

Orb

[A Big Business, Fresh Science and Seven Sins Satire]

In a world of thorny vestiges, where there is fear and fright,
Remove the rose colored glasses to peer boldly into the night.
Sarcasm is profoundly lost on those who routinely choose
To avoid their knowledge of it ---- so when you snooze you lose!

Wrath, greed, sloth, pride, lust, envy, gluttony roam Earth in abound,
Lurking inside the walls of big business, cult religions and the pound.
Orb hereby challenges the reader to find its truths and end the malaise
The gauntlet is thrown, think and ye shall find a path out of the haze.

**[How many truths, how many injustices, how much history, sarcasm and scientific truth
can you discover within Orb? The possibilities are limitless!]**

By Gio Iannotti

One

“Moi, Moi,” Avaritia, the Absolute Supreme Seadog of Vitiosus barks. “Where is that pig of a scientist when I want him?”

Minions pound out his summons on drums of gold. The number of beats put Moi on high alert. The A.S.S must have finally gotten to the report Moi communicated telepathically 3.1556926×10^{19} picoseconds ago.

For anyone interested, 3.1556926×10^{19} picoseconds, is the equivalent of one year on the Milky Way Galaxy Blue Orb referred to by some as Earth.

This is an extremely irrelevant factoid, however for any type of anaerobic sludge transformation sucking life off rock 27 million light years from that terrene.

Vitiosus, located in NGC 5457, also known as the Pinwheel Galaxy, is a perfect example.

#####

Telepathic communiqué has been around for zillions of years, and if you ask Moi, it needs a definitive overhaul. Too many messages go unnoticed, unwanted, unanswered. It doesn't matter how advanced, how enlarged, how exposed to continuously pelting laser pulses a brain is, none can possibly process the quantity of messages someone like the Absolute Supreme Seadog receives in a femtosecond let alone one entire picosecond.

Splayed out in his usual ominous position next to Avaritia, gaseous bladder exposed and rumbling, Gula gurgles miserably, “Moi is abnormal. Never trust a cob roller who believes.”

“Such truth from one so engorged,” Seadog snarls. “Avaritia trusts no one.”

Golden drums pound three times heralding the arrival of Moi who pops in on the transparent wings of Invidia.

Vividly pink, partly from fright, (Invidia's silent wing wrap always does that to him), partly from excitement, (the summons from Supreme Dog might mean his project is in the running for the great prize), but mostly because his body was created by nature in that color, Moi bows as low as the bulk of his rotund frame allows. When he does, one of the yellow leggings he wears to help deflect pink begins to slip down his right rear hock. He shakes his dewclaw nervously in an attempt to thwart gravity.

Two

“You appear lately, Moi,” Seadog growls. “I hailed twice.”

“Not a very modern method of transport for an oinker of his ilk,” Gula dribbles, hideous goop oozing insolently from the cavity he uses as a mouth.

Flanking his A.S.S., Adjutant Sycophant Senator Ira Nasty snickers, hatred dancing from incandescent, flame red eyes. “When have you last moved a muscle, Gula? Is your mire of rot even transportable any longer?”

With eyes hidden literally in the back of his head, Avaritia studies his second in command closely. Ira Nasty is not a clot to be taken lightly. Throughout the universe, A.S.S. - A.S.S.I.N’s are held in trepidation widely.

“I am at your service, Sire,” Moi’s puny pink peepers survey the situation roundly. Bowing in front of Avaritia, the potbellied litterateur hopes to deflect the deepening vehemence in the chlorine-laced air. He is thankful his progenitor taught him the Art of Repel at an early age because he knows all of those in his present company are trying exceptionally hard to read his mind.

###

Most life forms on Vitiosus descend from one progenitor alone, although close to half of the populous can only claim to do so symbiotically.

Moi is not a symbiotic derivative and for him that is quite preferably and very thankfully so. Wouldn't it be embarrassing if the A.S.S. of Vitiosus knew how firmly Moi was consumed with streaks, at the moment?

All sizes and shapes of streaks whorl, not unlike a lamb roast rotating on a hot spit fire, along the neurons of his anaerobically transformed, suidae brain. Winning, losing, positive, unlucky, lightening, silver, blue, yellow, kill, bad, stubborn, liberal, mischievous, mean, streaks are all taking pains to capture his utmost attention.

Presently a very creative streak is applying a liberal helping of elbow grease to a filthy window in Moi's soul. It is the very same window from whence his newest creation, the subject of his telepathically communicated message to Avaritia was born.

Three

“Vitiosus is a recalcitrant macrocosm!” Avaritia howls, prompting scores of drum tenders to beat on their instruments wildly.

“You there, slinking by, I order you to stop in your tracks.”

The symbiotically descended, candy apple red mutation attempting to disguise itself as a Vitiosus dandelion is taken aback.

Unfortunately anaerobic transformations like candy apple red are not schooled in the Art of Repel. Regardless of the degree of excitatory synaptic connections the parasitic spiny stellate cells in its reasoning cavity adhere to . . . its thoughts are easily read.

[Noi, da A.S.S. kannou be kall me,] it thinks as a hurdling lariat ropes it firmly at midsection, catapults it kicking and moaning into the air and slaps it down at the feet of Avaritia.

Splat!

“Vitiosus yields nothing of interest to me, any longer,” the Absolute Supreme Seadog howls, kicking candy apple with all of his might.

“Its insipid humdrum gyrations exhaust me! I need new life to feed on, new planets to conquer. If one of you decaying Vitiosus indwellers doesn’t earn the great prize soon, I’m going to have to kill something! In the meantime, Ira, this miserable specimen is yours. Take your temper out on it and perhaps you will stop grumbling for a while. The only thing worse than sucking on this decaying rubble is the snarly look you get when you’re in one of your moods. ”

###

Ira smiles at the prospect. Perceptions like this remind him why Avaritia won the power struggle so cleanly over his predecessor, Acedia . . . not that Ira didn't poke his hot sword in and out of the pyre when no one else of consequence was looking.

Acedia, a conglutinated consul with no intestinal fortitude, especially when coarse milled psyllium fiber was involved, was a master of discouragement. He never urged his subjects to embrace the proclivities of their temperament the way Seadog did which is exactly why there was never a question he would not accede for long.

After a less than stellar, quincennial reign, defined by intergalactic attacks on unwitting adversaries, dubious anti-terror policies, cuts in where-with-all for the poor, incompetent governance, and monitoring of telepathic communiqué without warrant, all Acedia's negativity earned him was barren boulder banishment to, Apis Pains, the dry, dead black hole planet in the center of NGC 5139.

It is understandable then, that any pickets, mole crickets, split tickets or wickets that needed to be crossed on Vitiosus to earn a spot in an exclusive, private school now included memorization, backwards and forwards, of the alliteration: Acedia ascends abysmally, apathetic plains amongst the aevidernal, algid, acid rains of Apis Pains.

Four

Ira sniggers as the specifics of Acedia's downfall cross his ancistroid psyche. It was a perfect coup unquestionably the most perfect in all of recorded history . . . and since Ira was the primary architect engineer it was also one of his finest hours.

"Um hmm," Seadog's grunt shakes Ira from his reverie. He takes several picoseconds to survey the protoplasmic bloom of matter shaking and jittering at his feet.

Harnessing radiation, Ira uses an electromagnetic beam dispenser to painstakingly dissect candy apple into seventeen equal slices.

Seventeen happens to be the operative number to inflict complete disrepair . . . one slice less and this conical alteration would have been able to attempt to glue its filament back together.

Splat! Splat!

As pieces of candy apple splat to the ground, the contents of its gooey glutinous innards splash over the planet's petrified sedimentary surface.

One coincidental side effect of the agglutination splash is that it is now possible for sloth-like deviants to slide over the hard surface very quickly.

Since those particular chromosomal variants are only used to crawling ever so slowly and thusly have developed no stop gap mechanisms, they are as slippery as a fry cook's forehead frizzling cabbage croquettes in a combination of lard drippings, beef tallow and cottonseed oil.

Five

Peel out screeches litter the sound bites of the chill atmosphere.

“Now you’ve done it,” Luxuria moans, clicking his exalted taste buds purposefully.

“I spent a perfect fortune on these white Alpha Zori’s, and paid an equally ridiculous commission for Buteo Rufinus to transport me to and from NGC4414. You know how I despise that long legged buzzard and the pitiful planoform he calls a ship! You owe me Ira! I’ll never get this red goo off of what you will have to admit, were beautifully partitioned shoes.”

“Real males don’t wear white,” Ira erupts vehemently. “You owe me for doing you a favor.”

“What would you know of fashion, Ira? Your clothes were never in style even when they were new.”

“Luxuria, you wimp,” Ira seethes. “Kick off those candy ass spats and fight me straight out.”

As the Bodily Harm Torsion Dashboard lights up and begins to whirr, Avaritia the Absolute Supreme Seadog of Vitiosus makes an unconventional, albeit very bold move.

Six

“Subordination Decree, $7.3580000000000005 \times 10^{-1}$, front and center, immediately,” Avaritia howls the command. “It is time for the sneak preview!”

A fluttering noise momentarily interrupts the peel out screech compression waves created by slippery sloth sickles whirling through the air. If you didn't know what you were listening for, you would miss it.

Flutter!

Splat!

Splat! Splat! Splat!

A telepathically communicated, myriad-D message with glowing white appendages, bows in front of its commander.

“Relieve your self,” Avaritia demands.

Without further ado, ‘Subordination Decree, $7.3580000000000005 \times 10^{-1}$ ’ begins its march through the microcosms of six enamored minds. Moi is not one of them for several good reasons.

First, sneak previews are only ever viewed by enamored minds and the only one that is presently not present, is pining Apis Pains away.

Second, Moi has never been considered by any planetary or interplanetary object to be enamored in any way, shape or form.

Third, and last but foremost in Moi's mind's eye is that even if he had the desire to send one of his spy-bots into Decree to overwhelm its program barriers with snarly, little, noxious,

bug shavings in an attempt to see what the big deal is about, the inclination would be completely over-ridden by the undivided attention the mean streak tugging away on his left ear now requires.

Seven

Avaritia, Absolute Supreme Seadog of Vitiosus; Adjutant Sycophant Senator Ira Nasty; Luxuria, Soldier of Extravagance Fortune; Invidia, Purveyor of the Silent Wings of Envy; Gula the Prominent, who hails from Gastro-omental Gluttony Major; and Superbia, Chum Deridious from planet Hubris Pride (who has so far been extremely, uncharacteristically quiet), partake of the multi-compartmented message imparted by ‘Subordination Decree, $7.3580000000000005 \times 10^{-1}$ ’, with dread.

WHEREAS, to attain the highest norms of official conduct required of the cross functional Vitiosus Leadership Team, Section 8, Article XIII of Subordination Decree, $7.3580000000000005 \times 10^{-1}$, provides for the specific, secure sharing suite of social networking clicks and mortars essential to fostering transparency within the burning integrated platform solutions associated with organic growth, demand creation, semantic mapping, segmentation, root cause analysis, long swigs of Kool-Aid and bounce rate dynamics.

And so it begins.

As the Decreed diatribe continues its leisurely scroll through the web of enamored mind lobes, several pairs of eyes cross and begin to undulate upwards, including those firmly ensconced in the back of Avaritia’s head.

Mercifully, the Decree reaches its almost final fifteen thousand, spiral-bound end before any one of the Vitiosus leadership team is driven to shoot it.

Eight

As anyone in the know, knows, the almost final end of any Decree, is always followed by the final end, which regardless of the level of Decree-Degree-Potential-Severity, (Urgent/Showstopper, High, Medium, Low, Cosmetic,) they always begin and end in a similar manner.

And so the final end begins:

Every Decree is assigned a (S.M.E.) Subject Matter Expert. The Subject Matter Expert for Subordination Decree, $7.3580000000000005 \times 10^{-1}$, is Adjutant Sycophant Senator Ira Nasty. Anyone with a question, requiring clarification of any part or subpart, or just wishing to infuriate the S.M.E. personally, should contact the Vitiosus A.S.S.- A. S. S. I.N. directly.

Whirr . . . whirr . . . whirr . . .

Grinding halt!

All of the Bodily Harm Torsion Dashboard gauges grind down to voluntary hiatus, in large part due to the mind numbing effects imparted by ‘Subordination Decree, $7.3580000000000005 \times 10^{-1}$,’ on participating leadership team members, as well the dreamlike spell of euphoria embracing Ira as his name runs over him in multi-compartmented, myriad-D images.

Nine

Now since any S.M.E. associated with any Decree must be a member of the leadership team, that doesn't mean any of them, actually ever wrote anything. On Vitiosus that task is the specific responsibility of policies, and procedures.

Policies and procedures, (PRs for short), in general weigh in as thin, black, spindly vermin with prodigious noses perfectly designed to sniff out rumors, secrets, and the more important wistful thinking of the planet populace.

Their signature back-backs are stocked full of grade-A, number 2 pencils, (already sharpened), white and black chalk only, and erasers (in all shapes and sizes). They are thereby ever prepared to make their mark on any smart board, of any color, as it scoots by.

Through skillful writing and wordsmithing, PRs hide and protect top secret secrets; twist, elongate or repel rumors, as necessary; and put an end quite neatly to any wistful idea attempting to cross the lattice laced chamber of a Vitiosus citizen's mind.

Now the first factoid about the appropriate use of the PR tag is that it only applies when two or more are working on a project together.

In groups of two plus, they rotate in circles so rapidly around each other to spin a yarn they might, more correctly be called policy, procedure, rapid, rotators, but all the added spit would suck a lot more life out of the atmosphere than warranted.

The last key factoid about PRs, before enough is said on the topic, is that each one on its own matures with a specifically unique moniker.

Keanu Standit, Boreas Saul, Suckov Lifov, Noah Mora, Mona Tony, Tee Dee Um are notorious examples. But the worst pestiferous driver of all, the one who is capable of sucking the last scintilla of nostalgia or wistful thinking out of any heretofore perceived perception, is Tyre F. Woods.

Ten

As is the norm for any Chief Executive Officer, wielding power over a substantive number of subjects, through healthy doses of toxic grandeur mass ideology and PR spin doctrine, Absolute Supreme Seadog is permanently jaded.

Sneak previews, new, trendy restaurants and even freshly conquered, touted planets don't hold his interest at bay for long. He is at ease, therefore to process Moi's report through his corpus callosum again. This time he processes in femtosecond bytes.

"Come hither hog maven follow me."

After a short jaunt on a two-person man pack they reach an area just outside the present agglutination splash zone. Peel out screech compression waves are faint enough, at this point, for Avaritia to be able to think clearly.

"Talk to me slop sloven, but do make it quick and efficient. Your left ear is radish red. Please do not attempt to explain why that is. Just tell the thing precipitating it to complete its job post haste, stop bowing . . . and pull that ridiculous legging up before any of my other impressionable subjects gets a good look at you."

"This splat of squalid rock you are showing me, in what appears to be a galaxy as boring as the one I am already in, please confirm your reported environmental readings."

"Yes, your most auspicious commandant," Moi grunts, teetering on the brink of imbalance as he attempts multi-task legging lifting and mean streak extraction, at the same time.

“The environmental readings on the orb I have discovered are these: nitrogen comprises 69 percent, oxygen constitutes an additional 30 percent and smaller doses of argon, carbon dioxide, neon, helium, methane, krypton and hydrogen complete the final one percent.”

“That is not a formula for life, Moi, and I don’t take telepathic distraction lightly.”

“Ah, but Absolute Supreme Seadog, there are living organisms on this planet already, and my process will transform the environment to meet our needs in no measurable matter of time at all. No pun intended.”

“What kind of living organism could survive in such a degraded condition?”

“Extremely dense ones,” Moi squeals, swine nose flaring with excitement.

“Define extremely dense in this particular circumstance.”

“Simple, sluggish, dull, heedless, distracted, inattentive,” Moi trills. “The changes will begin so unobtrusively, they will never notice until it is too late.”

“I see,” Avaritia grunts, even though he doesn’t.

Eleven

“The make-up of the atmosphere on the orb of my discovery contains a significant component of oxygen which, as you well know, is toxic to us. The other gases within its containment, as you also well know, are complimentary to our needs. So, if I could find a way to replace oxygen with an equal degree of chlorine, the environment would become favorable for our survival,” Moi snorts more purposefully.

A sudden, spontaneously happy feeling overcomes him as a very funny streak winds its way around the curves of his porcine tail.

“I do see,” Avaritia nods as a same page monitor sidles up to him and he steps on.

“Swine augur, please don’t explain why a shit eating grin has knotted your face into bizarre, scrunched up contortions. Let it be gone now! I need to very quickly understand the primary kernel of the science you are proposing, as well as the basic logistics of your offering. All of your forehead raising, eye squinting spasticity is making jhana citta absorption impossible.”

“Yes your very own liege. I apologize profusely.”

“Um hmm,” hunger pangs and prickly thoughts begin to consume him as Avaritia surveys Moi’s protruding, albuginous eyes with disdain.

[I should be munching down, right now on sweet potato chow hound bagelettes slathered with thinly sliced, briny lachs instead of listening to the vegan ponderings of one so snouted,] Seadog thinks.

[If the peccary puke doesn't get on with it, I might have to poke those eyes right out of his allantoid pate!]

“Hustle up Moi, I am warning you.”

“First I would like to take a moment to assure you that mine is a best value proposal. All of the (MIRS), most important requirements, for project success as regards: methods for automatic and dynamic cueing; knowledge-based processing; cyberspace multi-intelligence correlation; resource optimization and management; as well as the very essential component of deceptive costumery; have been exposed to independent tests for accuracy, reasonability and realism. That being said, my price is tunable.”

“I'll bet it is,” Avaritia shifts his weight from one tree stump like support column to the other.

Twelve

Whirr!

“You hear that, porky? The Bodily Harm Torsion Dashboard is beginning to heat up again. You better nail the brass tacks quickly, before I have to fly off to tackle other business. That is if you hope to secure any measure of precious where-with-all, while you still have my ear.”

“Yes, yes of course. The kernel is simple. Oxygen is a reactive gas, and so is chlorine. They both absorb and release energy in the process of combining and separating from other chemicals. Life is built on these reactions. My process will degrade and then transform the oxygen base of my quarry into a chlorine base, while the heedless attempt to define their sense of security via hundreds of “World Development Indicators,” like measures of gross domestic product; residential and non-residential fixed investment; stock and bond performance; demand deficient, frictional, technological, structural and seasonal unemployment; as well as their other more deeply debatable topics surrounding investments in infrastructure, education, health, poverty and trade. In a nutshell, Supreme Seadog, while the oblivious are busy being conned, they won’t see us coming.”

Whirr, whirr!

Moi picks up the pace, “Logistically, I will need ten dedicated, expendable drones, possessing common look/feel interfaces, with rigidly enforced enterprise-wide compatibility to space/ground situational awareness for telemetry, command routing, and communication across the universal enterprise. Thereafter, I will need to engage a certified doyenne to help design the

appropriate costumery fit-out prior to atmospheric collision. I am given to believe that Master of Disguise, Poseur Fraud, is available.”

At that pronouncement, Avaritia, Absolute Supreme Seadog of Vitiosus holds up his huge paw and says, “Silence!”

Telepathic communiqué overcomes the leader as he transmits directly into his second in command’s extrasensory receiver.

“Ira, stop spitting nails all over the sweet potato beds. I can hear you from here. You know how partial I am to them. Saddle up and join us please.”

ERRR! ERRR! THOMP!

Click . . . click . . . click!

“Ira Nasty at your command, sir,” the Adjutant Sycophant Senator salutes after he lands and marches his way to the fore.

“Do you need to split more hairs, on blubbery, bloginous goo my trenchantly, irreverent, adjutant, or can you answer a question without frothing?”

Ira Nasty shifts his mouth into neutral and says, “Ask away.”

“Did I or did I not banish Poseur Fraud to Life without Distinction on a bed of stale macaroons?”

“Hard, fetid, tatty ones, Supreme Seadog,” Ira spews.

“Then pray tell why swill-fry is recommending him for a project.”

“I am sorry, Absolute Supreme Seadog, but since I do not know that answer, would you like me to go investigate?”

“Very much so, Adjutant Sycophant,” Avaritia snarls, stimulated by both raw curiosity and the burning desire to keep Ira Nasty from beating the pulp out of the other members of the operative leadership team and/or the general constituency of the planet proper.

At a raise of the paw, drums pound out orders for the inquisition to commence immediately.

Ira Nasty tightens his belt, whistles for his crew and heads for his starship, heels clicking purposefully in goose-step, chilling rhythm.

Thirteen

As soon as the Adjutant Sycophant is out of site, Superbia Chum Deridious from planet Hubris Pride (who has so far been extremely, uncharacteristically quiet), transmits a request to join Seadog's side, to which he receives a come hither sign.

VROOM! VROOM! VROOSH!

Avaritia acknowledges the appearance of his third in command with a nod. Superbia, who holds the very important position of Treasurer of Vitiosus Mazumah and where-with-all, bows traditionally.

"Listen up," Avaritia tells him, which of course prompts the new arrival to rise.

Absolute Supreme Seadog turns back to Moi, four eyebrows raised to perplexion.

"How many drones did you say you would need to complete the mission?"

"Ten would do nicely, Supreme Supremacist Sir," Moi replies.

"Then we will fund seven, make note, Superbia."

Moi is almost beside himself, as an indubitably industrious winning streak pokes him pointedly in the side.

All of the statistical testing he has already completed, including Chi-square, piecewise, stepwise, local and segmented regression analysis; linear least squares dissection; negative likelihood ratio parsing; multivariate normal distribution evaluation; multivariate adaptive regression splines scrutiny; parametric method estimation; meta-analysis; survival analysis; Monte Carlo molecular modeling; permutation testing; jackknifing, bootstrapping, and flukiness, to name but a few, have indicated that five drones would be all that is necessary to do the job.

Seven will be cake, and isn't it almost a perfect outcome since that number correlates exactly to the quantity of significant landmasses on the orb of his destruction?

Fourteen

Seadog grunts, to his treasurer, “give warthog here enough where-with-all to get his project off the ground. By the way, Moi, as a point of clarification, no-one wins the prize until their project is completed successfully.”

“If I may ask, Supreme Seadog Master, what is the prize?”

“No-one but no-one gets to know what the prize is unless they have won it. That’s half of the point in vying, Moi. One of your corpulent chunkiness should get that.”

“Superbia, if you will be so kind.”

“Yes, a well . . .” the treasurer of Vitiosus holds his hand up and waves for a sign of approval.

“Impress him appropriately,” he directs R.J. when it arrives shortly thereafter.

ZAP.

The pyramidically shaped, widely whispered about Mazumah where-with-all symbol bolts its signature trademark permanently into Moi’s right shoulder. Only one corner of one of the three angles is etched in gold, however.

The personal treasury stamps’ penchant for right shoulder attachments is exactly how it earned the nickname Rivet Joint, RJ for short.

“Moi, please follow R.J. to my office now where you will begin to lay out your plans for all twelve of my mechanics to view. When your plans have been approved though each of the required levels, we will commence the process of drafting your promissory note. I will join you

momentarily. Oh, and R.J. make sure someone stays with him at all times. Moi that's only an escort badge we've given you. You can't be alone, at any time in my facility . . . yet."

Moi snorts with delight and quickly heads North, yellow leggings nicely stayed thanks to the dexterous ability of winning streak to provide tension at the top of all four of his hocks. Such vigilance just might mean this particular streak has something else up his sleeve, Moi realizes, but he'll cross that bridge when he comes to it.

Fifteen

Now alone on the tacky, tarmac together, Superbia leans in towards his master, “May I have a word, Avaritia?”

“You have the floor,” the Supreme Ruler grunts.

“Why do you think, Supreme One, that Luxuria, Soldier of Extravagance Fortune, hired Buteo Rufinus to transport him to and from NGC4414, when he possesses a much more modern, efficient starship of his own?”

“Is this a loaded question, because I have no Vitiosus-ly idea?”

“If anything’s loaded I’m guessing it’s loaded with buckminsterfuellerine molecules.”

“What?”

“I think Luxuria is hoarding his bucky balls.”

“You can’t be serious. Why would he do that?”

“Absolute Supreme Seadog, you know how our solider of extravagance fortune is. Do you not wonder then, how he could allow himself to be seen arriving on NGC4414, on one of the oldest planofrom ships in the universe, in the company of such a long legged, squirrely buzzard as Buteo Rufinus?”

“Now that you mention it, I can’t imagine. Is this why you have been so uncharacteristically quiet?”

“Yes.”

“You have been pondering the subject?”

“Yes.”

“Have you come up with anything?”

“Avaritia, unlike your second in command who has to launch an inquisition before he’ll go out on a limb, I have no problem taking wild ass guesses.”

“I must say, I admire your knack for that.”

“Who was the only member of the leadership team who didn’t vote to oust Acedia?”

“That would be Luxuria.”

“Righto, Sire!”

“So what are you thinking? He is planning to go collect him?”

“We only get our own fair share of bucky balls each quadragenial. Luxuria hasn’t taken his starship out in several cycles. I calculate he has now stored enough fuel to make it to Apis Pains and back without raising any red flags.”

“Hmmm, I need to mull this one over. In the meantime, if I don’t get my hand on some sweet potato chow hound bagelettes, there’s going to be hell to pay.”

“I forgot”, Superbia says apologetically, pulling a vacuum tight pouch out of his sleeve, “I brought you these.”

“Is that what I think it is?” Avaritia’s tongue licks the atmosphere in wild, uncontrollable expectation.

“Yes, Absolute Supreme Seadog, I picked up your favorite variety when I flew by the superette on my way in. I know how much you like thinly sliced, briny lach-slatherings on your sweet potato bagelettes.”

Sixteen

[Why is Superbia not my second in command?] Seadog wonders as he does often when an occasion such as this presents itself.

Yum! Chomp!

“Just so you know I do like variety. Every now and then, I have to admit I crave wild gefiltefish garnish in lieu of briny lachs.”

“I know that, boss. It didn’t feel like a gefiltefish day. By the way, I am very happy in my present position,” Superbia answers the unasked question. “I’m not an expert inquisitioner but I do know how to keep our where-with-all and Mazumah spotless. There’s an art to the amount of starch required during laundering.”

[Superbia’s got a point. He has his amortization schedules down pat . . . can’t imagine Ira ever wanting to get into skeleton parsing or temporal planning!]

Chomp!

“How many types of mortgages did you once tell me there were?” Supreme Seadog likes to explore tangents when he’s chowing down.

The inquiry makes his treasurer smile. There’s nothing that pleases him more than showing off his banking acumen when anyone requests it.

“Balloon, bridge, buy down, jumbo, offset, reverse, participation, seasoned, wraparound, non-conforming, endowment, interest only, equity release . . .” He stops mid-stream when Seadog goes off on a different tangent.

Seventeen

“When Ira returns we will have a quorum. I’ll need an excuse to send Luxuria off for a spell, so we can talk behind his back. Let me think, where is the best place to meet?”

“Are you okay with us not trying to make Gula move, Supreme one?”

“I’m getting tired of having to hold all of my meetings, especially clandestine ones of this nature, at Gula’s greasy geosyncline because the flatulent, gamy glutton has his gelatinous self plastered in place. There are plenty of better places we could huddle. When was the last time we mounted an intervention?”

Chomp!

“We’re overdue for another one.”

“Remind me, where’d we send him last time?”

“Psych Central, Avaritia.”

Chomp!

“Remind me, what did they do for him again?”

“Banded gastroplasty-plasty, followed by solution focused and ego-state therapies.”

“How long was progress made?”

“Absolute Supreme Seadog, progress lasted right up to the point when Gula’s manifold duodenums discovered a way to wrap around the titanium based gastroplasty-plasty bands and singe them off one by one. The gain could be measured in yoctoseconds.”

Known for being able to bark commands quickly and authoritatively when his blood sugar levels are in check, with the entire pouch of sweet potato bagelettes now history, Absolute Supreme Seadog is ready to make heady decisions.

“Like I said, I’m getting tired of holding all of our meetings at Gula’s greasy geosyncline,” he snaps. “I’m thinking out loud here, so don’t repeat this, but sometimes I wonder, do we really need him any more?”

“There are so many decrees and so few S.M.E.S,” Superbia reminds him.

“Good point . . . right on the mark, as usual . . . we need our decrees. What would we be without them?”

Eighteen

Seadog scratches under his chin. "I have orders."

"Yes, sire?"

"I know your staffer's name . . . I just dislike repeating it, so say it for me."

"It's Bootlick Bottle-Scum, sir."

"And that's why. The words are so hard to swallow they get stuck on my uvula for days. Get in touch with B.B.S and tell him to start looking into other in-patient, eating disorder programs. This is his priority one. I want a report directly after our Luxuria tête-à-tête. Let's get moving. Superbia, I see your wheels turning. You have something else to say?"

"It took throngs of masses to lug Gula onto a freighter that could carry him to Psyche Central last time, and no matter where we decide to take him, we have to consider the prep time required to get accommodations ready. There's also the issue of making sure one of our Vitiosus Behemothic Class, Roll on Roll off Container ships is available for transport at the appointed time."

"Good points, great points. I'd say B.B.S has some work cut out for him and the absorption spectroscopy fountain is counting down."

"I'm on it, Avaritia, and I have your back."

As the Absolute Supreme Seadog of Vitiosus and his third in command, buddy up for the quick drift return to the place where Invidia, Purveyor of the Silent Wings of Envy, Gula the Prominent, from Gastro-omental Gluttony Major and Luxuria, Soldier of Extravagance Fortune have remained and are very busy placing significantly sized bets on which up and coming sloth-

like deviant will achieve higher peel out screech oscillation and more robust splat splatter
residuum than the other, Seadog receives a **more than top secret encrypted inscription** from Ira
Nasty.

Nineteen

Before they reach their target, Avaritia gives Superbia the high sign, and the quick drift stops promptly.

“Superbia, I need to take this jump off point. I’ve just received an M.T. T.S.E.I. from Ira. Go ahead, join the others. I’ll be along momentarily.”

Alone in a place where he feels comfortable, Avaritia engages the verification code that will immediately authenticate itself and provide direct linkage between the two minds when it knocks on Ira Nasty’s processing central portal.

“It is Avaritia, Ira.”

“I have completed my inquisition.”

“This is good and curiously immediate.”

“Poseur Fraud was readily available. He is on my ship. I am transporting him back to Vitiosus.”

“He is in your custody?”

“No, sire. He has immunity.”

“That would be Immunity of what kind, specifically?”

“Cosmic Immunity, Sire, via an Act of Divine Intervention.”

“And how did this come about, exactly?”

“Severe, high energy, convectively induced, unpredicted, gamma ray derechco pelted him long enough to completely destroy the macaroon bed you had banished him to as well as the rest of what he had left of his hair.”

“In other words, insurance won’t cover the damage.”

“That is correct, Avaritia.”

“If we wanted to debate this policy, we would have to deal with Hyman Achselvype?”

“That is correct, Avaritia.”

“I would rather not do that.”

“Neither would I, Avaritia.”

“Except for the premature hair removal, Poseur Fraud is a lucky varmint. He just got an unexpected out of jail card. You can tell him I said so.”

“Okay if I reword the message slightly?”

“Have fun with it, but do return promptly. We’ll instigate Fraud into Moi’s project when you get here. The work will keep him busy.”

“Never knew a project that didn’t involve a little fraud, wouldn’t you say, my Liege?”

“Good one, Ira . . . we’re going to keep a close eye on Poseur. If he so much as thinks about diverting any of our resources for his own personal gain, he’ll long for those hard, fetid, tatty macaroon days, I can assure you. Now do make hay swiftly. I need to convene a quorum, without Luxuria present. This is a matter of state security.”

“State security. . . Luxuria . . . can you give me more of a clue?”

“Not yet, not on your life.”

“Interesting, we’re in descent . . . all hands on deck . . . Harney down for the Tylte!”

Twenty

“Hail,” Avaritia yowls as he rejoins the group now firmly ensconced under Gabija, Gula’s sumptuous, black hair woven, conveyable tent.

ZWOOSH!

The black tent sways ever so slightly as an aftereffect of the landing compression.

“That would be Adjutant Sycophant Senator Ira Nasty returning from his inquisition. Luxuria, please go change your attire, before another look at the tincture of your Alpha Zori’s sparks a fray.”

Almost like clockwork, as soon as Luxuria swaggers off, Ira Nasty dashes in heels clicking away.

“Am I late?”

“Your timing is perfect,” Avaritia’s low-pitched bay catches Invidia and Gula’s immediate attention. Superbia is already fully engaged and Ira Nasty knows the subject.

“We may have a situation. I will tell you the facts as I know them,” Supreme Seadog continues. “(1) Luxuria has not taken his ship out in three cycles; (2) When he does travel, he does so with pomp and circumstance. (3) Buteo Rufinus is the polar opposite of pomp and circumstance, yet Luxuria hired him to take him to NGC4414 when he purchased his Alpha Zori’s. The floor is open to debate.”

“Perhaps he felt he could negotiate a better price upon such an arrival,” Invidia begins.

“Luxuria’s a lot, more shallow than that, something else’s up,” Ira weighs in.

“Maybe he’s saving’ up on bucky balls,” Gula grunts, the spittle slobber sloshing out of his orifice forms a wet frothy beard over the bottom of his frontal blubbery matter.

“Why would he do that?” Avaritia muffles a snarl. “We all get a fair allotment. If a venture that is approved will take more, there’s never a question we’ll provide the buckminsterfuellerine molecules required.”

“He’s planning a trip and doesn’t want our approval,” Ira states soberly. “Why are you so oddly quiet, Superbia?”

“Waiting on the final shoe,” the latter smiles cagily.

“And what would that be?” Invidia asks as he considers multiple possibilities.

“What his destination might be,” Avaritia sneers.

“Apis Pains,” Gula blathers.

“Really . . . continue, oh grubby glottal of excrescence, why would he travel to Apis Pains?”

“To collect Acedia and bring him back here, why else?”

“Lest you forget, I overthrew Acedia and banished him.”

“If he got off a ship now in front of you . . .” a sinister burp exits the glob-like oral cavity, “you’d let him stay.”

Gula’s grody gastronomic gaseousness gurgles turbulently from the effort taken during these moments of introspective deduction.

Gurgle. Burp. Gurgle. Gurgle. KABOOM!

Flatulent spumes of noxious, vapor filled bubbles erupt and spew into the atmosphere.

“Run for the hills,” Invidia yells, as bodies scramble to exit the tent.

Avaritia is not the Absolute Supreme Seadog for nothing. Eyes watering, forehead knotting up with violent suppression stress fractures, he pinches his nose and stands his ground.

“Why do you think I’d let him stay?”

“Its tax season,” Gula groans miserably.

Twenty-One

As the leadership team scurries to distance themselves from the almost impenetrable cloud, Ira runs so hard into Luxuria the latter goes flying.

KA, KA, KA, KA, THUMP!

“Damn you! Look what you did to my new outfit,” Luxuria wails.

Bringing up the rear, Avaritia grabs Ira’s booth strap in the nick of time, before it roots itself firmly into the back of Luxuria’s head.

“All of you, head to the palace,” he bellows.

Minions pound out his orders on drums of gold.

“Luxuria, sit much longer in this rank stench you’ll never get the smell out,” Avaritia barks. “Get up. Get moving, now!”

After the team exits the decontamination chamber and everyone has had enough time to irrigate their noses with a sodium chloride / phenylcarbinol solution, they are called to Avaritia’s, Seriously Clandestine Imperial Flat, S.C.I.F., whose shielding, soundproof technology and unique design render it impenetrable to threats, vulnerabilities and surreptitious enemy penetration, to wit the salon has also earned accreditation as a sensitive compartmented information facility.

“Lilith, make everyone a drink. I’ll have a triple, and put out some munchies. I’ll take a couple pouches of sweet potato chow hound bagelettes one with thinly sliced, briny lachs, the other with heavy gefiltefish garnish,” Avaritia yips to his robot du jour.

“Superbia, get in touch with your staffer. Instruct him to move into one of your Treasury SCIFS where we can communicate securely. I hope his report is in order!”

Ira Nasty squints suspiciously, “What’s going on now?”

“We’re mounting an intervention,” Supreme Seadog snaps. “Gula is too gross for his own good.”

“Doesn’t he have to agree to that?” Luxuria asks in a high-pitched shrill.

“Not considering the fact that this latest plume could have blinded half the city. Stop blinking your eyelashes like that or I will let Ira kick the tar out of you.”

Twenty-Two

“B.B.S. is ready, masterful one,” Superbia announces.

“Good. Go ahead,” Avaritia commands, “Tell him to report away.”

“First, I have secured the masses necessary to move the senator from his present, ummm, lodgment. Second, Gillion of the Vitiosus Behemothic, Roll on Roll off Container Class, is at your disposal. Lastly, I contacted each of the top, full care, residential, Eating Disorder Clinics on the planet, and down selected to those who could prove they had ample accommodations, or could reconstitute their space to meet our needs. Of those eight, five are greedy enough and publicity hungry enough, to agree to take on a high profile, high maintenance, risky case, like the senator’s. Their commercial solicitation offerings are ready for your review.”

“Roll ‘em.”

First up is a nutshell named Xenu Leaflet, who is armed to the gills with a Get Chummy Manifold entitled, Holds No Water. He begins his diatribe with glee.

Dietology House is proud to invoke the ether-laced, cajolery laden dogma of I. Con Blubbard, whose rehabilitative, self serving, paranormal ponderings, as set forth in his personally profited, cult-ivated, work, Diet of Pathetics, incorporates all of the components of star power-level brain washing tactics, negative energy elimination via a quick drain solution and heavy doses of recycled, barrel cured, bath water. All of this can be yours for a fairly designed, individual pricing package which is equal to but not less than one hundred percent of a candidates total net worth as evidenced through independently obtained financial portfolio

investments and seventy five years of Vitiosus federal tax filings, audited and analyzed accumulatively.

“What the hell is that,” Avaritia pounds the table full force. “Get it outta here, now, Bootlick Bottle-Scum, before it metastasizes! Damn, now my uvula is aching, too.”

“That was scary,” Luxuria agrees wringing his hands for effect.

“Quit wringing and quit blinking, Luxuria, I’m warning you. Roll the next one.”

Twenty-Three

A punch-em-out, rhyme scheme known as Busta Gut hits the telepathic stage decked out in black and bling.

Gula gotta come wit' me, to da pick it up purge it out territory, where siphon hoses and rocket science gravity, ken blanket me homies wit' his currency.

“Um hmmm, no, get the talentless prig off my stage before I rap zap it. Superbia, I am thus far not amused.”

“B.B.S., stop with the random selection, put your best foot forward,” his boss instructs.

A bonneted, light blue cookie, sporting a monogrammed, very white, cobbler apron, over a heavily starched, ruffled dress arrives with handouts from the residential, compulsive eating disorder facility called the Meadows. Her name is Stella Doro.

“I think I brought enough of these for everyone,” she says sweetly as papers fly everywhere. “I am so happy to be here in such a resplendent setting, to be speaking my piece in front of such a resplendently, profound assemblage.”

“You don't want your cookie cut, get on with it,” Supreme Seadog howls.

“Ah, yes, well we all know that any life form with secretive eating habits, who binge eats at least twice per week . . . suffers from emotional, psychological, physical distress, often resulting from childhood trauma . . . deep down inside, feels guilty, disgusted, depressed . . .”

“No, no, no . . . remove her forth with! Lilith, I need some more sweet potato bagelettes to calm my stomach. Hurry! Now listen to me closely, Bottle Scum, did anyone at all come up with an offering that was not completely full of bull shit?”

“Psyche Central, Sire.”

“What did they say?”

“They would like to try again, your Highness.”

“And that was it?”

“No not quite. This time they said they’d use stronger ties, much thicker bolts and staples and . . .”

“And . . .?”

“. . . And gads more of them.”

The vote to hire Psyche Central was unanimous.

Twenty-Four

“So, Moi, this is the orb you are so worked up about?” Poseur Fraud asks examining the structure of the planet carefully. “There’s not much going on that I can see.”

“Doesn’t mean there won’t be a little later on,” Moi replies fighting with the blond streak that keeps getting in the way of progress.

“Okay, I’ll buy that, but this process of yours is nothing more than panspermia, right? The drones are going to shed some seeds on the way in and will continue to spew on for a while once they touch ground. I got that, right?”

“When you pose a statement in that way, it makes my work seem so trivial”, Moi shakes his head back and forth involuntarily. “It’s not the process, Poseur, it’s the pod.”

“Don’t get your panties in a wad, Moi. I’m on board the gravy train. So what I’m thinking here is that for the time being, I’ll use elegant simplicity to make the probe remains look like rock. The first guy with a microscope and an abacus that finds and examines one will think it’s sexy. I can have the first prototype ready in no time.”

####

“Gillion made it off the ground without incident?” Avaritia, the Absolute Supreme Seadog of Vitiosus inquires of his third in command.

“If you could call Gula’s pissing and moaning incidental,” Superbia replies.

“He’ll thank us for this later. Anyway, Moi is ready to launch his first probe. Please collect our leaders, all except for Ira, and have them gather at the observatory.”

“Will do,” Superbia does not inquire after Ira who appears as soon as the Vitiosus treasurer leaves.

“Ira, I want you to travel to Apis Pains to bring back Acedia,” Avaritia grunts.

“Pray tell why I would do that?”

“Gula made an important point to me, while you were all flying the coop.”

“Which was?”

“It’s almost tax season, Ira. You know how our subjects hate tax season.”

“That they do.”

“Acedia makes a great scapegoat, when it comes to unpopular issues such as this. I’m thinking that I will put him in charge of empty pretense.”

Saluting, Ira Nasty replies, “There is merit in that.” He tightens his belt, whistles for his crew and heads for his starship, heels clicking in goose-step, chilling rhythm.

Twenty-Five

“This isn’t going to take too long, mish-mash, is it? I’ve had a very busy day and it’s not over yet.”

“No, sire, we are ready to shoot. This is the spot I have chosen for first penetration,” Moi stubs a pink knuckle into the rotating myriad-D map in front of him.

Hereinafter, let it be known that on 8 June, 1741, four stones fell out of the Milky Way Galaxy sky, onto Honshu, a Northern Japanese Island on the targeted blue orb called Earth. They carried with them, the first injection of Moi’s, filthy window born creation.

“Send progress reports when necessary,” Avaritia snaps as he heads home for an ample serving of sweet potato bagelettes.

On 13 October 1838, the second booster reaches Cold Bokkeveld, South Africa.

Drone number three makes its mark on 20 June 1840 in Uden, Netherlands.

Although, a-priori newsletters are published routinely to keep the Vitiosus leadership team informed of all of the pretty eventful, mildly eventful, and bordering on boring specifics of Moi’s blue orb project, he is compelled to request a personal audience, when he taps into an announcement during the 1876 Centennial Exposition being held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States of America.

With governments being called to mount exhibits, Japan (the site of his very first insinuation) builds a garden entirely out of the redolent-smelling blooms and large leafy leaves of Moi’s transplanted pods. “The oblivious are spreading it for me!” Moi brags as his hot streak continues to grow.

Numero quattro lobs Piemonte, in Northwestern Italy on 17 July 1840.

It only gets better.

In 1930, the United States Soil Conservation Service promotes Moi's invention to help control soil erosion. They offer to pay farmers to plant the stuff in their fields.

"Perhaps you won't need to use the rest of your ordinance," Avaritia suggests during a follow-up session.

"Additional coverage, hastens results, while providing for more widespread indemnification," Moi argues successfully, jettisoning probe number five on 29 November 1933 over Entre Rios, Argentina.

Number 6 is right on target when it impacts New South Wales, Australia on 7 August 1942.

As often is the case with heretofore-successful experiments, probe number seven falls short of its mark on 30 November 1954. It crashes through the roof of a home, in Sylacauga, Alabama whacking the owner while she sits idly by the radio in her living room. Earth scientists are calling it a very freaky, but albeit random, meteor strike.

Twenty-Six

“I’m delighted to see, Superbia, after all is said and done, that our porky peccary’s project remains on budget. Have you reviewed this data? His experiment is working! The oxygen content in the orb’s atmosphere is dropping, on average, .85 percent every fifteen Earth years. In 1905 the level was 30 percent. Thirty-five Earth years later it was 25 percent. At this moment it is varying between 19 and 16 percent. We will be able to take over our new planet in a blink of one of my eyes.”

“This is an era of new horizons, Avaritia. Vitiosus has more Mazumah and where-with-all in its coiffeurs than ever, thanks, in large part, to the successfully run smear campaign mounted by our newly appointed director of empty pretense. Life is good.”

“Perhaps we should give Moi his prize now. Beckon him and the others.”

Superbia does not need to ask what the prize is. As any powerful ruler, seeking to maintain his position and his head knows, brilliance must be tapped into, used up and then neutralized immediately, before it can take on a mind of its own.

###

“Sire,” Moi bows managing to avoid the boorish clumsiness of the past. His attendant industrious streak might have something to do with that.

“I am ready to pronounce your experiment a success. All of your electronic data, notebooks, images, diagrams, readings, will be filed in the Vitiosus Bibliotheque Nationale. As

such, you have the honor now of naming your work. You have thought of an appropriate appellation?"

"Yes, Sire, but I must say, I have something else very exciting to report. I have discovered a new orb in a different galaxy that I will be able to make ready for you, as soon as you are through with the blue orb. This one is chartreuse."

And just that simple, Avaritia's plans for Moi change profoundly.

"Your prize will be a state of the art laboratory, named in your honor, shoat sloven. Superbia will see to the funding. Now, pray tell, what will be the name on the binder of your present work?"

"Kudzu," Moi emphasizes.

Conclusion

Way out in the Carnival of Space, far away from Moi's blue orb . . . a politic watches closely, while the earthen heedless march to the beat of faceless drummers.

Coal stacks pollute the air with poisonous vapors.

Non-biodegradable trash covers landfills and threatens oceans.

Kudzu spreads like wildfire, its roots, shoots and nodes strangling the life out of trees and bushes, and other oxygen promoting vegetation, at a rate that is phenomenally amazing.

Avaritia, Absolute Supreme Seadog of Vitiosus and his leadership team, Adjutant Sycophant Senator Ira Nasty; Luxuria, Soldier of Extravagance Fortune; Invidia, Purveyor of the Silent Wings of Envy; Gula the Slightly Less Prominent; Superbia, Treasurer and Third in Command, and Acedia, Director of Empty Pretense, munch on mildly salted, sweet potato bagelettes while they wait for their turn in the sun.

THE END