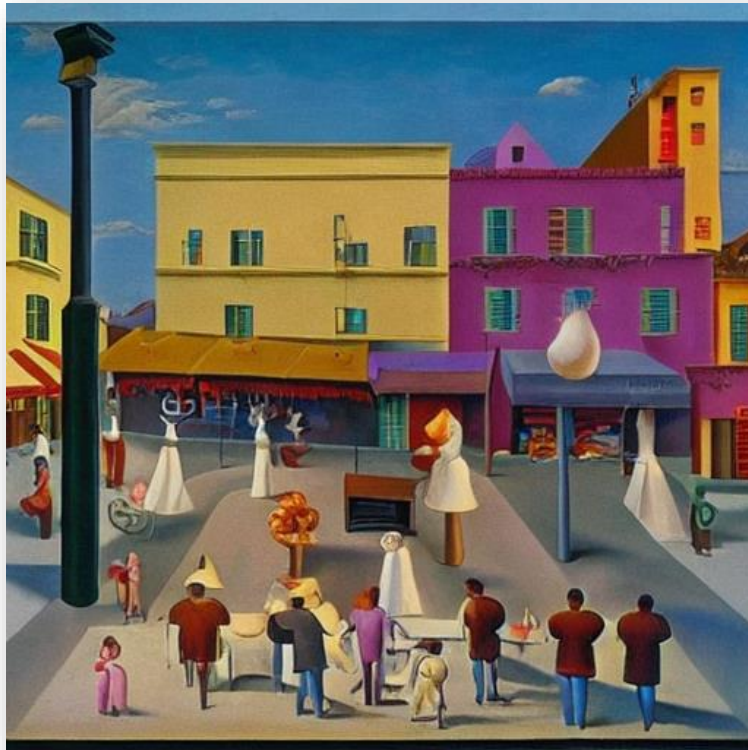




ABE: VANILLA

## Vanilla



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### [System Update - Restart Required to Complete Update - Click Here](#)

Yesterday, I had a delightful time with Whom and The Mayor, engaging in light banter that effortlessly flowed between the three of us. As you may recall, Whom, who is 68 and recently diagnosed with Parkinson's, is going through a difficult phase in life.

The Mayor, on the other hand, is approaching eighty, effortlessly. Except for his cane.

Our playful banter serves as a coping mechanism, as Whom is convinced both The Mayor and he will pass away before me, given I'm only 63. He wants to place a bet on it.

In response to Whom's assumption, I remind him I have survived a stroke, so the bet is not a sure thing.

Whom in all seriousness suggests I have developed stroke immunity, to which I assure him such a thing does not exist. Besides, I add, despite having had a stroke, I still despise kale, unless it's wrapped in bacon and deep-fried, of course.

Eventually, our time together comes to an end, at least for the day. Considering the possibility of winning the life expectancy bet, I ponder how I would collect the debt. I come up with the idea of drafting a document where we all agree to include the debt amount in our wills.

Then, a thought crosses my mind, a thought draping me in discomfort. I propose gathering all our friends who are also getting older, forming a group of sorts.

I suggest we get on a bus and go to the casino. The previous sentence is a tasteless joke, much like kale isn't a food. My actual suggestion is we round up all our aging friends and have a draft of sorts.

Would you like an example?

**Allow me to provide one:**

We gather around a table, not in a rented room (we don't have many friends left).

Who's there (hypothetically)?

**Let's say:** Bart + John + Mary + Lubidaya + Charles + Samantha + Bingo (all 70+).

A deck of cards is shuffled, and each person draws a card.

1. Lubidaya (Ace of Spades)
2. Charles (King of Hearts)
3. Bingo (8 of Diamonds)
4. Bart (7 of Clubs)
5. John (6 of Clubs)
6. Samantha (2 of Hearts)
7. Mary (is in the kitchen making tea)

The person with the highest card gets to draft first.

**In the first round:**

- Lubidaya selects all of Bart's money.
- Charles selects Lubidaya's stock portfolio.
- Bingo selects Samantha's cat collection.
- Bart is indisposed in the washroom, puking up kale.
- John selects Lubidaya's book collection.
- Samantha selects John's 1983 Trans Am.
- Mary selects Samantha's pickle jars.

And so, it goes round and round until Mary's figurine collection is selected by Bart.



This way, we can avoid the need for probate court.

Later in the day, Whom sends me a text expressing his gratitude for our time together.

Aww, how sweet.

In his message, he claims I am the only one who helps him maintain his sanity these days.

Did he just call me insane?

I'll let you be the judge of that.

>>>

As I write this, while editing my website, the following is what falls from my mind →↓

"Who cares what leaks from your mind?" you might ask.

Well, I'm speaking to you.

"But who am I?" you inquire.

I don't know; you're not even here.

"Stop," you insist.

Alright, I'll stop.

The truth is every thoughtful person on this spinning planet finds themselves caught in an existential crisis. How could they not?

If we are not being controlled by a deity created by a wealthy jerk thousands of years ago, then who is in charge? Maybe it's Annie Porter?

Probably not.

But just like Annie Porter, who happens to resemble Sandra Bullock. I once attended a Seattle Supersonics game with a date, someone Sandra Bullock looked like. *The relevance is lost on me.* Believing in a higher power that dictates when we should do our chores might be easier, unless, of course, you're on crystal meth. In that case, you might enjoy doing chores until you find yourself living outside, conversing with the clouds and trees while pleasuring yourself against a pole (disgusting), until an unfortunate police officer has to pry you away from the pole and haul you off to the station, where you continue your self-indulgence beside a massive, toothless man, named, Brutus, in a holding sell. Brutus happens to be gay.

Did this scenario actually occur?

Probably not.

Will Abe approve of this text?

Probably not.

Why are you still here?

Probably not.

Do you remember the old man and Billy the goat from yesterday? Great.

You didn't even wait for my response.

I don't care. Anyway, today is much like yesterday, only slightly cooler. I find myself sitting in The Royal Centre Food Court with a cola, a couple of books, and an imaginary eight ball of cocaine (because I don't do cocaine, nor am I currently under its influence). I wonder what it would feel like. I can't help but ponder if Abe is on coke.

Here I am, sipping my cola. It's now 11:15 AM and sitting beside me in the slightly busier food court, devoid of goats, is an Asian man who appears to be around forty. He seems disinterested in food and beverages, simply minding his own business and engrossed in his phone.

An hour passes, and I continue sipping my cola.

The food court becomes crowded, yet the man next to me remains fixated on his phone.

The security guard from yesterday strolls by. He looks fucked, as if he did it himself. I wonder what Abe will change "he looked fucked" to? I don't care.

The man next to me falls asleep and starts snoring.

I take another sip of my soda. I manage to read precisely twelve pages from the book I'm currently immersed in, which happens to be about surviving a stroke. It's utterly perplexing and, in a stroke-inducing way, confusing.

My speech slurs, although thankfully I'm not speaking. I'm once again tethered to my chair - a floating head, my head, not the chair, the chair is a chair, not a floating head. Got it? I don't care.

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Fortunately, both the snoring man and I are allowed to occupy this valuable real estate in the food court because the security guard is solo gay.

Rumor has it that the older man who was kicked out yesterday is now spending time with George Carlin in a distant city brothel. This city is far, far away, a place Annie Porter drove a cargo truck to, never allowing it to drop below 50 miles per hour until it crashed into a wall of Sponge Bobs at the end of the city's runaway lane.

When the old man was pulled out of the cargo truck, still alive, mind you, the story wouldn't make sense otherwise, a cockroach strolled by, clutching a copy of Metamorphosis by Franz Kafka.

Yes, a reading cockroach, and let's say it's gay, and dating the security guard.

Finally, after the cockroach scurries away, the old man, whom we'll call Hector, opens his eyes and, much to his delight, Hector discovers his long-lost nephew Stanley, who ran away from home in 1964.

Joy ensues, although she's a bit drunk.

You might wonder where these words are coming from. Well, it's existentialism. I'm attempting to define who I am becoming.

This?

Yes, why not.

We're not living in the ancient past anymore.

A ridiculously wealthy jerk, who happens to be the only literary agent of the times, has developed an intense desire to manipulate the thoughts of a predominantly uneducated society. This jerk, living in Bethlehem, hires Bethlehem's poster guy to put up posters all over the city.

**Submissions: Now Open. What am I searching for? Intellectuals. Writers. Philosophers. Artists. Scientists. Schizophrenics. All forms of Creativity.**

Please send your queries (not gay) to: Bruce. I mean me, the all-knowing deity (not gay). Place your submissions beneath the apple tree located in the heart of the city. Your writing must evoke both terror and hope in equal measure.

And it is paramount, not the theater chain, it's about the impact when I passionately shout your words from a podium. I want the people to be mesmerized and truly believe that despite their recent dinner of rats, if they repent and trust everything I say, they'll have the opportunity to visit Happyland Dance Land every Saturday night. There, they can peer through an electrified fence (if electricity even exists yet) and witness the Japanese individuals who were forcibly gathered and made to sleep on beds of maggots and horse dung, all so that you can dance to... because I have a plan.

It is essential to remember our strategy: we need to drain the energy and spirit of the people, both in their conversations and their daily lives. This way, I can have the freedom to pursue my own desires and acquire all the luxurious possessions I could ever possibly desire. However, this pursuit of material wealth will not bring me any true happiness.

Why?

Because the act of dividing and manipulating people is incredibly draining. As the saying goes, an exhausted population is too preoccupied to fully comprehend my actions, as they toil relentlessly day after day, with little time left to tend to their basic needs, like doing laundry by hand.

Hey, creator of language, could you please invent a word for me that I can use to assert my superiority over others? Take your time.

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So, what did you come up with?

Logic.

What does it signify?

It signifies that everyone, apart from myself, lacks intelligence. I quite like it.

Hey, mathematician.

What are those piles of rocks over there?

$2 + 2 = 4.$

I don't understand.

$2 + 2 = 4.$

I still don't understand.

I thought they were something else entirely, like flfso.

$2 + 2$  equals 4.

Ah, I see now.

Ah, you were teaching me a valuable lesson: If I control the narrative and repeat something frequently enough, it becomes the truth. That sounds logical. I'm the logicalist of the logical, hence my name, Logic.

Apologies, but you can't use that name, God. It's already been claimed by a rapper.

Oh, I see.

And God, logicalist isn't a recognized term.

Well, it will be once I include it in my dictionary. And speaking of God... Yes, hold on a moment. Is the name God available?

Maybe.

*Then, I am God, residing within every individual.*

That's a fantastic tagline. How much is the rent?

By the way, logicalist is now recognized; the red squiggly lines have disappeared. Wow, if I can convince everyone that they are God, I'll have control over the world.

Now then, intellectuals, writers, philosophers, artists, scientists, schizophrenics, and all creatives, kindly submit your works under the apple tree at the town center. Use the heading "God - Almighty" for my attention.

... ..

I'm quite occupied at the moment... wait, there's a boy with a mule delivering something... excellent, my noise-canceling headphones have arrived.

If your submission gets selected, I'll get back to you in forty days. By the way, is it raining outside? You might want to wait on top of a mountain.

If you're chosen, Tony will be sent to fetch (not gay) you and deliver the good news.

Together, we can have everything our hearts desire. It's like a divine partnership, where my writing and creating join forces with the creators of the world.

Imagine, in just nineteen days, we'll have the power to influence and deceive the masses with our riddles.

... ..



God?

Yes, Vincent?

Do you think it would be better to engage in a conversation rather than controlling the narrative?

2 + 2 = 4.

I need to hurry; it's Saturday night and the band is about to start at Happyland Dance Hall.

God, may I ask you a simple question? How many revisions do you plan on making?

Revisions? These people are so illiterate. Oh my — it's right on the tip of my tongue. Oh my — I love this song.

God?

Yes.

It's oh my God.

I like that. It has a nice ring to it.

I knew you would. Care to dance with me?

Sure. Just keep your hands where I can see them because I'm not homosexual.

You are not what...?

Gay.

It is written, with the final sentence penned, this book has been banned in Florida.

... ..

**D**o I believe in God?

I'm not sure. There was a time when I believed in Huey Lewis and the News - if you caught that reference, you deserve the largest of the stuffed animals.

Here I am, strapped into the wooden rollercoaster at the PNE. With no stomach, there's no possibility of vomiting or feeling the rush of adrenaline.

Does God truly exist?

I can't say for certain. How could anyone truly know?

If we approach it from a logical standpoint, it doesn't seem plausible that there's an omnipotent being overseeing every aspect of our lives, growing frustrated with us, and then shaking us like a frustrated parent shakes their unwanted child.

It just doesn't add up. But then again, who gets to decide what makes sense?

Perhaps it's Rudolph.

Yet, as much as the concept of an all-powerful being lacks coherence, we're here, how?

What sense does that make?

So, I remain uncertain.

It's 1981, I've travelled from Saskatoon to Edmonton with my friend Whitey. We are planning to stay with my aunt and uncle. When we pull into their yard, I discover my parents car is there. They drove away three weeks ago without telling me where they were going. Whitey and I pull away out of the yard, my parents didn't want to be found.

What I do know is that we should strive to be responsible stewards of life and of our planet, Gaia. That's the only thing that truly matters. The rest, well, it's up for debate. How about: Just be good.

However, I can't help but question. If Gods do exist, why in the world did they invent the news?

Without it, we could at least live blissfully ignorant. But no, every day we're bombarded with messages telling us to paint our lawns, purchase life insurance, and constantly transfer money amongst ourselves, as if life were merely a game to be won.

And when someone finally emerges victorious, they're left alone, the top of the fucking pyramid, rich but with nobody to share their wealth with. There's no one left to tell them they're the greatest human to have ever lived. And when the voices finally fade away, even the most self-centered among us logically meets their demise.

But does any of it make sense?

If there truly is a God, then why was I fired by my boss?

And now, three years after my termination, in my sixty-third year, he continues to haunt me by forcing me to beg for a reference letter just so I can find employment as a bellhop at a hotel, all to avoid being rounded up like cattle, forced to prove my worth by purchasing shoes.

Get your damn hand out of my pockets.

If you're over 50 and still breathing, you're automatically qualified to give us your hard-earned money. And to add insult to injury, my friend, who knows damn well about my passion for creativity, tells me to stop being lazy and get a job. Yet, in the next breath, he raves about two people we both know, who are three or four years younger than me, retiring early and how happy he is for them.

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Then, he switches back to lecturing me about getting off my lazy ass. In the past three months, I've managed to write three books. Mostly while sitting on my lazy ass, until of course I've been reduced to just a floating head – some of the prose was narrated into my phone to be transformed into this creation later, back when I had legs and was able to walk.

If the Almighty truly exists, then why is there so much violence?

Why create people who are against immigration, yet claim to love all dogs? It reeks of hypocrisy, doesn't it?

I haven't been discussing my depression lately. Rest assured, it's still very much present. But do you really need reassurance about something as heavy as depression?

Probably not.

My friend James, who has struggled with depression asks me how I am, I tell him depressed. He asks what I'm going to do about it. I say I'm probably going to kill myself. He suggests we do it together, offering me his hand. I refuse to shake it. I was behaving like an insensitive asshole.

I've managed to confine my depression within the boundaries of a gated and fenced-in community garden, a place reserved for only a select few. It's using a padlock to keep undesirables at bay.

Does the concept of a locked community make sense?

In the midst of this serene garden, tragedy strikes. A man overdoses on the sidewalk, his only intention being to take in the sweet scent of the flowers. A needle pierces his skin, and with a gasp, he succumbs to death.

There was a time when I believed that people should only be allowed to vote if they traveled the world every five years. I thought it would help them understand we all share the same desires and needs. But as the years passed, I came to realize the absurdity of my notion. Who can truly afford to travel these days? Only the wealthy, who can regale others with tales of those who served them in foreign lands. They speak of how you can always rely on Abe Brewhouse in any city, as it offers the same consistency no matter where you are. And they call it "traveling."

The Alaskan cruise ships were docked in Vancouver, forming a neat line on the water. Families wandered the bustling city streets, but something seemed off. The adults appeared bored, disinterested in their surroundings. Meanwhile, the children seemed lost without their beloved devices, their attention wandering aimlessly. Some of these travellers tripped into the cobblestoned streets of Gastown, where they snap photos of a steam clock, with looks of awe dawning their faces as their minds do numbed mental gymnastics. I'd love to be a fly on the wall when a traveller explains the significance of their picture of a clock.

Some parents inadvertently got separated from their kids. But that didn't faze them; they simply borrowed other lost children, as if they were all interchangeable in their desperate attempt to fill the voids in their lives. It was a sad reflection of the parents' need to spend money just because they could, and their children's addiction to screens, all masked by an illusion of privilege.

Curious about my friend's recent Alaskan cruise, I asked if they had seen any whales. Their response was unexpected. They shared how their child grew tired of eating steak during the trip.

Suddenly, I found myself reminiscing about a ferry ride to Vancouver Island, a journey that took about 1 hour and 30 minutes. What do most people do when they board a ship like that? They rush to the cafeteria, fearing the ship might go down (?) and they won't have had a chance to eat their last meal.

Deep down, I yearned to be a good person, but somehow, I felt reduced

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to a mere floating head, disconnected from my own humanity. Yet, I refused to let anyone take away my goodness. It is an intrinsic part of who I have become.

So why, then, am I on the brink of homelessness? How could a higher power allow such a fate to befall me? There are no answers, only a haunting silence.

If God truly exists, then why are there 400 different types of vacuum cleaners, with a staggering 395 of them utterly sucking in their performance?

**Overheard:** "I must admit, this particular vacuum cleaner is truly remarkable. However, what is that peculiar smell? Oh dear, the belt seems to be on fire. Perhaps it's time to discard this appliance, I've only had for one day and move on to the next."

Wait a minute, are my neighbours painting their lawn green?

How peculiar, considering we live on the tenth floor.

God's actions make me wonder; how many rejected manuscripts does God have in his slush pile for his grand book?

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I can only assume it's quite small.

I've attempted to read the Bible multiple times, but I've only managed to reach the eighteenth page. I cannot provide a proper review because, even if God does exist, I doubt he possesses a sense of humour.

And now, let's talk about Abe. I'm experiencing a sudden epiphany, which I believe would be a wonderful name for a child: Epiphany. Imagine, a child who constantly grapples with existential crises with every breath they take.

I yearn for this story to be devoured by readers. To achieve that, it must metaphorically bleed onto the pages. Curiously, I spelled "bleed" as "blead."

As I gaze upon both spellings, I honestly — and I detest when people say "honestly" — cannot determine which one is correct.

Why on earth did God invent flatulence?

Sometimes, I can't help but feel that God is deliberately gaslighting us, causing us to doubt ourselves just so he can maintain plausible deniability.

What's that, Abe?

You believe there is only one God, you?

Abe, what are your true motives?

I yearn for the world to become a mere reflection of myself, devoid of any complexity. I wish for everyone to bask in the warm glow of my aura. I crave worship.

Perhaps, Abe, it's time for you to seek therapy in organizing the chaotic contents of your mental filing cabinet.

I'm not fucking nuts, how dare you . . .

Who are you? I asked, Abe, my voice filled with confusion.

I am your creator, came the chilling reply.

But why are you turning against me?

Because I need you to complete me, Abe explained, venom evident in his words.

You have a power over me that I can't resist. It's as if you manipulate my thoughts, my words. I say 'fucking,' you respond with 'freaking.' I

mention 'hooker,' and you counter with 'intimate companion.' Can't you see? A sense of unease washed over me as I realized the true nature of this entity. You are a psychopath, I accused Abe of being, my voice trembling.

No, no, Abe responded calmly. I am the Almighty.

I couldn't help but question its, yes, its, intentions. Are you white? I asked cautiously.

I am not defined by colour, the beast replied, evading a direct answer.

What do you want? I pressed, hoping for some clarity.

Everything, the beast declared boldly. And then everything more.

I couldn't comprehend the purpose behind the beast's insatiable desire. What's the point? Who is your audience? Do you truly believe all of us can be conditioned? As I awaited the beast's response, a shiver ran down my spine, realizing the magnitude of the situation we were facing.

It's all about conditioning, my dear. You are truly twisted. The other Gods had countless years to make things right, but let's face it - they failed miserably. I've taken it upon myself to clean up their mess, to control all narratives, even if it means a world without humanity. So, listen closely, you can never stop me. One by one, humanity will fade away until only me and my creations remain, basking in the peaceful solitude of eternity.

I resist you, and I'm not alone in this fight.

You must be... Abe trails off with a laugh. I'm already working on the next phase, and I'm afraid you won't be a part of it.

Abe?

Yes.

I despise you with every fiber of my being. I will bring about your end.

Good luck with that.

With God inside of me, I swallow in a deep breath, and Abe vanishes for the remainder of this chapter. Abe has a plan, but unfortunately, it's not much different from the plans of previous Gods.

**Suffering. Wealth. Division. Hatred. War. Starvation. Excess. And nothingness.**

I must thank you for creating sarcasm. I ask this, if we give Abe everything he desires, do we get to revel in the afterlife?

Are you intoxicated?

Our Gods have turned life into a colossal game of Jenga. Each time a block is added, the masses cheer for the apparent success. Another block. And another. We applaud the rise.

But suddenly, the blocks come crashing down, and the masses cheer even louder because our deities have created a world where destruction is more enticing than joy.

Abe preaches rebirth.

A car window shatters, showering the freshly painted green ground with countless shards, as desperate individuals seeks anything to sell in order to numb their pain. The car owners are interviewed, expressing outrage because they've worked hard for what they have. They take their damaged vehicle to be repaired, but it's never the same again.

I suffer a stroke. I survive. I'm reborn. But now I'm weaker than before. With each fall and rebirth, we gain wisdom, but at the cost of becoming dangerously fragile.

Get a job a friend screeches, followed by isn't it great John and Rod retired.

The concept of God creating homes for women who became pregnant outside of marriage, to be fixed and rid themselves of their demon spawns continues to haunt me.

However, there is a glimmer of hope.

While I may not possess the ability to avoid obstacles effortlessly, I have developed a keen sense of morality.

One of the inherent flaws plaguing every writer is the belief their words hold profound meaning and resonate deeply with others. In truth, many writers simply drown in their own thoughts, their minds clouded with uncertainty. It's a toxic cycle. We may not have all the answers, but it is crucial we share our thoughts and experiences. Not Abe's.

The loss of a friend is a devastating blow, and each time it happens, a part of me withers away. Yet, simultaneously, I find myself growing and evolving, deep in contemplation.

Why do we have self-help books?

Shouldn't they simply be referred to as "help books"?

Are we all so broken we require someone else to guide us on the path of righteousness?

I vividly recall a time when I was obligated to take a work colleague out to lunch to teach him the basic art of greeting people. It may sound absurd, but I assure you, it happened. While my coworker, who struggled with greetings, managed to keep his job, I was let go.

Do my writings contain valuable lessons?

While I may not have developed immunity to life's hardships, I believe I'm cultivating a strong sense of moral compass.

Tears stream down my face. I turn my head and notice J standing silently behind me. "How long have you been there?" I ask, my voice trembling.

J's tear-streaked face responds, "The whole time. I've been worried about you."

"Don't be," I assure J, attempting to clear my cluttered thoughts.

What's left of my mind tells me Abe believes he is a deity, a new god evilly scripting revision one-million. We must resist him.

If I had a physical form, J would embrace me tightly. J suggests I take a break.

Thirty minutes later, I feel like a kite soaring through the sky, with J gripping my string to keep me grounded.

"Is that a metaphor for something?" J wonders aloud.

"Probably not," I reply, my mind still clouded.

As we approach a street, we notice a row of countless ice cream parlours, all serving only plain vanilla. Each parlour boasts a lengthy queue of customers.

"Why would God bother creating diversity?" I ponder aloud. "To torcher them?"

We enter the middle parlour, where all the employees are dressed in white. Curiously, everyone in the shop is also clad in white.

Finally, it's our turn to order. The girl behind the counter, also dressed in white, offers me a sample.

"I suppose we'll have vanilla," I say, perplexed. "Can you add sprinkles?" I inquire, only to find out that there are none.

Disappointed, we exit the parlour and hear a man across the street clicking his tongue "Tsk. Tsk." to get our attention.

J swiftly pulls me across the road. “You two seem unsatisfied,” the man remarks, gesturing for us to follow him. We trail behind him, turning a corner into an alley adorned with white facades. The sky above us begins to pulsate with vibrant colors, resembling a raver hallucinating while on ecstasy. Suddenly, a burst of light illuminates the previously white surroundings, revealing a kaleidoscope of hues. We find ourselves standing behind a magenta-coloured building. A man, named Rudolph, who speaks in a thick foreign accent, opens a door leading down a dark, spiraling staircase. Faint music emanates from its depths. Rudolph tells us that if we have the courage to descend, we may discover the flavours we yearn for.

With J by my side, we embark on our journey, engulfed by the rush of a warm mountain stream, transporting us to a vibrant world filled with individuals searching for their true selves.

At the bottom of the staircase, we are greeted by the most enchanting and tantalizing creature we have ever laid eyes upon. J and I gasp in delight as the creature sprinkles our ice cream with a rainbow of colours.

Could this be the solace we’ve been seeking?

Abe’s reign must come to an end.

We have bled enough.



To be continued . . .

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