

"There was a time in my life when everything seemed resolvable—a right answer to every question lurked somewhere on the edge of my imagination. Universal logic, no matter how perverse, was within the grasp of somebody's suitably perverse mind. I endeavored to be that somebody. Then I grew a little and my eyes opened up. There was reality. Oh well. With the original elitist attempt thwarted at every turn, I substituted the intuition of the Everyman into this formula for cosmic success. Direct perception was far more efficient than intellectual acrobatics, and since it was available to everyone, I was touched by the egalitarianism of it all. Sadly, faith in illogic fared little better in the equation.

"I am forced to conclude for the present that there is one monolithic Universal perversity with nothing left over to suitably describe it. We are trapped in the curse of Godel: in attempting to describe a universal system we preclude the ability to name it directly. We either succumb to the useless paradoxes of self-reference or we cease to seek resolution all together."

So spake Zarathustra to the cockroach that was sampling the residue at the lip of his coffee cup. The roach, disquieted by the attention of the human, attempted to retreat from the cup, but only managed to slip backwards on a drop of spittle and drown in the cold coffee at the bottom. Zarathustra took this as a sign.

And so Zarathustra, on that fateful morning, decided to venture down the mountain and confront the monolith of reality again. Roll sound. Roll camera (We have speed). Slate it. Cue the organist. Cue the sun. Cue the billions of extras. Annnnnnd. . . action.

The first man to see Zarathustra was a swarthy giant of a man named Dwayne. Zarathustra believed Dwayne was impressed by his ability to think. Dwayne offered him a job working at his mill. Zarathustra accepted, thinking himself fortunate. Indeed Dwayne was impressed by Zarathustra's ability to think, but he was more impressed by this bumpkin's lack of knowledge concerning current labor practices. Zarathustra worked hard at the mill every day for company-lease housing, bread, beans, well and privy privileges, and a weekly jump on the town whore.

Dwayne would occasionally come around the mill and look in on Zarathustra, who was always busy balancing ledgers. Dwayne liked guns. He carried a large revolver into the company office with him at all times. More often than not, he would hold the gun to Zarathustra's head.

"Would you like to come to work, tomorrow?" Dwayne asked once.

"Yes," replied Zarathustra, making a slight transposition error as he felt a cold spot just behind his ear. "Is there some reason why you would question my desire to come to work?"

"You remind me of my sixteen-year-old," said Dwayne. "He's a smart kid

too. I tell you boy, there's no sense in always trying to do things fancy. Sometimes you just have to buckle down and get the job done. I don't care how it looks. If it flys, it flys. Do you know what I mean?"

"I believe so," said Zarathustra. "I'm just trying to get last month's commission expenses to jive with the bank statement. I've tracked it down to a combination of transactions. . ."

"You just aren't hearing me boy."

"Perhaps I'm not."

That night, Zarathustra had his weekly appointment with the prostitute. They ate beans. The whore was named Gertrude--she was foreign. Gertrude was large boned and had long braided blonde hair and bad teeth. She paid little attention to personal hygiene, claiming that most of her clients did not mind. Zarathustra did, and never used her. She, in turn, believed him to be homosexual, and covered for him with the mill. She was actually quite relieved to have someone to talk to, and always stayed late. They were just finishing off a complementary single-serving bottle of Lambrusca, when talk shifted to the meetings with Zarathustra's boss.

"Gertrude," Zarathustra said. "Why does Dwayne give me these awful little bottles of wine?"

"He probably likes you."

"Would it be presumptuous for me to ask him for another for you?"

"I don't think he'd understand," replied Gertrude. "It would probably wise for you to thank him for the bottle-- tell him how good it was."

"That would not be honest."

"As you say," she said, tipping the bottle up to get the last bit of dregs.

"He is such a complicated man," Zarathustra said. "On the one hand, he seems to like me a lot, but he likes to threaten me constantly. I know me means nothing by it--it's just his way of showing me that he is in charge. I wonder, however, what he plans for me in the future."

"Probably nothing."

"What do you mean?" asked Zarathustra.

"Nothing."

On the following week, Zarathustra felt the barrel touching his scalp

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again. Zarathustra calmly transposed a nine and a one in the accounts receivable ledger, finished totalling the column and then spoke.

"Good morning, Dwayne." he said.

"Nerves of steel, boy. That's right. That's what you have to have."

"Tell me, Dwayne," Zarathustra said. "What sort of gun is that?"

"It's a Colt, forty-five caliber single action. And it's not a gun, it's a revolver--a legend at that."

"I'm sorry. A revolver--I'll remember that."

"Then he related how he had to kill his boy's dog with it last summer. It had been run over by a wagon, and he tried to put it out of it's misery," Zarathustra told Gertrude. "He blew off half it's head, but the dog kept moving, so he had to shoot it many more times before it died. He said it made him sick and the boy started crying. That made him mad."

"What did?" Gertrude asked.

"I'm not sure what he meant--whether it was that the dog would not die, or that his son was crying, or what. He's such a complex man."

Gertrude backed up the conversation at this point and enlightened her customer as to the difference between guns and revolvers, and single action versus double action and automatic. Zarathustra was fascinated by this, and asked for clarification on several points, many of which Gertrude was required to draw pictures to fully explain.

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"Howdy boy!" Dwayne said that next week.

"Howdy Dwayne!" Zarathustra replied, underlining a sub-total. In one fluid motion, Zarathustra placed the pencil aside, then reached behind his head twisted the revolver out of Dwayne's hands. The Colt slipped from Dwayne's grasp with ease, and Zarathustra had it by the barrel, muzzle down, pointing the grip at his boss.

"You're fired!" Dwayne shrieked. "Put that gun down before you hurt someone." Zarathustra looked at the position of the gun, deduced that any discharge would only hurt himself--in a manner that might be a blessing in disguise anyway-- and proceeded to stare blankly at Dwayne.

"You're crazy." cried Dwayne, and he ran from the office. Zarathustra finished the grand total for the trial balance and left. He packed a few things into his blanket, dropped over to Gertrude's to thank her for all that she had done, and then headed east. He carried the Colt on his belt, with one of the six cartridges removed so that the weapon

was loaded on an empty chamber.

Zarathustra slept in the open that night, under the stars. He had a wet dream. It was about a beautiful large woman with blond hair and immaculate personal habits. It ended with an immense ejaculation which caused him to awake just as the sun was crawling up over a nearby mesa.

"I am amazed that there is not some greater sense of equilibrium in the world. Perhaps it is the way in which the Universe keeps from sliding head-long into entropy. Still, I would think that one should be able to detect a logical pattern to life--whereas the extremes are subordinated by some sort of cosmic democracy. Instead, I find excess in all things. The stars in the sky burn out and explode. Flowers and birds specialize within species. They evolve into non-viability and become extinct. The human experience is one of the few over-powering the many. Greed, degeneration, and genocide control a breed of man who by logic should have bred these traits out of their genetic vocabulary many generations ago."

Zara was addressing a horned toad at this point. He had been in the desert for several days wandering without appropriate supplies. The hallucinations of protein deprivation were beginning to unravel the fabric of his unconscious.

"Pardon me sir," replied the toad. "But has it ever occurred to you that you err in your logic?"

"How so?" asked the blinking Zara. "I mean not to doubt you-- I think therefore I err-- but how now brown toad?"

"Droll," said the toad. "Have you considered that the 'Universe', as you call it, has purpose and that purpose is the expression of 'Perversity.' You have been rambling on and on about that concept for hours now. Do you really understand that which you throw around with such disdain? We of the toad race have a completely different view of that which you loathe. In point of fact, we appreciate perversity, we revere it, we thrive in it. We are the lowly horned toads of the desert, kings of the sand. We have turned the asshole of the Universe into our Heaven-on-Earth by means of adapting ourselves from lower less hardy ancestors. We live where everything else dies. Look at yourself: you're dieing, and you're too stupid to realize it. Toads are immortal!" Zara tried to say something right about then, but he was too parched to vocalize.

"If you want a tip from a pro," continued the toad. "I'd get something in the way of food into your system. Say, why don't you eat me?"

Zara was amazed at this. "B...But. . ." he stammered.

"Go ahead and eat me! You ugly human, you want some good toad meat right about now."

"Aren't you poisonous?"

"You'd be dead before you could take your first bite," Replied the toad.

"Then why do you want me to eat you?" gasped Zara.

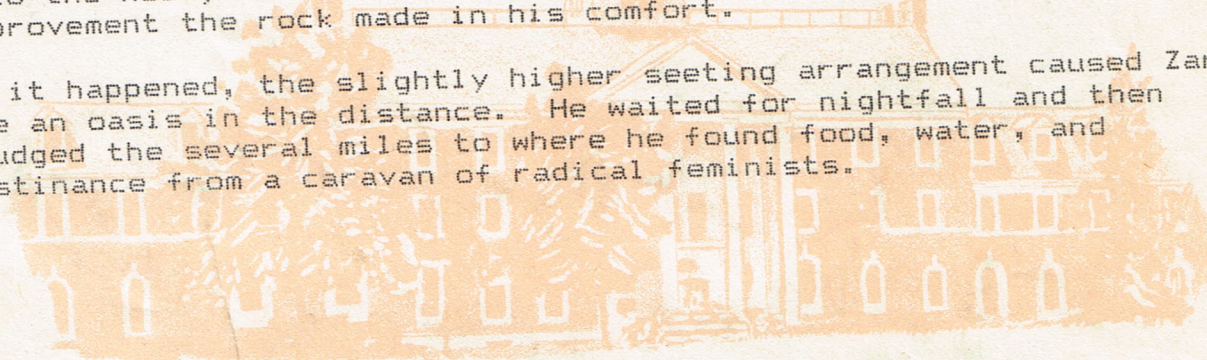
"I'm betting you would," said the Toad. "In your convulsions, roll away from my home, the front of which you are currently blocking with your left buttock."

"Why don't you just ask me to move away politely?" asked Zara.

"It is not in the perverse nature of the toad," replied the toad. "Besides, carrion is a great attractor of insects. I daresay you'd be good for about of full season of good eating. Have you any idea of the number of maggots that can be produced by a single blue-bottle . . ."

At this point in the conversation, Zara heaved up a large rock and squashed the toad flat. He then gingerly picked up the remains and placed them in a hole he found underneath him. After grinding the rock into the hole, he sat back down and remarked to himself as to the improvement the rock made in his comfort.

As it happened, the slightly higher seating arrangement caused Zara to see an oasis in the distance. He waited for nightfall and then trudged the several miles to where he found food, water, and sustenance from a caravan of radical feminists.



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