

THIRTY DOLLARS

By

Heath John.
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Simon, a struggling fencing contractor receives a sizeable inheritance, but soon ends up in prison where he learns a valuable lesson.

Heath John

FADE IN:

INT: PICKUP TRUCK - DAY

SIMON, a scruffy, weathered looking, 30 year old fencing contractor is driving in his old pickup truck. He has blonde surfer's hair and is wearing a grubby, fluorescent polo shirt. It's a hot day and the aircon has stopped working so he is banging on the dash, flicking the switch on and off. There is rock music playing on the radio and he turns it off to answer his cell phone.

SIMON

SK Fencing, this is Simon.

MIKE

Hi Simon, it's Mike Gorman here. You gave me a quote on some pool fencing last week.

We hear Mike's voice but we don't see him.

SIMON

Yeah Hi Mike.

MIKE

To be honest, I was hoping you could do it a bit cheaper than that.

SIMON

Um, it's a really big job and materials keep going up all the time. I've offered you a really good rate. Per meter it's almost 10 dollars cheaper than some of my competitors.

Simon pulls his car over to the side of the road.

MIKE

I think you could knock another 10 dollars per meter off and still come out on top if you work efficiently. But look I will get some other quotes and get back to you.

SIMON

Look, I suppose I could drop my price by 5 dollars a meter.

MIKE

Eight?

Simon shakes his head in disbelief and sighs.

SIMON

Yeah look okay. -- I'll be there
on Tuesday morning.

INT: HARDWARE STORE - DAY

Simon is waiting in line at the trade desk of a large hardware store. He gets an SMS from his UNCLE RAY. It reads: "My garage door just broke. Can you come?"

It's Simon's turn in line and a pale, skinny young man in a blue poloshirt serves him.

HARDWARE SALESMAN

Hi, how can I help you?

SIMON

Yeah I placed an order online
last night but for some reason it
hasn't calculated my trade
discount correctly.

HARDWARE SALESMAN

Let me have a look.

The salesman has a brief look at the invoice and then points at one of the items.

HARDWARE SALESMAN (CONT'D)

No, the trade discount is there,
see here -- It's just that the
glass panels have gone up 10
percent that's all.

SIMON

10 percent!

HARDWARE SALESMAN

Yeah, the whole Polyfence range
went up in January, in all
stores, we just took a while to
adjust our prices.

EXT: CARPARK - DAY

Simon drives off with his pickup truck and trailer loaded up with fencing equipment.

EXT: MIKE'S BACKYARD - DAY

Simon is struggling in the sun, digging fencing holes around a massive pool at Mike's Mansion. Mike is in his early forties and in good shape. He is wearing only boardshorts and is having a playful game of tennis on the grass court with an attractive, younger lady who is wearing a flattering, white tennis outfit.

Simon, dripping with sweat is getting frustrated, sighing in anger as he tries to break through the rocky soil with his shovel. He looks over towards Mike. Mike has stopped to answer his cell phone and wanders over to the pool while chatting. Simon over hears his conversation:

MIKE

I don't need to know all the details, just make sure you get a good return, that's what I pay you for. Call me when you have some results.

Mike dives into the pool. A middle-aged maid drops off a silver tray and ice-bucket with champagne, two glasses and the worlds' thickest white towel to a table by the pool. Mike gets out of the pool and sips the champagne while he is drying himself and then swaggers over to chat to Simon.

MIKE (CONT'D)

Nice day for it.

SIMON

(Wipes his sweaty brow) I guess you could say that. So how long have you lived here?

MIKE

I bought this estate back in 2009. It was nothing but paddocks when I bought it, but look at it now.

SIMON

Yeah it sure is nice. What do you do for work?

MIKE

(takes a sip of champagne) I built a very successful chain of electrical stores which I sold to Vintrek, back in 2005.

SIMON

So what do you do these days?

Mike Laughs

MIKE

These days? Well I take tennis lessons, swim, buy and sell. Look, If you are clever with your money, you can multiply it and never run out. I was just on the phone to Eugene, my Guru of a financial controller. He invests it for me and takes a small percentage. It's a win win.

SIMON
Yeah right -- Cool.

Simon stops digging. He looks over at the tray and spare champagne glass sitting on the table and then reaches down and picks up his dirty plastic drink flask which he takes a swig from.

EXT: UNCLE RAY'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

It is nearly dark and an exhausted looking Simon arrives in the driveway of his Uncle's house carrying a loaf of bread and a carton of milk.

INT: UNCLE RAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

UNCLE RAY is an old, frail looking man and is using a walking frame. Simon puts the milk in the fridge and Uncle Ray is fumbling around trying to get money out of his wallet while using one hand to hold on to his walking frame. He tries to pay Simon for the bread and milk.

SIMON
No, you keep it, it was only a few bucks.

UNCLE RAY
Don't you worry about me, I've got more money than I will ever need. What I don't have is the strength to fix my own garage door.

Simon leaves with his tools under his arm and Uncle Ray sitting in his electric wheel chair happily pressing the electric garage door remote control up and down.

INT: SIMON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Simon is sitting on the couch watching the news on TV. He gets up to take his TV dinner plate to the kitchen. The phone rings.

SIMON
Hello? -- Yes, that's me.
-- Oh no! But I was just with him a couple of hours ago and he seemed fine.

Simon appears to be devastated by the news.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Was he in much pain? -- Okay --
So what do I do now?

EXT: SIMON'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

It's a sunny day and Simon is wearing tradesman shorts, boots and an old blue singlet. His hair is messy and he needs a shave. He opens up his mailbox and pulls out a couple of envelopes. He smiles and waves to a neighbor.

INT: SIMON'S KITCHEN - DAY

Simon reads a letter from a solicitor. He has been made the sole beneficiary of his Uncle's estate. Simon's mouth drops open.

Simon's home-phone starts ringing and at first he doesn't even hear it, he is in shock. He finally picks up the phone, still holding the letter.

SIMON

Hello. Yes. Um, sorry, but I am
-- I am on holidays. Yeah I am
not taking on any more work. --

Simon looks back down at the letter.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Indefinitely.

Simon hangs up the phone and we see his face light up in excitement and he gives a triumphant fist pump.

EXT: MIKE'S HOUSE - DAY

Simon is now well dressed with styled hair and gold watch. He presses the doorbell at his wealthy client Mike's front door. Mike answers the door.

SIMON

Hi Mike.

MIKE

Yes, and you are?

SIMON

It's Simon! I did your pool
fence?

MIKE

Oh Simon, sorry, I almost didn't
recognize you. How can I help you
- you got my payment I trust?

SIMON

Yeah, that's all fine. I just
came to drop you off a bottle of
champagne to say thank you for
the job.

Simon passes Mike a very expensive bottle of champagne. Mike examines the bottle with disbelief.

MIKE

I'm impressed. Your other client's must be paying you a lot more than I did!

SIMON

I remember you telling me about your guru of a financial controller and I was wondering if you wouldn't mind giving me his contact details.

INT: SIMON'S NEW HOUSE - DAY

It is late in the day and Simon is holding a house warming party in his own new mansion. He is dressed like a film star and has a gold chain around neck. He opens the door to greet a couple who are in their early 30's. The well dressed female passes Simon a bonsai plant and gives him a kiss on each cheek.

FEMALE PARTY GUEST

Happy house-warming! I love the new place!

MALE PARTY GUEST

Sorry to hear about your Uncle.

SIMON

Thanks guys.

MALE PARTY GUEST

Wow, I didn't realize he was THIS loaded.

The female slaps her partner on the arm for his rudeness.

SIMON

It was a surprise to me too!

EXT: SIMON'S POOLSIDE BAR - NIGHT

It is early in the evening, not quite dark and everyone is at the well lit bar alongside Simon's pool.

Simon is passing out Cuban cigars, fine cognac and champagne to his guests. There is also a waiter picking up empty glasses.

Simon is showing off the labels on the expensive bottles and pouring drinks. He and some of his friends are doing the whole posh tasting discussion (holding the glass up, smelling it, swishing it to let it breathe etc...)

INT: SIMON'S HOME - DAY

It is the afternoon after the party and a dressing-robe wearing, hung-over Simon is looking around at all the mess. He makes a cup of coffee and sits all alone at his huge 12-seater dining table. He flicks on a day-time TV soapie.

The doorbell rings. Simon checks his watch and gets up to answer the door. It is EUGENE, Simon's new financial controller. Eugene has slicked back black hair, Italian clothes and snakeskin boots.

EUGENE:
You were expecting me right?

SIMON
Yeah yeah, of course. Come in Eugene, I just had a bit of a late night, is all.

INT SIMON'S HOME OFFICE - DAY

They are both sitting in Simon's home office. There are still packed boxes against a wall, but the finest leather couches and dark mahogany cabinetry. Eugene is looking through some documents and Simon is fiddling with his coffee cup.

SIMON
So, will you be able to keep me from ever having to work another day in my life?

EUGENE:
Look Simon, you have spent almost half of it on this place already. There isn't enough money here to last you for ever, not if you are planning on living over 40.

SIMON
Yeah, that's why I need you to invest and multiply my money, like you do for Mike.

EUGENE:
I can definitely increase it, but Mike didn't get to where he is by playing it safe. -- I tell you what. If you're serious about multiplying your money, I could invest it in a safe, but some might say "illegal" investment which is guaranteed to double your money in a matter of months. It's completely safe, my money is in and so is Mike's.

Simon is considering this investment opportunity but we don't see him give an answer, nor do we learn what the actual investment is.

INT: HAIR SALON - DAY

Simon is dressed in a designer suit. He has just had his hair cut, highlighted and styled at a prestigious salon. He pays, thanks the staff and then leaves.

EXT: HAIR SALON - DAY

Simon's sports car is parked right outside and as he approaches it, he clicks the key-less remote. The car beeps and as he is about to open the door, two police officers and a plain dressed detective approach him.

DETECTIVE

Simon Kingsley?

SIMON

Ah -- , Yeah --?

DETECTIVE

You're going to be one popular guy with a haircut like that! You're under arrest for aiding and abetting the manufacture of narcotics. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you.

The police officers grab and handcuff Simon.

INT: PRISON CELL - DAY

Simon is sitting at a table next to a set of bunk beds in a small sterile looking cell, playing poker with his cellmate, BRUNO. Bruno is a well-built, rough looking, tanned man with black hair in his 40's.

BRUNO

I'd rather sit in here all by my self for ever, than go and get saved by one of those religious church mob!

SIMON

Nah, any excuse to pass the time I say. And this guy seems like a real decent bloke.

BRUNO

He probably still thinks you've got money and wants to get his hands on it when you get out!

SIMON

Well he's gonna be mighty
disappointed when I start the job
in the tool-shop and he finds out
that I'm only earning thirty
dollars per week!

They both laugh and continue playing cards.

INT: PRISON WORKSHOP - DAY

Simon is one of about a dozen men who are working in a large, professional looking workshop located at the prison. He has sandpaper in hand and is sanding a wooden door-handle. It is hot and the ventilation is poor. There are several crates of door-handles on the bench next to him and people cleaning machinery behind him.

WOODWORK SUPERVISOR

You better get a move on
"**SIMONE**"! This ain't no holiday
camp!

Simon quickly grabs another door-handle and sands more vigorously.

INT: PRISON LOUNGE - DAY

A youthful looking middle aged, prison ministry chaplain is sitting with Simon. He has a logo with a cross on his black polo shirt and he is holding a small Bible.

SIMON

It's soul-destroying work though
and all for what? Thirty dollars
a week?

CHAPLAIN

I've told you Simon, there's an
answer for everything in this
book: "Whatever you do, work at
it with all your heart, as
working for the Lord, not for
human masters."

INT: PRISON WORKSHOP - DAY

Simon turns off a wood-planing machine, takes off his ear-muffs and with a spring in his step, carries a crate of wooden book-ends to a shelf that is full of other crates. He passes GEORGE, another inmate who is slowly sweeping with a broom.

GEORGE

You realize that they don't pay
us more if we get more done
right?

Simon just smiles and grabs another crate. Then he begins sweeping under the benches and stands back to admire the clean workshop.

INT: PRISON CELL - DAY

Simon and Bruno are both lying on their beds reading. There's a loud clinking noise, the cell door opens and both prisoners drop their books and sit up excitedly.

A large African American female prison guard comes in. There is a white, male guard standing behind her.

FEMALE GUARD

It's shopping day.. (she says,
half singing it.)

Bruno lets out a little triumphant scream.

BRUNO

Yew!!!

Simon's eyes light up as the guard ticks off items on her list and passes Simon shampoo, 2 packets of biscuits, a journal and a 6-pack of blackcurrant drinks.

Simon is relaxed, sitting on his bed leaning against the wall. He carefully removes a bottle of blackcurrant cordial from the 6-pack and begins to take slow, sips from the bottle. He has a huge smile of satisfaction as he savors the flavor of the drink and sighs in contentment.

BRUNO (CONT'D)

You're drinking that like it's
the finest champagne!

SIMON

Oh this tastes better than
anything I've ever tasted.

BRUNO

I've never been into those fancy
champagnes and cognacs like you,
but I'd give anything for a cold
beer right now.

Simon passes him one of his Blackcurrant drinks.

BRUNO (CONT'D)

Really? Thanks man!

BRUNO takes a few quick gulps.

BRUNO

Man it tastes pretty nice, but
it's no "1948 Dan Perri sauvignon
blanc" - is that what you call it
haha?

SIMON
Oh it tastes way better than
that.

BRUNO looks over at Simon with curious disbelief.

BRUNO
Really? Why?

SIMON
Because I earned it.

INT: PRISON INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Simon is sitting nervously before the prison parole judge, a slim man in his mid fifties wearing an old fashioned business suit that is 2 sizes too big.

PAROLE JUDGE
It says here that over the last
18 months you have, and I quote
"excelled" in woodwork duties.

He lowers his reading glasses momentarily to look up from his document at Simon and then continues.

PAROLE JUDGE (CONT'D)
Productivity has increased by
twenty percent due to your
promotion as supervisor. -- Will
you be requiring assistance
seeking employment when you are
released?

SIMON
No, I know exactly what I am
going to do.

PAROLE JUDGE
And what exactly is that?

With a huge smile and exuberant confidence, Simon answers.

SIMON
I am going to set up a new
fencing business.

EXT: HORSE STUD FARM - DAY

Simon and three other workers (including Bruno) are packing up their tools taking them back to a reasonably modern looking white pickup truck and a white van. Both have professional sign-writing, "SK Fencing" on the side.

Simon pauses momentarily to admire the newly finished fences and then opens up an icebox from the back of his pick-up truck. He reaches in and takes out a 6-pack of blackcurrant cordial.

*Inspirational music begins to play.

Simon passes each of the men a bottle. They nod in appreciation and lean against the vehicles, looking out across the fields with the new white fences, contently enjoying their drinks.

FADE OUT

THE END