

Less Is More and More is Even More Than Less

Dirk changed his name. And not in a flimsy way either. Not like when a man in his 60's buys a grill and tells his wife to call him 'The Duke' in front of neighbors. No, Dirk really did it, in court, stamped by the finality of law.

What after all, he thought, could be done as Dirk Twott? Nothing heroic. Nothing that could steer the ship or change the plot. Not much, Dirk Twott thought. Not much nor a whole lot.

When the Judge asked him if he thought a Christian name was something to be given up, traded, bought, he said, Judge, what is there that has been given that *cannot* be *bought*?

The Judge furrowed his heavy brow and conceded, Not a whole lot, Mr. Twott. But what is so wrong with a name like Dirk? It's at the least *abrupt* is it not?

Other than *His* that is on most high, *Lord, King, Yah-something or other, God*, name a name that is succinct for succinct sake that carries any... well, *agency*.

Agency, the Judge repeated. He was stumped. He read Dirk's new name to himself and asked, You really think you ought to do this, Mr. Twott? Cause the law in my court is final and the virtue of my compassion grows *succinct* if I suspect Tom Foolery.

Thomas Foolery. Now those five syllables have made an impression have they not?

Getting smart, Señor Twott?

He's made a name for himself whoever he is, is all I mean. Now in regards to moving forward anew... Judge, I thought an awful lot, and

heck, me thinks I ought.

The Judge's brow nearly sunk past his chin.

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*One week prior*

Dirk was flipping through the Yellow Pages. Just like he did every afternoon. Running his hands over the names, his fingertips absorbing the ink. There were muscular names like 'Bronson Thorpe'. Yummy names like 'Moses Chutney' and 'Barry Paltrow'. He smiled at one that sounded like a sword fighter... 'Sergio Bick'. One he fancied a romantic writer, 'Forest Twombly'.

Why, Dirk thought, why couldn't I have been named *Forrest Twombly*?

But that day he noticed something about the way the names were displayed. The last first, the comma, and then the first and middle. He slapped the giant book and knew right then and there he had solved his problem. You see, Dirk knew what he wanted to be called all along, he just didn't know who would ever take him seriously if he introduced himself as 'Batman'.

Dirk yelled to his brother, THADEUS, get your ass in here!

Thad came in a hurry and there was Dirk in his usual kitchen position... hunched over the Yellow Pages, fingertips as black as advertising.

Jesus, Dirk, what is it?

I've got it!

Got what?

The name.

You shouting at me like that for another name?

This is it though.

Well, you don't need to be shouting my full name. Makes me feel like I'm in trouble.

Thaddeus?

Well, yea. Momma only called me that when I was fittin' to catch a switch.

But Thaddeus carries such weight, such agency.

Suppose I don't need no more *agency*.

Couldn't hurt to have a tad.

Really never minded 'Thad'. Besides, a man makes the name not the other way around.

*Archibald Leach.*

Come again?

Before Cary Grant was Cary Grant he was Archibald Leach. Now who made what and what made who?

What you got in mind, Dirk? Something new?

Nope.

Thaddeus rolled his eyes. Still *Batman*, then?

Dirk drum-rolled on the phonebook with his fingers... ANNE!

AND the name, yes, I'm ready.

No. ANNE. Gonna change it to *Anne*... *Anne Robin*.

Thad stared at Dirk. A little wooden bird popped out from the clock that hung above the kitchen table and cuckoo'd four times. They looked at their daddy's old clock. Dirk acknowledging the bird, Thaddeus the time and turned to leave the kitchen.

Now I ain't messing with you, Thaddeus. Just take a look at this.

Dirk tore off the bottom of the page and grabbed a pen.

Dirk said, For all the people out there just like me... born into a trivial title, marveling at the possibilities on these blond pages of the phonebook... this is how they'll read mine.  
Dirk began to write on the strip of paper...

"BATMAN (comma) ANN ROBIN."

Thad scratched the fuzz on his 2nd chin.

The last the first, the first the ladder! Ain't it perfect, Thad.

I see what you did there, Dirk.

Anne Robin.

And who?

Just start calling me Anne Robin, ok?

Don't you think Anne is a little...

Little what?

I don't know... kind?

Well, yes Thaddeus, on the spectrum of phonetic nicety, Anne is... *gentle*. But what isn't compared to the upper cut that is 'Dirk'!

I like Dirk. It's abrupt.

Sharp as it is succinct.

Less is more.

And more is even *more* than less.

Thad shook his head and said, At times I don't know how it is the two of you and I is related, Mr. Twott.

Batman. *'The two of you and I is related...Mr. Batman'*.

And what's gonna make a man in his right mind call you *Mr. Batman?*

Same reason I call you Thaddeus.

And why was—oh, right.

Anne smiled at his brother and in unison the two men cuckoo'd, *Agency*.

-Cookie

