

**Just  
a  
couple  
of  
Days**

**TONY  
VIGORITO**

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# Prologue:

## Logos Libido

*Why aren't apples called reds?* What a dumb question, I used to think, before a five-year-old named Dandelion taught me otherwise.

*Why aren't apples called reds?* One could just as easily ask, Why aren't bananas called yellows, or why are oranges called oranges? These are essentially the same question, no matter the outfit in which we dress her.

*Why aren't apples called reds?* All questions are female. All answers are male. If you're wondering why this might be the case, you are thinking with your feminine sensibilities. If you're considering why this *is* the case, you are thinking with your masculine senses. Questions are creative, intimidating, and periodically irritating. We may think them docile, we may try to ignore or suppress them, but their destabilizing power persists, pushing us toward our proper destiny. Answers are protective, giving us some ground, however shaky, on which to stand. Answers are cool, logical, but they can also become stubborn

know-it-all, resisting the emergence of new questions and answers and deteriorating into conservative old farts. Truth is a precarious balance between poignancy and peace. Truth lies within the perpetual prance of yin and yang.

*Why aren't apples called reds?* Look at her. She blushes exactly like an apple in the harvest sunshine every time she's pronounced. She is an honest question, unassuming and not at all arrogant. She is demure, to be sure, but her diffidence is her only defense to the endless parade of listless shrugs and wise-assed banalities that have been answering her every utterance since shortly after the dawn of time.

*Why aren't apples called reds?* She's an old question, one of the oldest, in fact, and a bachelorette until Dandelion introduced her to her long-lost answer. The oldest question, that is to say, the first question borne on the vibrations of a monkey's larynx, is of course *Why are we here?* After all, if we are to believe those rumors about Adam and Eve, this question surely occurred to them while they were still munching their apples of knowledge. It could not have been very long, perhaps while they were abashedly affixing fig leaf pasties over their genitalia, before one of them wondered why that stupid fruit was called an apple (or a pomegranate or whatever) in the first place.

*Why aren't apples called reds?* She does not mind these repetitious pronouncements of her essence. She used to fumble and fret, but now she pays her continued vocalizations only courteous heed. She found her answer, though most of us never received the wedding announcement. It was a wild party, some say the wildest the linguistic universe had ever seen. But the Logos, the realm of all questions and answers and the ultimate

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source of all knowledge, knows this to be an exaggeration. There is another question, the oldest question, whose impending union promises to be the highest time of all.

*Why are we here?* Come on people now, let's introduce them already. We know her answer. We're just afraid to admit it.

**part one:**  
gliding with  
the glow

**1** No event, no matter how preposterous, will fail to find itself indispensable to some future happenstance. Hence, as I sit here sipping instant coffee in my makeshift prison cell, I am led to wonder when the daily accidents of my existence began whispering among themselves and conspiring to place me, and perhaps humanity, in such a dire and peculiar predicament.

This is nuts, really. This is some previously undiscovered variety of craziness. This is a singularity, something else entirely, and I just don't get it. Everyone in town is laughing and dancing like there's no tomorrow (and that cliché may well be a literality), and I'm left counting my fingers like some bewildered bumpkin. Consequently, it would be premature of me to assert what exactly *this* is, and so, borrowing an irritating habit from a very good friend of mine, I must leave *this* temporarily undefined.

Here's the thing. I could theoretically retrace the path of occurrences leading to *this* from the beginning of time (and

perhaps I well should), but I cannot risk courting such infinite regress. It's a long story, as they say, but not that long, and so instead I shall retreat to a much safer point of departure from which to commence my telling: the weather. Yes, let's talk about the weather. Let us linger for a nostalgic moment in the safety of the humdrum, the shelter of the mundane, where the commonplace is common and not some misty reminiscence.

The weather was awful. It was hot—sticky, stinky hot, hot like a smoggy sauna with an overdue litterbox stewing in the corner, and it stayed that way all summer. The season had been pranked by the El Niño weather devil in the Pacific Ocean. Dr. Blip Korterly, my best friend, says El Niño is Spanish for “global warming.” He’s joking. El Niño means “the child” (or more precisely, “the boy”), and indeed, the candy-brat climate was pegged on sugar and unable to simmer down. It was in this hyperactive atmosphere that Blip went mad. I hasten to add that he was not what you might term psychotic. Rather, he lost himself somewhere on the harmless side of lunacy, slightly south of innocuous but definitely north of demented.

It is at least possible that the disagreeable climate had something to do with the blossoming of Blip’s eccentricity. He certainly wasn’t the only person in our big Ohio town acting suddenly screwy. Last summer it seemed as if everyone was rocking their chairs frightfully close to the tip of their arcs. But lest I scapegoat the prevailing meteorological milieu, the sweaty weather cannot be held solely responsible for toppling Blip off his rocker. He had, after all, recently lost his job, and before then he was already tempting the point of no return. Never much of a cheerleader for cognitive conformity in the first place, he charged instead through the brambles and brush on the mar-

gins of consensus reality in search of berries most people wouldn't touch even if they could reach them. This past summer, however, Blip ate the wrong berry and lost sight of the beaten path altogether, and however hazy the line between innovation and insanity may be, he was unmistakably sipping iced tea with the hatters and the hares.

Perhaps it was appropriate, then, when he became the accidental and anonymous ringleader of what his wife once referred to as "mass meshugas." As far as I can tell, or as far as I'm willing to see, events began their inexorable dance toward *this* with a mania-inspired misdemeanor committed by Blip, unemployed and unesteemed professor of sociology and nouveau graffiti artist. He found a canvas for his artistic expression on an overpass near campus, a bridge under which most of the city's commuters had to pass every afternoon. After covering all the FUCKS and I LOVE YOU TRACYS on the bridge's side with black paint early one morning, he replaced them with a simple, unexplained expression, written in dripless white: UH-OH. Then he called at 4:00 A.M. to tell me about it, justifying his vandalism as "freedom of landscape" and refusing to explain what it was supposed to mean. He made me promise not to tell anyone, not even his wife, but it matters not who knows any of these trespassings and transgressions now.

For a few weeks, countless drivers on their way home from work could not help but read Blip's tag along with the dozens of billboards for a dazzling variety of consumer crap. As it happened, it piqued their collective curiosity and gave the urban workforce pause to think. Drive-time disc jockeys quickly assumed the role of moderator as commuters called in from their cellular phones to argue about the significance of the graffiti.

Untold speculation abounded as the dreary, air-conditioned masses projected their own anxieties onto the bridge, and it very quickly became the favorite topic of idle chatter as coworkers gabbed about the vandalism during their cigarette and coffee breaks like it was last night's popular sitcom. Blip's graffiti gave people something in common, however bizarre, and an esprit de corps never before known settled over the city like an intoxicating cloud of good cheer.

Then it happened, inevitably and yet wholly unexpectedly. Some bold soul responded, and an entire city was surprised and a little embarrassed that they had not thought of doing the same. It was simple. One day the bridge was broadcasting UH-OH, and the next day the graffiti had been replaced with an equally confounding message painted in a distinctly different style: WHEN? Blip nearly choked on his delight at this turn of events, and called me every hour to talk about it so he wouldn't burst and tell someone else.

"I'll let it be for a while," he resolved. "But I'm gonna have to respond."

"What will you say?"

"How should I know? I don't even know what we're talking about."

This was not the case with everyone else, who now debated their personal takes on the graffiti exchange at every opportunity. Local religious zealots claimed it was an omen from on high or thereabouts, while employers pointed out that the number of sick days taken by their employees had plummeted since the enigmatic declarations had appeared. One local columnist offered his own wry observations, claiming to be surrounded by morons and casting himself above such desperate ridiculousness.

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He was relieved of his column following a torrent of angry letters from readers. Wise guy.

And so it developed. Public enthusiasm for what came to be called “Graffiti Bridge” was overwhelming. Mayor Punchinello originally decried the graffiti as a blatant show of disrespect for the law and a scar upon the landscape, and vowed to put whomever was responsible behind bars. He toned down his rhetoric immediately, however, after a public outcry ensued when someone leaked to the press that he had ordered the bridge sandblasted. The mayor’s spokespersons immediately denied the rumor, what with an election in November, and the graffiti stayed.

Then came Blip’s response, despite increased patrols around the bridge. Surprising everyone, he broke with the initial one-word pattern and wrote an entire phrase, taking the time to paint: JUST A COUPLE OF DAYS. He resisted phoning me until the next evening to see what I thought.

“It works,” I said, not wanting to encourage him.

“My ass it works. That phrase has never worked a day in its life. It dances, man, it dances across the side of that bridge.”

Working or dancing, the city was in a mild uproar for the next two days, eager to see what would happen. Strangers shared amiable smirks of solidarity with one another on the street, bars and coffeehouses made record business, and the traffic jams under the bridge took on a festive atmosphere no authority could or would suppress. Vendors set up tents and tables on the median, and picnics and Frisbees soon followed.

Local ad guys were surely incensed. Some sloppy graffiti on a highway overpass was gaining the coveted attention they never received for their flashy billboards. To add insult to injury, a

monkey-wrenching truck driver demolished a billboard near the bridge with a few pounds of dynamite. He was arrested and questioned about the bridge as well, but his travel log, stamped at truck stops around the country, provided a reasonable alibi. In the end, he received a nine-month jail sentence, but SALE EXTRAVAGANZA! had still been reduced to ZA!

But two days passed, then three, then four, and nothing at all happened. Nevertheless, it was generally agreed that the meaning of COUPLE was not to be taken literally, for if it was, the mysterious scribe would have written TWO DAYS instead. COUPLE was taken to mean a few, or several, or however long it took for something to happen or for another reply to appear. Granted, the traffic snarls around the bridge were no longer so lighthearted (or frequent, for that matter), but the local population enjoyed the saga too much to let semantics get in the way. Blip was thus granted poetic license. He had been worried when the initial excitement dissipated, fearing he had foolishly ruined all of the fun.

“All right,” Blip breathed a sigh of relief one day in late September, after it was apparent that Graffiti Bridge had not waned in popularity. “It’s his turn. But God help him. This dialogue has outgrown us already, and there’s no telling where we’re headed now.”

**2** “What if this happened?” Blip halted our heretofore silent stroll across Tynee University, which despite its name was the largest campus in the country. I stopped reluctantly, sensing a stark-raving delusion on the swell. My intuition was confirmed when I turned around and found Blip standing motionless,

staring into his Styrofoam cup of cranberry echinacea tea and muttering under his breath. “They’re putting,” he began aloud, “they’re putting poison in the teas. Small amounts of a mild toxin, so that anyone who drinks herbal tea for health will only get sicker, see?” He slapped my arm with the back of his hand.

“What?” I looked past him at a small crowd of people gathering nearby in an attempt to hide my irritation at his increasingly fantastic paranoid fantasies.

“Poison!” he emphasized. “Don’t you see? Any healing properties are canceled out then!”

“Blip . . .,” I began.

“Who’s gonna drink tea that makes you feel sick, eh?” He heaved the tea out of his cup. The broken mass of liquid flew several feet to his side and splashed onto a squirrel, flattening its tail and making it look more like a rat as it raced madly up the nearest tree.

“Christ, Blip! No one’s poisoning your tea!”

“You heard it here first,” he persisted. “They’re poisoning the teas.” He shook his head in sorrow, and so did I. Blip was a professor of sociology, but his department was being combined with the Anthropology, Political Science, Psychology, History, English, and Philosophy departments. It was part of Tynee University’s downsizing and restructuring plan, combining all these departments into a single Humanities Department, which itself would be smaller than any one of the previous departments. Consequently, a good many Ph.D.s were going to lose their jobs. Blip was one of them, and he was not taking it well. He began spouting bizarre conspiracy theories the morning after the decision was finalized late last spring, calling to tell me that Tynee Industries was disposing of its low-level radioactive waste by

selling it off in minute quantities as staples through its office supplies branch. I, Dr. Flake Fountain, was unaffected by the restructuring. I was a molecular biologist then. Now I'm a threat to national security as well.

"Here's something interesting." Blip snapped out of his herbal tea despondency and stooped to pluck a mushroom growing in a patch near the walkway. "Do you realize that this mushroom is bigger than the entire Green?"

"You haven't been eating those mushrooms, have you?"

"These are Haymaker's mushrooms. They're only mildly psychotropic, but very poisonous," he responded matter-of-factly, beginning to tap his foot, as was his way whenever he became excited. "But see, this isn't a separate organism. What's in my hand is only a single part of a much larger whole. Look around, man. You'll notice these little brown bells all over the Green, whenever it's drizzled a lot." He walked me along the sidewalk, pointing out the peppering of small mushrooms that were scattered everywhere. "See, the mushrooms are just the fruiting bodies of a much larger organism that exists underground. Mushroom roots are called mycelium, and the mycelium is actually a huge network of fibers that are entwined and interconnected beneath our feet. It's just like an aspen grove. It looks like a bunch of different trees, but they grow rhizomatically, and are actually only a single tree. Did you know that?"

"Since when are you a botanist?"

"Mycologist," he corrected. "And you should know the difference, a biologist like yourself. Mushrooms aren't plants. They don't have any chlorophyll."

"I'm a *molecular* biologist," I began to explain, then waved him off. Blip already understood the distinction. He was only

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hassling me for what he claimed was my excessive knowledge of the minutiae of life and my relative ignorance of the bigger picture. I amended my question. "Since when are you a *mycologist*?"

"I overheard a student talking about a class she was taking. She said there's probably a single mycelial network beneath the entire Green. One organism. Pretty cool, huh?" Before I could nod, he continued, quickening the tap of his foot. "And you know what else? There are more connections in this mycelial network than there are in a human's neural network. That means it's *aware*."

"She said she learned that in her class?"

"Well not the last part. I added that on. But it makes sense, don't you think?" He hopped in front of me. "You think for one minute this humongous fungus under our feet isn't observing us right now? Think about it. There must be more than a hundred billion connections underground here. This thing is humming with awareness. You can even feel it if you pay attention." He closed his eyes and made a show of feeling the ostensible hum of the mushroom. After a moment he popped them wide open in theatrical excitement. "Man," he gushed. "People don't even realize they're being scanned by an extraterrestrial as they amble across the Green." He nodded his head and looked around the ground. "Yeah, it's got us all figured out."

This last embellishment marked a new direction for Blip's eccentricities. Heretofore, his delusions had been confined to the surface of the planet. "What's this now?" I asked.

"This giant mushroom is an extraterrestrial probe, man. It's called a von Neumann probe, a self-replicating machine. That's what the space cadets at NASA and SETI theorize would be the logical first step in space exploration. The way it works is you

send a few off into space in different directions, and whenever one of them detects a planet with favorable conditions, it lands and collects materials to build a duplicate of itself. The duplicate then takes off to another planet, and the original stays behind to search for life and collect and transmit data. For efficiency, the probes would have to be small, no bigger than a hockey puck, according to the astrophysicists. With a gizmo like that, they say the entire galaxy could be explored for signs of life in no time, relatively speaking of course.

“But here’s their mistake: They’re right on with the theory, but they’re wrong about the size. What they missed was right in front of their faces. The best example of a self-replicating machine is life. An advanced civilization, as a *molecular* biologist like yourself would no doubt agree, would have mastered the appropriate use of biotechnology by the time they engaged in interstellar exploration. So why would they build it out of metal or plastic? And guess what else? Mushroom spores are so small and light they can drift right off the planet. And their shells are so hard they can survive outer space until they meander across another planet. The beautiful part of it is that they’ll only self-replicate—reproduce, that is—if there’s life on the planet. That’s what fungi do. They’re really more like animals in that they live off the energy and nutrients of other life-forms. So, the spores won’t germinate until and unless there’s life on the planet. If there is life on the planet, it germinates and fruits.” He held up his mushroom. “And don’t you think the mushroom cap looks suspiciously like some sort of antenna or transmitting device?”

I shook my head more in amusement than necessary dis-

agreement, although his reasoning was certainly absurd. "It's an interesting theory."

"It's very interesting," Blip nodded gravely, scrutinizing the mushroom in his hand. "But it's not a theory."

I marveled at the internal validity of his figments, and that all of it was inspired by a few stray remarks of some college student. "So do you always eavesdrop on other people's conversations?"

"Of course!" He tossed the mushroom aside. "There's nothing better than walking around catching little snippets of the conversations of others. You wouldn't believe how many different things are being talked about out there, and all at the same time. Hell, I hope someone else heard what I was saying and spreads the word." He paused, waiting for an approaching student to draw near. "Little snippets of conversation," Blip spoke to me as the student passed. Blip broke into a smile so broad the corners of his mouth were patting him on the back. "Little snippets of conversation," he said to me again as an uptight-looking woman walked by. She put on her headphones.

"Come on," I said, growing irritated with my best friend-cum-lunatic. "Let's see what's going on over there." I pointed to the crowd, which had grown to be quite large and raucous.

Blip eyed the crowd warily. "Yes, let's do that." He led the way immediately, as determined as Don Quixote embarking on yet another fool quest. True to form, he stumbled as he strode off the sidewalk onto the grass, then yet again over an exposed root of the tree the squirrel had darted up earlier. The squirrel, sitting on a branch above him fluffing its tail, seemed to laugh at Blip's lack of grace before leaping and skipping along ever smaller boughs and twigs until it was in the limbs of another

tree. There it stopped and turned around, just in time to see me, captivated by this rodent's gymnastic ability, stumble over the very same root.

**3** “Hearken unto the Lo-ord, all ye fornicating heathens! Jeyzus is coming!” A preacher, wearing a T-shirt with READ THE BIBLE printed on the front and DRUID HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH on the back, stood in the middle of the crowd, hollering about hell and gesticulating like an inept stage magician all the while. “Jeyzus hates this copulating campus, all you whoremongers and masturbators!” His ranting canting delivery was constantly interrupted by heckles from the mass of students gathered, but he was nonetheless thoroughly enjoying himself. This was very clear. I had seen him on the Green before, and he seemed to thrive off the ricochets of his damnations and denunciations like any sadist grinning at the blood spattering off his whip.

“Jesus said, Judge not lest you be judged yourself,”<sup>1</sup> a female student bleated, attempting to argue with the preacher.

“He was not referring to those of us without *sin!*” the preacher boomed back. “*I*, Brother Zebediah, am without sin, ladies and gentlemen. *I* have entered the Kingdom of Heaven, and *I* am here to tell everyone in this infected flock that you are heading straight for the lake of . . .” He rotated his arm as if playing an air guitar. “*Fi-yurrrrr!*”

“All right, Brother Zygote! You tell ‘em!” A large male student jeered and cheered. The congregation followed his lead.

“You’re like a bunch of copulating rabbits! Just spill your seed anywhere you feel like it, governed by your penises!” The

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crowd burst into laughter. “Worshipping your penises! Letting your *penises* rule your lives!”

“You just like to say *penis*!” the heckler yelled back, much to the amusement of all assembled. “Say hey, where’s the little woman today?”

“At home, of course,” Brother Zebediah snorted.

“She pregnant?” someone else called out.

“Not yet, but the factory’s still open. Sister Sally and I are going to repopulate the Earth with people who think like us.”

“*Seig Heil!*” Heckler clicked his heels together and saluted him with an outstretched fist.

“Sir, you’re being rude!” Brother Zebediah thundered at him. “I’m trying to preach a message!”

“Sir, you’re going to hell! How’s that for rude?” Heckler responded. Other members of the herd contributed less beligerent protests. “Tell us again about the time you did acid!” Heckler’s voice boomed above the rest.

“It’s true,” Brother Zebediah admitted. “I lost half my brain to LSD in the sinful sixties. But that just makes things fair, children, otherwise I’d be so far above you kids that we couldn’t communicate! So listen carefully and *be not deceived!*” Brother Zebediah picked up a bright orange laminated poster board and began to recite what was on it. “Masturbators, Feminists, Adulterers, Whores, Homosexuals, Lesbians, Hippies, Buddha-heads, Evolutionists, Blasphemers, Drunkards, Pro-choicers, Pagans, Potheads, Mormons, Jews, Muslims, Hare Krishnas, and especially *Fornicators* are going to *hell!*”<sup>2</sup> He hurled the poster of the damned aside and roared in self-congratulatory fury, “Jeyzus is coming! Jeyzus is *coming!*”

“Jesus is coming?” Heckler retorted. “Is that some kind of dirty joke?”

“Let’s take a little survey.” Brother Zebediah ignored the laughter and began anew. “How many *masturbators* do we have here?”

Heckler raised his hand, followed by others. “Wait, does it count if I masturbate by myself?”

“Masturbators! Be not deceived! You’re going straight to *hell!*”

“Do you masturbate?” Heckler called back.

“No, I do not masturbate, you pervert!” Brother Zebediah pointed at him, flinging righteous lightning from his fingertip. “You sinner! You covet my godliness! You’re jealous ’cause you’re running around jackin’ off! You could lay one of these cheap campus whores every night and still go home and smack your monkey!” Uproarious laughter prevented Heckler from responding immediately, and Brother Zebediah quickly continued. “And how many *pot* smokers do we have here?”

Heckler and his buddies cheered enthusiastically.

“Well I got bad news, children. You fail. Go directly to hell! Do not pass Go, do not collect two hundred dollars. Smoke that pot, you’re gonna rot! Drink that booze, you’re gonna lose! *Fornicate*, and you’re not gonna see that pearly gate!”

“But God made marijuana!” one of Heckler’s comrades yelled.

“God made poison ivy, too, that doesn’t mean you should roll around in it!”

“Well, what if you eat it?”

Brother Zebediah furrowed his brow a moment, consider-

ing the question, then replied, quite seriously, “Well, you’re still ingesting it, so yes, you qualify for hell.”

Heckler’s comrade, not terribly swift, crossed his arms and shook his head, shifting awkwardly from foot to foot. Brother Zebediah took advantage of his upper hand and immediately resumed his evangelical survey.

“And how many *feminazis* do we have here?”

“What if I like women to dress up like Hitler and crap on me?” Heckler came back strong, and I laughed out loud with everyone else. I glanced at Blip, perhaps to share a smile, but he seemed oblivious of everything but a cup of tea resting near Brother Zebediah’s feet.

Before the laughter dissipated, a female student, wearing combat boots, lots of leather, and a buzz cut, pushed out from the crowd and sauntered into the middle of the circle. “You think you’re some prophet and we’re the jeering heathens, don’t you? But you’re not; you’re just the village idiot, do you understand that? You don’t know anything about spirituality, brother. You’re not preaching love. What you’re preaching is *hate*.”

“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness!”<sup>3</sup> Brother Zebediah quoted his Bible to the woman and the crowd. “Love is the fulfillment of the *laws*! See what sin, what feminism, will do to you girls?” He pointed at the woman. “It’ll turn you into a whorish butch bull dyke feminazi witch! God’ll pick her up and skip ’er across the lake of fire like a flat smooth stone!”

The woman paused a moment, then, to everyone’s astonishment, slugged Brother Zebediah square in the jaw, knocking him flat. Scarcely had the collective “Oooooooooo . . .” escaped

the lips of everyone when three large men, apparently plainclothes security guards, tackled the woman. Instantaneously, three of her similarly clad friends jumped into the struggle. The crowd, including Blip and myself, stood dumbfounded. A fourth security guard entered the clearing, eyed the coed wrestling brawl (which was still anybody's match), and yelled into his radio, "We need backup on the Green!" Then he grabbed ahold of Brother Zebediah, who was dazed and getting up slowly from the ground. "Are you okay, sir?"

Brother Zebediah nodded, looking slightly stunned, and reached for his cup of tea on the ground.

"Come with me then," the guard said. "I'm afraid I'm going to have to place you under arrest."

Brother Zebediah nodded, wiped his brow, and took a sip of tea. It was at that moment that Blip cracked, as suddenly and dramatically as an ice cube fracturing in a hot beverage.

"No!" he screamed, racing toward Brother Zebediah. "It's poisoned!" He slapped the cup out of the preacher's hand and into the face of the security guard, who then grabbed Blip seconds before the crowd rushed inward like a collapsing star, and pandemonium was born.

I was jostled backward, and eventually stumbled out of the melee. I ran to a bench and stood on it to try and find Blip. I needn't have bothered. A great wind suddenly descended, radiating everyone's hair out from the center and startling the throngs back into individuality. A stealth helicopter, an inexplicable presence, hovered directly overhead.

"DISPERSE IMMEDIATELY," came a disembodied, steely command from the bullhorns mounted underneath. "DISPERSE IMMEDIATELY OR YOU WILL BE GASSED."

Everyone more or less dispersed, as much as was possible under the circumstances, and pandemonium became panic. I located Blip, still in the center, struggling against the wind and the grip of a security guard who had him in a bear hug. Shortly thereafter, the helicopter began moving in larger circles around the area, and the wind died down. The other security guards had lost the women they were originally combating, and instead arrested Brother Zebediah and Blip with a vengeance. Blip spotted me and hollered, “Flake! Call my wife!” just before being dragged off with the preacher to a nearby patrol van.

Brother Zebediah, also struggling against the guards, screamed rabidly at the fleeing students. “I am your spiritual alarm clock! Don’t hit that snooze button! I’m your wake-up call! I hope you all run home and are tortured by nightmares of *hell!*”

**4** The average ocular distance, that is, the space between a set of human eyes, pupil to pupil, is 6.5 centimeters. Tibor Tynee, the president and CEO of Tynee University (so renamed at his financial insistence), has an ocular distance no greater than 4 centimeters. A lifetime of narrowing his eyes and tightening his lips has left his face decidedly pinched. The expansive facial features of Blip’s wife, Dr. Sophia Carthorse, are precisely the opposite. This was apparent even over the telephone as I called her and relayed the news about Blip. She did not seem surprised, and asked only that I meet her at the police station in an hour. I agreed, allowing that I’d be a little late due to a 1:30 meeting that had been scheduled for me with President Tynee.

Tibor Tynee is a short man. He has short hair, a short body, and a short temper. Small but powerful, he is a dinky Lilliputian