

Make Your Own Luck

Luck is a relative thing.
What might be good luck for you could be considered bad luck for me.
Let me give you an example.

When Steve and Chris were in their late teens, Chris decided to move out of his parent's house. His parents were going through one of their periodic re-unions and this time had decided to live in his mother's house.

Chris' father had been willing to cough up for what the estate agents laughingly called a town house, but was in fact a bed-sit with delusions of grandeur. A town house had a kitchen and living room downstairs and bathroom and bedroom upstairs. It was small and pokey, but very few nineteen year olds had their own house and it was a meeting place for Chris and his friends as well as a home to many impromptu post-pub parties.

When Chris and Bas had got married, they had moved into his father's house (they were still living with Chris' mother) and rented the town house out to a couple of Bas' friends, Kelly and Pete. These two had married young and were on a very tight budget.

When they had divorced a couple of years later, Pete had kept the house on. He was still in his early twenties and had an interesting approach to interior design. He had got two friends who were part time graffiti artists to come round with their aerosol cans and decorate the four small rooms of the flat.

They had painted a nice mural of fishes and sharks above the bath, but had placed a large arrow with the words "Place Poo Here" above the toilet. The artwork in the kitchen had a nice culinary feel, but the centrepiece of the living room was a large anarchy symbol and a semi-naked valkerie.

Some years later, Pete had moved out and Chris' dad had decided to sell the flat. Steve and Chris had been given the job of redecorating. They'd decided to start early in the morning, paint all the walls and then spend the rest of the day visiting all their old haunts in the area. They were the going to spend the night at the house "for old times sake".

Unfortunately, they had not anticipated how difficult the graffiti would be to cover. They had completed the first coat by eleven o'clock, but the Valkerie was still staring down at them with her nipples pointing unnervingly towards the kitchenette.

A second coat was put on within an hour, but there were still the outlines of a shark on the bathroom wall and anyone unsure about where to put their poo could still get faint advice through the two coats of paint.

They went out for lunch and came back for a third coat. The images were distinctly fainter, but the anarchy symbol, which was painted in black on a white background, was still clearly visible.

By now, they'd run out of paint, so while the third coat was drying, they went to buy more paint.

Fortunately, it was a hot sunny day and the paint was drying quickly, but it was now early evening and the fourth coat took a little longer. Steve was starting to worry that they might not make it to the pub at all.

Chris told him not to worry. The licensing laws had just changed and pubs were open until eleven o'clock. They'd got time to get to the pub before last orders. They knew

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the area well and knew that if they could get to the Rose and Crown before they shut the doors at time, they could stay there well into the early hours.

They slapped another coat of paint on and dashed out for the pub.

Chris ran ahead, but when he arrived at the Rose and Crown he found the doors shut.

“What’s wrong?” asked Steve.

“I don’t know, we’re too late. They’ve already locked the doors.”

“We can’t be. It’s only twenty five to eleven.”

“We better try the Dog and Duck.”

The Rose and Crown was some distance from the other pubs in the area, but they’d gone there hoping for a lock-in. By the time they got to the Dog and Duck it was quarter to eleven.

The pub doors were open, but it was clear that they were no longer were serving.

“Sorry, lads,” said the landlord. “You’re too late.”

“How come?” asked Steve. “The licensing laws have changed. The pubs are open until eleven.”

“Not round here, they aren’t pal. When the law changed we had a lot of bother with people getting tanked up in that last half-hour and starting fights. We’d also got to pay the staff an extra hour so we had a meeting of the pub watch members and decided to go back to the half ten closing.”

“Is there anywhere we can get a drink?”

“Not round here, pal. Sorry.”

They decided to head back to the house. Steve put the kettle on while they decided what to do. Chris started rummaging through the cupboards in the kitchen.

“Eureka!” He suddenly cried and came out from the cupboard under the sink brandishing a can of lager.

“Is that all there is?” asked Steve.

“I’ll look.”

He disappeared back into the cupboard for five minutes but could find no further beer.

“I’ll split it with you,” said Chris.

“No, I think I should have it. It was you who persuaded me to put that extra coat of paint on instead of going to the pub.”

(And here’s where the luck comes in.)

“Alright, I’ll toss you for it.”

“What? With my luck?”

“What do you mean, your luck? We’ll both have the same chance. Fifty-fifty.”

“Oh, sod it. Alright.”

“Heads or tails?”

“Heads.”

Chris tossed the coin high and let the coin fall on the floor.

“It’s tails,” said Chris.

“Bugger. I knew that would happen.”

Steve handed over the can.

(And here’s the question of good and bad luck)

At the time there was a competition on cans of beer. Some of the cans contained money. The winning cans contained various amounts. Some contained ten-pound notes others contained different amounts up to the main prize of a cheque for one hundred thousand pounds.

The method of dispensing these amounts was by means of a straw contained in a small capsule full of water. When you pulled back the ring pull, the straw popped out of the can.

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So that you couldn't tell which cans contained the prize just by weighing the cans, the prize cans didn't contain beer, but instead contained a liquid that ensured that the weight of the composite was the same as any other can.

On this fateful day, Chris pulled back the ring pull and out popped a small plastic straw.

"What the...?" said Chris.

"You've won a prize," Steve told him.

Chris took the straw out and looked for the beer. He shook the can expecting the beer to froth out of the can but nothing came out. He then turned the can upside down and shook it vigorously but this only produced a small amount of clear liquid. The can was obviously heavy enough to contain beer so Chris went looking for a can opener. Most of the things had been removed from the house and his search was unsuccessful, so he decided to attack the can of lager with a screwdriver while chanting in a semi-Neanderthal fashion "Give me the Beer!"

When he finally got into the can, he found it contained nothing but a clear liquid with a slightly salty taste.

He sat back disappointed.

"Aren't you going to see what you've won?" asked Steve, trying to brighten the mood. "It could be one hundred thousand pounds."

This cheered Chris up a little and so he unravelled the straw. It contained a crisp new ten-pound note.

So here's the rub.

A hundred pounds would definitely have been a lucky win. Having a can of beer would also have been a result, but a ten pound prize was somewhere on the cusp. Anybody else would have been over the moon if ten pounds had suddenly popped out of a beer can, but really in this situation what Chris wanted was beer.

And this is what makes it a question of luck. Winning the tenner was good luck, but missing the much needed beer could be considered bad luck. The whole story definitely has something to do with luck, but is it good or bad? Where does the line between good and bad luck come?

Steve tried to explain this dichotomy to Chris.

"Oh sod it," said Chris. "We can use the tenner to get a cab into town. We'll go to a night club."

So they did.

And the moral is: whatever your luck is, good or bad, you have to make the most of it.