

Unconventional Methods

By Dylan Siebert

Part One: The End

One day I got fed up, so I decided to destroy the world and start over again. It's a pretty well-established practice, global annihilation, and I knew that there were well-established ways of going about it, but I decided against doing something old-fashioned like flooding the earth or raining down fire and meteorites. It's never wise to develop aggressive habits in oneself, and besides, I wanted to do it my way rather than just using the conventional methods.

No, I've always been a real people person, so I decided to go for a more involved approach. I wanted to get up close and personal with what I was working with, the way a gardener or a potter would—get my hands dirty, in a manner of speaking. I quickly sketched out a plan of action and then got to work.

The first things to go were the missiles. I gathered up all the nuclear weapons in the world and made a big pile on a conveniently out-of-the-way island in the Pacific. I was so pleased with first act of magnanimity that I built a log cabin out of ballistic warheads. It had a chimney but no door, but that was okay because no one would ever live in it. ISLAND OF DOOM, I wrote on the beach with a flourish, and surrounded the place with an impassable coral reef.

Now that I was sure no-one would wreck my work before I was finished, I put myself on global television and announced my intentions.

“People of the world!” I said, “Do not fear! I have come to save you from your misery! Just sit back and I'll handle things.” After repeating this in seventy-two more languages, I allowed regularly scheduled programming to resume. The regular schedule was terrible, but I had priorities.

Next I sponged oil all up and down the coasts, scrubbed soil and filtered water till the chemicals turned my fingers green, and commanded the endangered species to multiply and fill the earth. To top it all off, I sucked up a couple billion lungfuls of carbon

dioxide and sequestered the resulting mega-burp in an undersea cave.

After all this I was pretty tired, so I sat down on top of the tallest mountain in the world (it was kind of pointy, so I smoothed it down a bit) and looked at what I had done. I saw that it was pretty good. To reward myself, I allowed a small rain of fire—just over the ocean, where no one would get hurt. It made a satisfying hissing and bubbling sound.

Once I was rested, I set to work on the next order of business. I gathered up all the people and put them in Greenland, which was a nice big space that I could work with. “Greenland” wasn’t a very interesting name for the largest island in the world, so I relabeled it the “International Department of Integrated Organic Tinkering.” In other words, it would be my hospital and genetics laboratory. It also spelled out the acronym “IDIOT,” which I thought was funny, especially since I was the only one able to laugh at the joke. English, along with all other modern languages, would have to go.

The patient list was seven billion names long, so I set to work at a feverish pace. AIDS, polio, malaria, cancer, influenza, hemorrhages, demon possessions, and contagious skin diseases of all kinds: I healed them one by one and pumped them full of vaccines to prevent all future illnesses.

Once I had worked through the entire list, it came to my attention that several wars had broken out in the waiting room while I was busy with individual patients, so I had to sedate the entire world population and do half of them over again.

When it was all over, I was bone tired, so I let them sleep. I had a few more things to do though, and it was getting dark. After making sure they were all tucked in and comfortable, I took my broom and dustpan and walked over the empty moonlit lands. Wherever I found traces of human habitation, I swept them into my dustpan, being careful not to disturb the surrounding wildlife. Some of the bigger buildings needed a little elbow grease to clean up, but eventually I was done. I had one enormous pile of rubble and a billion bald patches speckled across the earth, but I didn’t worry myself too much about that. Nature has a way of snatching up real estate like you wouldn’t believe.

I didn’t know what to do with the rubble, so I dumped it in the middle of Asia and made a mental note to deal with it in the morning.

Achingly weary, I trudged down to Jamaica and collapsed on a sparkling white beach. It was blissfully free of tourists and pollution. I closed my eyes and smiled as I

thought about what I had done. It was pretty good.

Part Two: The Beginning

I rose before the sun and tiptoed north to the IDIOT. Everyone was sleeping peacefully, just as I had left them. Some were a little stiff and needed to be thawed out, but most had taken advantage of the fact that I had built a billion igloos for them before turning in for the night (no sweat, really).

I shook them gently awake—or rather, I shook the earth beneath them, a hearty 4.6 on the Richter scale—and then waited as they staggered out of their little snow huts, rubbing their eyes and looking a little wobbly. The sunrise behind my head was glorious as I stood before them. “Eoplepay ofay Earthay,” I said, addressing them loudly and clearly in Pig Latin, which I had decided would be the new universal language. “The world is round.”

“We know!” shouted someone in the crowd.

“Oh,” I said, taken aback. “I guess you’re pretty smart. But you still managed to do a pretty bad job the first time around, so I solved all your problems and gave you a clean slate. Now that you know what not to do, I’m sure you can do better.”

“Is there a catch?” asked someone somewhere in the first few thousand rows. I was proud to hear them already murmuring doubtfully among themselves in flawless Pig Latin.

Beaming, I said, “No. The Earth is made new. Enjoy.” The tumultuous murmur grew and grew into a clamour of joy and wonder. Suddenly I had second thoughts.

“But,” I hollered above the din, and they quieted down, “you must follow The Law, which I will now recite for you, that you may hear and understand.” A low groan emanated from the audience. I took a deep breath. “Behave!”

And with a smile, I scattered them across the face of the earth.

Some time later, I was strolling through the forest whistling to myself, when I came upon a clearing in which people were fighting. It looked like a battle. Many people dressed in animal skins were trying to kill each other using bows and arrows and spears.

It was hard to tell who was fighting who, because the people were of all different colours and their clothes were ragged and mismatched.

Just then a spear grazed my arm. It hurt. I decided to stop this before it got out of control.

“Settle down!” I yelled, and made an earthquake. The people fell down and scrambled away from me, congealing into two separate blobs of outward-facing spears.

“What’s all this?” I asked. “Why aren’t you behaving?”

One of the warriors stepped forward from the blob on my left. He was tall and strong, and although he appeared young, his bared torso bore many scars. “And who do you think you are?” he asked, just a little haughtily.

That caught me off guard. I had never actually given much thought to the question before. “I am... who I am,” I stuttered. “I guess...”

“I know who you are!” cried a voice from inside the right-hand blob. A woman, elderly but still spry, and clutching a bow and arrow, elbowed her way through the throng to face me. “I was seven years old, but I remember! You destroyed everything and dumped us here in this wilderness!”

“Yes!” I said, happy and relieved to find at least one person who knew who I was. “Yes, that was me.”

“Where have you been for forty years while we starved and froze and shed blood defending our children from our enemies?” She jerked her head toward the blob on my left.

I shuffled my feet. “There were a few other things that needed fixing... like the comet orbits... and the solar flares...”

“So that’s it, is it? We’ve been down here suffering, and you’ve been up there playing with stars?”

“But I was protecting you! Some comets come dangerously close to...” I could see that she wasn’t buying it. I tried a different angle. “You say you starved. You say you froze. But the woods are full of animals and plants that you can eat and make warm clothes out of.” To demonstrate, I pulled a leaf off of a nearby tree and ate it. “I didn’t abandon you, I just helped you get back to the land. Isn’t that what you always wanted?”

She rolled her eyes. “Back to the land? Is that what you think our life is? Some

kind of magical romp through the bountiful, sparkling forests? You're a dreamer, always up in the clouds somewhere. I doubt you've ever even set foot on 'the land' before, let alone tried to learn to live off of it."

I blinked. "But I thought you had learned from your past." The people in both blobs were getting restless, shifting their weight from foot to foot and murmuring amongst themselves. At this statement some of them spoke out angrily. "Don't lecture us about the past!" someone called out. "You killed the past!" yelled another.

I had to shout to make myself heard. "But it would have worked if you'd just obeyed The Law and not spent all your energy fighting!"

Suddenly the tall warrior spoke. The clearing became instantly silent. "And who appointed you to be a judge over us?" His voice became very soft. "Who are you anyway? You still haven't answered that, and I think I know why. It's because you're a nobody." He turned around and addressed the warriors of both sides. "Look at him. He's just like us. See? He bleeds."

He pointed at me. I looked down. It was true. Blood was slowly trickling from the spot where the spear had grazed me earlier. I covered the spot with my hand angrily. "I was only trying to help—" I began, but he was already rushing at me. He jabbed me with his spear, hard. It hurt a lot.

So I burned them. I burned them all. Fire rained down from the sky and burned them all up.

I awoke with a crashing headache, lying on a bed of ashes. Someone was shaking my shoulder. It was a young freckle-faced warrior, one I hadn't noticed before.

"Please," he was crying, blubbing in fact, "I repent. I repent, I will behave. I will never carry a spear again. You have my deepest promise, only tell me how I can cleanse this terrible sin from the face of the earth."

I rose and looked him in the eye. "It involves a great and noble quest," I said, my voice heavy and solemn.

The youth knelt before me and bowed his head. "I will undertake it."

A far-off look came into my eyes. "In the middle of the largest continent in the world is a mountain of rubble as high as the sky. Buried somewhere in this mountain is a

certain device.” And I described it to him and drew him a picture. “On the other side of the world, in the middle of the largest ocean in the world, is an island that is impossible to reach.” And I told him of the impassable coral reef. “In the middle of this island is a house that has no door. In the middle of this house is a pillar, to which you must affix the device. Then you must do what is called ‘activating’ the pillar.” And I told him the manner in which it must be done, and I drew him another picture. “Then and only then can the sacred fire cleanse this terrible sin from the face of the earth.”

The young man rose to his feet. “Thank you. For the sake of humanity, I will accomplish it,” and a look of such nobility and heroism was in his face that I was almost moved. He turned and walked into the forest. Silently, I wished him all the fortitude and luck that the indomitable human spirit could supply. I never was one for the conventional methods.