

After working sixty hours again for what reason

By Bob Hicok

The best job I had was moving a stone
from one side of the road to the other.
This required a permit which required
a bribe. The bribe took all my salary.
Yet because I hadn't finished the job
I had no salary, and to pay the bribe
I took a job moving the stone
the other way. Because the official
wanted his bribe, he gave me a permit
for the second job. When I pointed out
that the work would be best completed
if I did nothing, he complimented
my brain and wrote a letter
to my employer suggesting promotion
on stationery bearing the wings
of a raptor spread in flight
over a mountain smaller than the bird.
My boss, fearing my intelligence,
paid me to sleep on the sofa
and take lunch with the official
who required a bribe to keep anything
from being done. When I told my parents,
they wrote my brother to come home
from university to be slapped
on the back of the head. Dutifully,
he arrived and bowed to receive
his instruction, at which point
sense entered his body and he asked
what I could do by way of a job.
I pointed out there were stones
everywhere trying not to move,
all it took was a little gumption
to be the man who didn't move them.
It was harder to explain the intricacies
of not obtaining a permit to not
do this. Just yesterday he got up
at dawn and shaved, as if the lack
of hair on his face has anything
to do with the appearance of food
on an empty table.

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