

The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar

By

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Based on the short story by Roald Dahl

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INT. CASINO - NIGHT

HENRY SUGAR, early thirties, stares at the DEALER with wide, excited eyes. He's a well-dressed man, with a well-dressed hairstyle.

He slaps the table every time the dealer looks to him. Receives another card each time.

JOHN WINSTON(V.O)
Before I begin Mr Brown, let me
just make it quite clear that he
has requested to remain anonymous.

Henry receives a fourth card, a KING. He adds it to his other cards in his hand. Makes his total Twenty-Six. He throws them back at the DEALER.

MR BROWN(V.O)
Well what should we call him?

Henry takes a drink of his scotch and an inhale of his cigar. The smoke meanders over his face.

JOHN WINSTON(V.O)
How about Henry? Yes, that sounds
quite right. Let's call him Henry
Sugar.

Henry smiles as he receives a fresh pair of cards.

EXT. MANSION - DAY

The rain pours down around the vast building. It's impressive gardens withered by the overcast day.

INT. MANSION - BILLIARD ROOM

The expansive room is decorated by very expensive looking ornaments. A prominent Chandelier hangs from the ceiling, below which is a large Poker table.

FIVE MEN sit around the Poker table, including Henry. They all wear tailor-fitted suits and their LAUGHTER fills the air. If it weren't for all the cigar smoke, the room would probably reek of money.

Henry, studies the five cards in his hands.

HENRY

Very good bet Charles, my good man.
However, I'm afraid I shall have to
call you.

Henry smiles across at CHARLES, his cigar hangs from his
mouth.

CHARLES

Go ahead Henry, throw your money
away just like your good father.

Henry smirks as the other players LAUGH heartily.

He slides all of his chips into the centre of the table.

CHARLES

Of course, your father gave his
money to charity whereas you just
give your money to us.

More raucous LAUGHTER as Charles turns over his cards.

CHARLES

Full-house my dear Henry...I do
wish you would actually learn this
game one day.

Henry forces a smile across at Charles as he stubs out his
cigar.

HENRY

Well to be honest Charles,
blackjack is more of my game.

He stands up and straightens his suit jacket.

Charles looks up at him in surprise.

CHARLES

You aren't going to attempt to win
your money back Henry?

Henry shakes his head and makes his way to the door.

HENRY

No Charles, I believe I will take
the chance to view this lovely home
of yours.

Henry exits as Charles and the rest share questioning looks.

CHARLES

I do believe he will be broke by
Christmas.

They deal another hand.

HALLWAY

Henry walks along mindlessly. The whole house is decorated
to impress. As if the owner's money is out on show.

He inspects an elegant painting that hangs on a wall.

HENRY

Damn show-off.

He scoffs and walks off into the -

LIBRARY

- his eyes widen at the expanse of the room.

Bookshelves line every wall, they almost reach to the
ceiling.

Henry walks along a shelf and glances at the books crammed
inside. They are all thick, heavy books. He shakes his head.

His eyes catch sight of a thin red book that looks
completely out of place. He pulls it out with a finger and
takes hold.

He walks off to a windowsill, reads the title.

HENRY

'A report on an interview with
Imhrat Khan, the man who could see
without his eyes' by Dr. John
Cartwright.

He smiles and sits down. The rain PELTS the window behind
him as he opens the book.

HENRY(V.O)

The day was September 27th 1924, I
remember because I had just
released a Thesis on the effects of
Diabetes in Children...

He reads on.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - 1924

DR. CARTWRIGHT sits in his office. Studies papers on his desk.

The door behind him opens and in walks IMHRAT KHAN, a small Indian man.

Dr. Cartwright turns in his chair and beckons Imhrat into the seat beside him.

HENRY(V.O)

He was a very peculiar man, and at first I wouldn't give him the time of day. Eventually though his persistence paid off and I agreed to see him.

Imhrat talks silently as Dr. Cartwright's eyes widen in astonishment. A curved eye-brow suggests his cynicism.

HENRY(V.O)

Mr. Khan claimed to be able to see without the use of his eyes. A skill he said that he learned from a Yogi in India.

Dr. Cartwright nods his head and goes to the door. He walks back to his chair as two more DOCTORS arrive and walk inside.

HENRY(V.O)

He wanted us to give his theatre show some credibility, some...authenticity. He wanted us to seal his eyes for that night's performance.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Imhrat walks to his bike, his eyes covered by bandages. The three doctors stand by the entrance to their office in open-mouthed shock.

Imhrat effortlessly manoeuvres to his bike and gets on.

They watch as he peddles off into a busy road. Intricately, he weaves between the cars.

HENRY(V.O)

Obviously, after that little performance I had to go and see his show. And see I did.

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

Imhrat sits centre stage. Eyes still blindfolded and a deck of cards on the table in front of him.

He raises a single card. Back to him, it shows the audience Five of Diamonds.

IMHRAT

It's a red card...it's...it's the
five of Diamonds.

Huge APPLAUSE fills the -

AUDIENCE

- where Dr. Cartwright sits. He gives an improving smile then joins in with the applause. He CLAPS with enthusiasm.

HENRY(V.O)

He said that through the teachings
of Yoga he could see, without
needing the use of his eyes. He
could even...

LIBRARY - PRESENT

Henry sits engrossed in the book.

HENRY

...see through cards.

He smiles and flicks through the rest of the book.

Diagrams of exercises and instructions take up the final pages.

Henry looks to the door then folds the book in half. Slides it into his jacket pocket and stands up.

He walks through the -

HALLWAY

- and out of the front door.

Charles enters the hallway and looks to the door.

CHARLES
Henry? Henry?

He looks back into the billiard room, laughs.

CHARLES
Talk about a poor loser.

He walks back to his guests.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The room is near total darkness. Only a single candle on a table gives off any light.

The light reflects onto Henry's face as he intensely stares into it.

JOHN WINSTON(V.O)
Of course Henry saw this as his chance. His chance to finally conquer his losing streak...which had gone on far too long.

Henry closes his eyes, still he faces the light.

He opens them and stares on.

JOHN WINSTON(V.O)
And as luck would have it he, like that Indian boy, was in that tiny percentage of the population who's brains were very adaptable.

MR BROWN(V.O)
So he learnt how to see through cards?

JOHN WINSTON(V.O)
(laughing)
Oh yes, and he learnt quickly.

Henry turns his head and picks up a single playing card. He holds it up and stares at it.

Slowly, a faint red colour pours through the back of the card. It doesn't show the suit, but the suit is most definitely red.

Henry smiles and puts the card on the bottom of the deck.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

SUPER: ONE YEAR LATER

Henry sits at the same table, a deck of cards in front of him.

He raises the cards in front of him one at a time. Keeps the face away from him. This one is the King of Spades.

After a few seconds he smiles.

HENRY
King of Spades.

He turns it over and throws it away. Raises the Five of Hearts.

HENRY
Five of Hearts.

He throws that one away too, and repeats the procedure a few more times. His smile grows. He LAUGHS.

INT. CASINO - NIGHT

Henry sits at a Blackjack table. A large pile of chips by his side. His eyes are glued to the deck of cards by the dealer. The top card is clearly the 10 of Clubs.

He checks his cards. 7 of Diamonds and 4 of Hearts.

He smiles and taps the table.

The DEALER hands him the card.

DEALER
Twenty-One Sir.

He slides a large pile of chips to Henry. Who adds it to his growing tower.

LATER

A CROWD stands around Henry's table. His stack of chips is now immense.

The dealer, a forced smile on his face, slides over another huge pile.

SECURITY CAMERA VIEW

In black and white, Henry collects his chips.

SECURITY #1(O.C)
Is he counting cards?

SECURITY #2(O.C)
I don't think so, his success rate
is too good.

A pretty BLONDE WOMAN sits on Henry's lap. She gives him a kiss on the cheek.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Henry walks in, alone. A solemn look on his face as he carries a large bag with the casino logo on.

He opens it and pours a mountain of cash onto his bed.

He stares at it for a few moments then lets out a SIGH.

Henry picks up a tied bundle of notes and leafs through it. He throws it back onto the bed.

He lies down on the bed, pushes the money aside and falls asleep.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Henry sits opposite Charles at a table in the corner. The cafe is almost full.

Henry looks depressed as Charles smiles.

CHARLES
Henry, my dear boy, I really don't
know what you're moping around for.
I don't know how you did it but you
did. Cheer up, for goodness sake.

Henry sips from his cup and shakes his head at Charles.

HENRY
I've worked so hard the last year
Charles, I don't understand it
either. It's just--I mean the
money, it really doesn't seem to
matter to me.

Charles LAUGHS loudly.

CHARLES

Henry Sugar, not caring about money? Well I do believe I have just about heard everything now.

Henry's attention is turned to a BEGGAR who sits outside, across the street. Henry stares at him through the -

WINDOW

- as he holds his hand out to passers-by. They ignore him.

BACK TO SCENE

Henry stands up and walks briskly onto the -

STREET

- and pulls out his wallet.

He walks up to the beggar and pulls out several notes. Hands them to him.

BEGGAR

Why...why thank you sir.

The beggar counts the money in his hand, his eyes widen.

Henry walks off along the street, a smile on his face.

BEGGAR(O.C)

God bless you sir.

Charles stands at the door of the cafe, shakes his head as his gaze follows Henry.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Henry enters with a smile on his face. He collects the money and unbinds it. Stacks it all on the desk by the window.

JOHN WINSTON(V.O)

For whatever reason Henry was a changed man. He admits that the transformation in him came as quite a shock but giving that money to the beggar gave him such happiness.

Henry opens the -

WINDOW

- the street outside is packed with PEOPLE.

JOHN WINSTON(V.O)
Giving his money away was more
rewarding to him than winning it in
the first place.

A scattering of notes floats out of the window and down to
the street.

At first nobody notices, but then a MAN does. He bends down
and picks up a note. Then looks up as more money floats
down.

HENRY'S APARTMENT

Henry LAUGHS as he throws the bundles of money out of the
window.

Hundreds of notes billow out of the window as SHOUTS are
heard from the street below.

WINDOW

The crowd fight over the notes. People try to gather as much
as they can. Stuff notes into pockets, hats and the like.

HENRY(O.C)
It's all yours people, I hope you
enjoy it more than I did.

A POLICE SIREN(O.C) is heard.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Henry opens the door to reveal a POLICEMAN, he walks inside
with a grave face.

POLICEMAN
Mr Sugar?

Henry closes the door and takes a seat.

HENRY
Yes Officer, is there a problem?

The Policeman shakes his head and takes a seat opposite
Henry.

POLICEMAN

Yes Mr Sugar, there is. Your little act of charity earlier almost caused a riot.

Henry is taken aback.

HENRY

A riot? Surely it's not against the law to give away money?

POLICEMAN

Unfortunately it's not Mr Sugar, however littering is. I could have you arrested for that alone.

Henry shakes his head with a wry smile.

HENRY

I'm sure all of my **litter** was picked up Officer.

POLICEMAN

Maybe, but this sort of act is madness Mr Sugar and very irresponsible of you.

The policeman removes his helmet and holds it to his side.

POLICEMAN

There are a lot of people in much greater need of charity Mr Sugar. The homeless? Children without a family to protect them?

He stands up and walks to the door.

POLICEMAN

I'll leave you with a warning this time Mr Sugar, but let this never happen again. I suggest you make better use of your charity in future.

The policeman nods and opens the door, walks out.

Henry stands for a moment, deep in thought.

INT. HENRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Henry sits in his chair.

JOHN WINSTON(V.O)
That is where I come into the
story. I was to be his accountant.

JOHN, a middle-aged man sits opposite Henry. Grey suit, grey person.

HENRY
Mr Winston, I will courier a check
to you once a month. With the money
I send, I want you to do whatever
it takes to finance the building of
orphanages in all of the countries
I visit.

John nods. They stand and shake hands.

JOHN WINSTON
If I may ask Sir, why orphanages?

Henry smiles.

HENRY
Why not my good man?

John smiles back.

MONTAGE - HENRY WINS MONEY, TRAVELS THE WORLD AND ORPHANAGES
GET BUILT

-- Henry sits at a Blackjack table. Large pile of chips get
pushed to him.

-- John opens an envelope, pulls out a cheque for £500,000.

-- Henry arrives in Paris.

-- CHILDREN play in an orphanage.

END MONTAGE

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

SUPER: 20 YEARS LATER

Henry sits on his bed. He looks up at a map of the world on
the wall. Many pins placed in different countries. He
smiles.

JOHN WINSTON(V.O)

In twenty years, Mr Sugar had won
over thirty million pounds and
together we set up more than twenty
orphanages.

Henry stands up and walks over to a -

MIRROR

- on the wall. He looks at himself with pride.

Slowly his body becomes transparent. All of his organs are
now visible.

In his chest, there is a blood clot.

BACK TO SCENE

Henry frowns and puts his hand to his chest.

JOHN WINSTON(V.O)

I never heard from him again.

Henry sits back on his bed. Ashen faced.

INT. QUIET BAR - DAY

A typical bar room.

John and MR BROWN(late 30s) sit across from each other at a
table.

JOHN WINSTON

He was such a modest man, Mr Brown.
His story needs to be told.

Mr Brown leans back in his chair. A smile washes over his
face.

JOHN WINSTON

And it is such a wonderful story.

FADE OUT