has dropped in value. And I haven't even showed you the yacht bills yet."

"It'll be fine," my wife said, reassuring nobody.

I closed my eyes. "Imagine if we had one trillion."

"One trillion," my wife mumbled.

"One trillion," I mumbled back.

"Imagine all the people we could help with one trillion."

"We could buy the Amazon rainforest."

"We could invent teleportation."

"We could save entire countries from starvation."

"And we can pay all our bills."

"And we'll never have to work again."

We both laughed.

"Where's the business card?" my wife asked.

"What business card?" I asked, playing dumb.

"The money demon's card."

"What money demon?" I asked, still playing dumb.

Ignoring me, my wife rummaged through our bedside table. She grinned after finally finding it.

"Here," she said, handing me the business card. "Call the demon."

I looked at the card, which was still in perfect condition, and then at my wife.

"I love you," my wife told me.

"I love you too."

I picked up my phone and called the number.

"Hello?" the demon asked immediately.

"Hello?" I asked back.

"I remember you," the money demon said.

"Then you know why I'm calling."

"You want a waterfall."

"A million waterfalls," I corrected.

"A million waterfalls that flow endless amounts of money," the demon corrected over my correction.

"Yes," I said, looking at my wife. She was beautiful. Although I'd bought thigh implants, butt implants, tooth implants, cheek implants and hair implants over the years, she never did one immoral thing to her body. I held her hand and she held mine, and I realised, for the first time, that her hand felt smooth and rough at the same time. My family was never going to have to worry about money again. "That's exactly right. A million waterfalls that flow endless amounts of money."

"You know the conditions?" the demon asked.

"Of course."

"Then I won't need to tell you—"

"You don't need to tell me the conditions."

"Then it's a deal?" The money demon asked.

"It's a deal," I said.

There was silence, and then I died.

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