

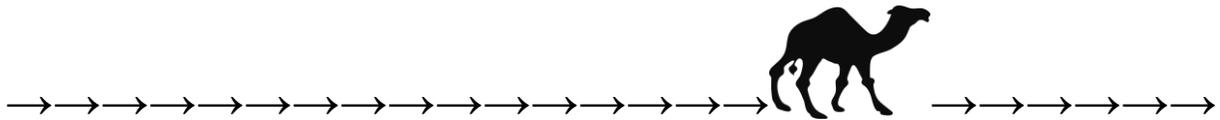
In Search of a Few Good Apostles

Whoever designed the anus was a friggin' genius.

I know I could never have come up with something like that.

I'm sure my ass would've looked like shit.

—The Dalai Camel



“Wanted: Self-Starter willing to work hard & do anything asked of him/her on a 24/7 basis—for no pay whatsoever! (Wisdom optional)”

I received not a single response to the above ad we had put online. Months were flying by like flaming geese in a foggy sky, yet no one had been chosen or had volunteered to be added to my exclusive, highly coveted (in my own head), righteous— “Apostle Egg Carton!”

Camel Commentary: I'm sure an “Apostle Egg Carton” sounds like some idiotic thing I just made up. But in Reality—it's a genuine, bona fide thing! Once someone signs up for apostlehood, she or he is symbolically placed into an invisible, sacrosanct carton; similar in shape and substance to an actual egg carton—but not quite so confining ... and such.

Life gets stranger and stranger as we advance through the Abstract Levels of Existence. They say, “If you can't stand The Weirdness, stay out of The Mystical.” But who in the world are “They?” And who do “They” think “They” are? See? Told you IT was weird.

And Then One **Seemingly Normal** Night ...

We were both drained and exhausted and just wanted to find a comfortable bed, worthy of The Messiah and his top-of-the-(dung)-heap apostle to sleep in for a change. We had been sleeping on sand, dirt, grease, or grass for the last year (yes, that's how much time had gone by till now) and it was getting a little old! (Even for someone like me, who was well-disciplined in **TAO-MAD** (The Art Of—Misery And Deprivation)). Plus, this whole apostle hunt was weighing heavily on us, after all the months we'd just put in and came up completely empty-netted. We were thoroughly spent, and really in need of a good night's sleep.

As we walked that night looking for any lodging, I responded to one of Nicholas's on-the-spot suggestions by teaching him about the karmic load you create when breaking into someone's detached garage and sleeping there for the night, even if it goes unnoticed by the residents of the house you're innocuously invading.

And so, as he and I were slowly walking, good-naturedly debating the difference between "house" and "home," we suddenly, and quite bizarrely, stumbled upon—

A **Peculiar** Storage Facility!

Yet, it wasn't peculiar in appearance. No, it was just your typical-looking two-story warehouse on some quiet industrial street, downtown L.A. ... **IT** was wildly peculiar, however, in the mutual sensation **IT** had created in each of our guts and gonads! It happened to us both simultaneously, and we both knew **IT** without having to say so. Although there was a knowing glance or two exchanged between us. A knowingness knowing that something strange was afoot.

And then the very next thing we knew . . .

We were **suddenly** standing inside the structure!!

We turned and looked at each other, with jaws dropped, noses dripping, and eyes ablaze!

Camel Commentary: Well, mine were ablaze; his were just bulging out a little on the psychotic-looking side. But that was due to his genetically predetermined eye-socket contortion capabilities he had inherited from a weird uncle of his—a guy nicknamed “Bug-eyed Stan.” There’s much about Nicholas I haven’t mentioned yet, for reasons unknown to even me. But I’m glad you at least got to hear about “Bug-eyed Stan.” [?]

We found ourselves on a portion of the floor where the moonlight was beaming down through the warehouse windows, situated way up on the twenty-foot-tall wall. It must’ve been an odd sight, the two of us standing there, staring at a wall full of storage compartments. And with the place being so eerily quiet, the silence felt supernatural ... so supernatural—it was palpable ... and then some ... and then some more, even.

“Why were we led to this eerily quiet place of supernatural silence that is beyond palpable?” Nicholas asked, as if I had explanations for every esoteric mystery imaginable.

“Perhaps this is more than just **Spirit** providing us with the gift of suitable compartments for temporary lodging,” I said. “Perhaps there’s more to this than meets the I. And please take note: I did not use the word ‘eye,’ dear brother ... for reasons of symbolism and senselessness.”

“Guess we’ll just have to wait and C, ha-ha,” he answered, but with the same sense of alarmed knowingness I was experiencing ... that something incredibly abnormal was afoot!

Strangely enough, we soon found two adjacent unlocked storage compartments on the ground floor—next to where we were standing!!! (Crazy, huh? Who would’a thunk!)

Mine came with a vibrating barker lounge, with enough room to recline. Nicholas had the other compartment, which fortunately contained a brand-new king-size mattress! Unfortunately, his unit was jammed up, and there was no way possible for him to situate his bed horizontally. Yet he didn’t seem fazed by this in the least! He was so grateful to be sleeping in a real bed—in any way, shape, or form. And so, completely exhausted, he climbed on top of his new vertical mattress and lay himself down on the eleven-inch-wide side of the bedding—the least softest part of the mattress.

As he lay there plucking the mattress handle, his words were in awe and appreciation of this sudden, odd turn of events. “Your Inner Goat really came through for us this time, Dalai C.”

“Which I find to be rather strange,” I replied. “My anomalous-looking master has proven to be a guide who seldom intercedes ... I have to wonder why he would choose to do so now.”

“Perhaps this is his way of saying that he wants us to start a Save the Goats Foundation!” Nicholas enthusiastically suggested.

“I’m not quite sure how you’re going to be an asset to my Mission, my dear Apostle #1. But it’s obviously not going to be in coming up with reliable theories explaining the peculiar occurrences we’ll be encountering. But thank you and kudos for at least trying. Now, I suggest we both get a good night’s snooze in this weirdly quiet and obviously vacant warehouse we’ve been blessed to take drama-less refuge in.”

We quickly settled into our compartments and we were both soon fast asleep.

* * **The Dream** * *

The moment I dozed off, I found myself in my dream body, meditating in some sunny meadow, filled with mellow, yellow fowl and gorillas wearing pink mink coats and matching stilettos. I also found myself loudly and uncontrollably chanting a secret word given by some random, run-of-the-mill spiritual master I had met, way back during the Mesozoic Period.

***Camel Commentary:** It could have been in the Paleozoic era, for all I remember. It was a long time ago, we forget these things. Getting old is a bitch. And where is my other sandal?*

Anyway, the guy who taught me this chant was no ordinary run-of-the-mill spiritual master. This was the strangest soul I had ever met in any era—prehistoric or otherwise! And he went by the odd name of AgMaxaMereMoo**MOO** (or “AgMax” to his friends and colleagues).

Now, this secret word Sri AgMax taught me had a unique vibration to it. So unique, that for some it brought about an Inner Harmony of sheer rapture. But for others, well, it sounded a little something like Mariah Carey singing “Flight of the Bumble Bee” with scolding soldering irons wedged up into her armpits and a porcupine shoved up her ass.

Camel Commentary: No offense implied to Mariah Carey, of course. She's wonderful! The above description was merely a reflection of her incredible singing voice, as well as that porcupine image of mine she played a big hole in, I mean—role in. But I digress!

Now, this AgMax chant was especially annoying to The Goat Master. Any time I chanted it, awake or when dreaming—he would always appear and poke me in the eyes with those stupid goat horns of his.

He had long ago forbidden me to use this chant, but I would sooner or later end up (uncontrollably) chanting it in a dream, and it would always piss the shit out of him. It rarely occurred, you see . . .but this was one of those rare dream occurrences where it did.

This time he poked out both of my eyeballs from their sockets. Luckily, they were only my dream eyeballs, and I still saw out of them, even after having them jabbed out of my face and bouncing around on the ground. I must say, my dream vision was quite peculiar coming from two different angles from eyeballs resting on the dirt. And I saw his unbridled fury.

“I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU NEVER TO USE THAT FUCKIN’ CHANT!!!”

“You most certainly did, your Goatitude,” I replied. “But did it really merit you violently yanking the eyeballs out of my face, just now?”

“Yes,” he replied in a much more professorial voice. “It’s only a dream, so it shouldn’t be too traumatic for you having your eyes yanked out of your face ... not unless I stomp on them, rendering you totally dream-blind, of course. You know how that infuriating chant upsets me!”

“My apologies for sounding off the AgMax chant, Sri Goat. I know the unpleasant way it affects you as a master in goat form, as you’ve explained to me so many times before.”

“You need a refresher course in dream control? I hear they’re offering one at the **WHY!**”

“I’ll try to be a little more alert when I’m totally unconscious going forward, your holy Goatiturd. Well, not totally unconscious; that slipped out. Dream Control classes at the **WHY**, I know.”

“Is there any other reason I need to be in this asinine dream of yours?!”

“Nope. I think I’m good for now. And thanks for the storage compartments, by the way. Nicholas and I really appreciated **IT**. A very kind and generous gesture on your part, most kind teacher and guide.”

“Which reminds me,” he blurted out with excitement, “there’s something I’ve been meaning to show you!”

He held his goat leg out over one of my detached eyes (lying on the ground), displaying a diamond-studded hoof ring he was wearing. But this was no ordinary hoof ring! It had the word “**GOD**” beautifully engraved on it, and it was giving off colorful, visible waves of energy and sheer ecstasy in all directions and through me! I found my dream self totally relishing in **IT**, but I did not understand what its significance could be. Yet, just as I was about to question The Goat Master on the meaning of the **GOD** hoof ring—

He suddenly exploded before my dream eyes in a great goat-spllosion!!!

It was like a goat grenade had suddenly gone off, with wool flying out like shrapnel in every direction in his wake. Wait ... did I just say— “wake?”

A Barrel of Apostles!!!!!!

The Goat Explosion blew me with near nuclear force straight out of Dreamland. The explosion was so fantastically enormous that it jolted me out my recliner and flung me straight out of my compartment and onto the smooth cement floor of the warehouse, where I slid for a good eleven feet, before coming to a sudden stop—in the middle of the warehouse floor.

Camel Commentary: Yeah, I don’t know what the hell is with me and the number eleven; It just is. Some people have lisps, some twirl their hair, I happen to be obsessed with the number eleven. It could have something to do with astrology or ... perhaps even my IQ. But it’s certainly not my shoe size, nor my number of ex-wives—so please let’s rule those possibilities out. So, what’s my affinity with eleven? Maybe it’s all those e’s.

I just sat there in the middle of the cold cement floor, trying to regain my breath and calm down from the shock of the crazy dream experience, with its bizarre exploding-goat

conclusion. Yet, as I sat there panting—I knew, without doubt, I had just received a vital **IM** (Important Message) in the dream state. And it was now my task to decipher its meaning.

“A hoof ring with the word ‘**GOD**’ engraved on it!” I said aloud. “But hold on a sec here. People don’t have hooves. So why would any sane person give a hoot about a hoof ring? It makes no friggin’ sense!” But then I quickly realized, “Ah, but of course it makes friggin’ sense—he was implying finger rings! Rings with the word **GOD** engraved on them ... Yet, for what purpose? Every person on Earth knows or has at least heard of **GOD**. Getting the masses to wear that kind of ring isn’t going to change anyone’s preconceived notion of whatever they think **GOD** may or may not be. There’s got to be more to this than that. Perhaps he wants me to manufacture **GOD** rings. But for what reason? Why would The Dream Goat Master want me to start manufacturing **GOD** rings? ... Unless—”

And that’s when **IT** hit me like a flash!

“What if the rings were electronically wired, where they could buzz your finger every other second to remind you to keep your attention on **The Presence**? Zapping the world into higher consciousness! Maybe, that’s what I was meant to do ... This must be my Mission.”

Now Nicholas (who was awakened by all the commotion) quickly picked up on the conversation I was having with myself and threw in his two lousy cents.

“I’m not sure if that kind of Mission would have any positive effect on the world, your Holiness. It might even become annoying for folks to be constantly getting their fingers electrocuted—even in the name of **GOD**. Just my two lousy cents. It was your fucking dream.”

“What I have in mind,” I retorted, “is having these electric reminders be ever so slight that they titillate the fingers in a delightful manner, instead of agitating them in pain.”

“And you suppose these shocks would serve as reminders to help keep one’s attention on their own Divine nature, in this incredible universe we’ve all been blessed to love and suffer in?”

“I can’t say with any certainty whatsoever, brother Nicholas. But this was what flashed through my mind. Yet it could be exactly what humanity needs right now—who knows? Personally, I couldn’t say ... I didn’t write the goddamn stupid dream.”

“But still, Dalai Camel, even for a Messiah, this is a seemingly impossible task, don’t you think? I mean, first of all, how in the world are we going to get these **GOD** rings made? I lost access to all my money, and we both know you’re pretty much worth camel squat. And so, seeing it from my limited vantage point, viewed way up here in my confined little apostle compartment on my vertically situated mattress ... I’d say we’re totally up Shit’s Creek on this one. Wouldn’t you?”

“Perhaps we are, dear brother. But I’ve been up Shit’s Creek many times before in my existence, and lemme tell you something: One never really knows what’s in store for one, up that cockamamie creek. In fact, there are times when even a place like Shit’s Creek might have some pleasant surprises in store for one. After all, anything’s possible when one finds himself up the creek. Wonderful surprises sometimes await us, in the gullies and gulches of **SC**. So never fear the creek! Delight in it, I say! For anything is possible in any of life’s waterways, no matter how rotten and polluted the currents carrying you might appear. Row, row, row your boat—gently up Shit’s Creek. Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily—life is but a mystique.”

Well guess what happened—that very next moment!?

(Go on—you know.)

Why sure—one of the storage compartments burst open! And guess who was inside? Why sure—it was a scrawny, BEARded homeless man, with a maniacally happy expression! And these were the words he shouted out with the greatest of pride: “My great-great-grandfather happens to manufacture rings! That is his trade, and the ol’ geezer is still alive and kicking!”

Although I wasn’t surprised by this sudden surprise, Nicholas was blown away completely by **IT**—exclaiming in full vocal volume: “My **GOD**—what are the odds of that?!”

The scrawny, BEARded homeless man continued: “Furthermore, I overheard your Holy Canole’s story and would like to assist in your monumental Mission and join your Inner Turtle.”

“It’s circle,” I explained. “Our Inner Circle, which till now, has been only a line. But with you as my Apostle #2—we shall have ourselves an obtuse triangle ... Or isosceles. Yeah, I’d be down with isosceles—why sure!”

Nicholas added, “Perhaps, by Thanksgiving, should this sudden explosion of good Karma continue smacking us about, we might even have ourselves ... an Inner Trapezoid!”

“That would certainly rock my horse, being part of some exalted, hallowed Trapezoid!” yelled the old, BEARded man. “Count me in, sonny boys! Apostle #2 is in the house!”

I waved a meaningless, two-fingered-blessing gesture to my brand-new Number Two and then asked him: “Geometry aside, are you sure you can aide us in securing these blessed rings of **GOD**? After all, your great-great-grandfather must be very old and fatigued. Are you certain he’s capable of pulling a feat like this off?”

“Excuse me a sec, while I wipe the long column of wild-man snot running down the side of my BEARd,” he replied. “Ah—better. And yes, easily on the rings. He’s still in the biz, and I can easily hook that up. But as far as those electric shocks you want them to intermittently give off? Well, I don’t think my great-great-grandfather has the expertise to hook them up like that.”

“Then he’s obviously not that fuckin’ great, is he!” Nicholas blurted out, in frustration.

I was still training my brother to rise above all anger (a topic that sometimes gave him difficulty, especially when he would get flashbacks of how good he felt when nunchucking those screenplay readers, years ago). And so, I tried to teach him not to resist any agitation du jour, but to just let those distressing feelings flow through and out of your beingness, without acting on them.

“Now—now, Number None, I mean One. You just need to relax and breathe out all your tensions and worries. Life will provide a way, as **IT** always (actually—just occasionally) does. And you can bet the farm on that, if you get what I’m plowing here. So allow life to live, #1!”

And what (pray tell) do you think happened ... that very instant?

Why, sure—another storage compartment door burst open! And sure enough, inside was—the tallest friggin’ midget I had ever laid eyes on!!!

Camel Commentary: Just to be clear—I’ve laid more than my share of eyes on midgets in my day. And plenty of midgets have laid their share of eyes on me! ... Someone needs some serious therapy, here. (Hint: And it ain’t the goddamn friggin’ midgets.)

Now I know this will sound nuts to you, but that midget in the cabinet was five feet eleven inches tall! (Give or take a millimeter.) And if that weren’t crazy enough, he was also wearing a coat made entirely from the tails of long-ago deceased squirrels. But the “crazy” didn’t end there, no sirree, **GOD**. For the (not-so) little fellow promptly bellowed out:

“I was once an unemployed electrician! And I have teeny-weeny hands for ‘The Midget Life’ I’ve been blessed to live! I’m sure I could wire them up, these here **GOD** rings you desire.”

I examined his hands, and it was true! They appeared to be the size of a three-year-old’s, yet they were not chubby and they had terrific adult dexterity and coordination to them, and could easily exceed typing 100 words per minute on a cell phone keypad. (111, I bet.)

I smiled to myself, picking up on the breezy way things were unfolding for my “Mission.” And I said to the dead squirrel coat fella, “I suppose you want to be my Apostle #3.”

He answered with such beautiful love, it was a marvel to behold. “You had me at the prospect of being part of that killer Inner Trapezoid of yours, Mister Messiah Man.”

I answered, “Well, at the moment—it’s only an Inner Parallelogram. But I welcome you to your corner of it, #3. I’m sure you will hold up your angle with humility and honor, and such.”

Full of joyous delirium, he spontaneously jumped out of his cube, just to come over and shake my hand. But I was worried I might fracture a couple of his miniature phalanges, which gave me complete extemporaneous pause and major intestinal consternation.

And then I realized he wasn't really a five foot eleven midget at all! He was simply wearing boots with twenty-nine inch heels!!! This made much more sense than him being a five foot eleven midget—why sure. And that gave me the satisfied feeling that everything was coming together for me **NOW** (this time an acronym for: “Nature’s Own Way”—an expression from out of pre-post-antiquity ... wherever the heck in time that may be.)

“This is all coming together so nicely!” I opined, with the proper voice inflections one might expect of a messiah. “But gee, hmm, I wonder who we could get to help us market these electrified **GOD** rings—once they’re mass-produced and ready for public consumption?”

A whole four seconds went by, with not even a single miracle manifesting. (I found this a bit on the annoying side, probably due to several months of sleep deprivation.)

“I SAID ... I wonder who the hell we could get to market these— “

Suddenly, another storage door (finally) burst open. This one from the top row, upper left. And an older German woman, wearing thick muddy sneakers and a moth-eaten skirt revealing her knobby knees and smelling like she had just fallen off a nineteenth-century turnip truck, answered me in the most boisterous tone her one good, working vocal cord could muster.

“My half cousin produces infomercials, bitches! And she’s scared shitless of me—to the point where she’ll do whatever the fuck I ask her to—no questions asked!”

“There we go,” I said to myself with a sense of relief, but still with a tinge of annoyance over the slight delay in her appearance. The tinge was soon crossing over into the bothersome, and I was feeling compelled to take **IT** up, directly to my supervisor ... And that’s what I did. “Hey guys—excuse me a sec, while I talk to my invisible goat guide, okay?”

I looked upward to nothing particularly apparent, and commented with hands on hips, “I’m glad you’re finally pulling your wool back from over my eyes, Master Goat. But your dramatic pauses are starting to get a little old for me, considering my age and condition. You see, my poor body is exhausted and needs its rest. So, if this is the apostles-all-busting-out-of-their-cabinets night, can we please just press forward and expedite the whole, stupid thing, Sri Goat?”

The Goat did not answer.

But **THE VOICE OF A ZILLION VOICES** did!! (And in perfect harmony.)

“This is not your Inner Goat, dumbass.”

“... **Godney**? Is that you?”

*Camel Commentary: “**Godney**” was **THE ALMIGHTY**’s name from way before *The Dawn of Time*. But a few of the younger Ancient Ones shortened **IT** to “**GOD**” back in the day, and **IT** has stuck ever since. I just know about “**Godney**,” and I enjoy calling **IT** it.*

“Don’t you know **ME** by now?” **IT** replied.

“Yes, and thank you for your Presence, **Godney**, I couldn’t be more grateful. But can we please drop all anticipation from the process and just watch the thing unfold expeditiously? I’d really appreciate **IT**, my **ALL**-encompassing **Source**. It’s not me, of course—it’s my terribly fatigued body, you see.”

Godney replied in a perfect, monotoned voice: “This was supposed to be a joyous, holy event and you just went and completely sucked the **FUN** (Fun U Nincompoop) out of **IT**. A Soul of your awareness should know how to rise above fatigue.”

“You’re right, of course. I know how to rise above fatigue, but I guess I was a little too tired to think of **IT**. My apologies for interfering with your miracle-in-progress, oh Magnificent Ocean of Compassion and Mercy—who never requires apologies from any of **ITS** Souls.”

“Let’s just get this shit over and done with. Just because you’re old and tired doesn’t mean you must be such a buzz-kill, my child. For there is nothing more enjoyable than **FUN**.”

“I apologize once again, oh great **Source** of **IF**.” (Infinite Forgiveness.)

“Fine. Now how bout’ shutting your trap and enjoying the rest of the show, my beloved Soul. This is your Blessing to relish in. So, have yourself some **FUN**—you nincompoop, you.”

As **THE VOICE OF A ZILLION VOICES** left the room, nine more cabinets simultaneously flung open, with all my remaining apostles climbing out and enthusiastically declaring their allegiance to me and my mysterious “Great Cause.”

I was relieved **IT** was finally manifesting, but Apostle #3 expressed major disappointment in seeing all these new apostles, when he exclaimed:

“Well there goes the fuckin’ trapezoid!”

Aside from his own personal dreams being dashed, I was still pleased about the whole thing, ... except for possibly of having annoyed **GOD** just a few moments ago. But I would not let that Holy Bummer stop me from enjoying the oddly peculiar experience unfolding before me, in that **Bizarre** warehouse we had strangely “stumbled upon.” **IT** was reminiscent of the scene in *The Wizard of Oz* where Glenda calls on the munchkins to come out and meet Dorothy—a scene that we all delight in watching and one that never gets old. Of course, that was a fictional story with colorfully dressed, adorable little characters singing and bringing sheer joy to a nervous little girl extremely out of her element.

I was given a group of malodorous, down and out derelicts—who appeared way more zombie than eye candy. Not that there’s anything wrong with that, of course. For I intuitively knew that their hearts were (basically) in the right place, which is all you need to start with—when forming a group of disciples.

**But then something alarming dawned on me, as I did some
counting!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

Standing before me were twelve Souls that just suddenly appeared from behind closed doors. But with the addition of Nicholas ... I now had a total of thirteen (13) apostles.

I was deeply baffled by this, thinking that twelve was the officially designated Lord-sanctioned number, probably due to some esoteric, apostle-istic formula too complicated for the human brain to fathom. (Either that or it was some lamebrain apostle union rule, who knows.)

Still, I couldn’t figure out why’d I’d be given an extra apostle for my Apostle Egg Carton. But I decided to wipe that “Mental Dandruff” off my shoulders and instead just focus my attention on the utter jubilation of this insanely astonishing moment before me—the excitement of which was plainly written all over everyone’s grimy (and somewhat grotesque) faces.

“Please settle down,” I warmly said to The Shady Bunch. “That’s better. Thank you and Namaste to each one of you, on this obvious **GOD**-sanctioned, blessed day. Now, please introduce yourselves and tell me how you feel about this **HHH**, or Historic, Holy Happening—you’re all very much a part of. Please don’t be afraid—you’re now all **HHH**.” (Home Here, Homies).

The first person to ring in was a fella who apparently had spent years on the streets.

“One minute I’m a homeless, despicable wretch, the next—a major religious icon ... Talk about a Guinness fuckin’ Record for a total life makeover! WOO fuckin’ HOO, man!”

“Language!” Nicholas squawked back at him, with some authority in his voice.

The apostle turned and asked: “Oh, was I supposed to say ‘f*ckin’ with an asterisk, your Holy Shitness?”

“I’m good either way,” I chimed in. “As long as the word isn’t used in hate and vileness. Now what is your name, my son?” I asked, with **Divine Love** oozing out of my Spiritual Pores.

“They call me Bernie. But if I have counted correctly, I imagine soon they will be calling me ‘Apostle #4.’ Am I making the correct call here, would you say, great Soul?”

“Indeed, I would say!” I said. “And you have a very good head for sequential mathematics, number four. I know I’ll be able to count on you, if you calculate my cheap quip.”

Bernie took a few moments, but he figured **IT** out and boisterously burst out laughing.

Next, a Hungarian woman in a long brown, mildewy woolen dress made her introduction. “I am Gilda. I came to America to get rich, so I could help the unfortunate ones. As fortune has **IT**—turns out I am now one of the unfortunate ones. And that is me, your Gilda.”

I saw the heavy burden of disappointment she had been saddled with, and so I lovingly approached and spoke to her in vocal tones of warm, creamy intonations (soothing to eardrums).

“You should know that the greatest fortune one can ever possess in life—is that of **The Golden Heart**. And you, my dear Gilda, have a—” I stopped midsentence, suddenly choking on some terrible, biological stench. “Goodness gracious! What’s that disgusting, horrible smell?”

Gilda smiled sheepishly, and I understood. “You do realize that I said ‘heart’ and not—”

“Oh!” she overlapped with. “I thought you said I should have **The Golden Fart!** My bad, Your Holy Piss. I just become hard of hearing when I get over-bloated from too many bowls of onion cereal for breakfast—such as the ones I feasted on earlier, just this very morning.”

She spoke with great sincerity, and so I validated her good nature. “I completely understand, my dear fart—I mean, heart. Your intentions were pure and benign, even though your gas wasn’t. I will, however, need to teach you that in doing **GOD**’s work as my dedicated apostle, your tendency to exude sickening, rotten odors might serve as a deterrent in your ability to uplift others. Stench distracts from the higher things in Life; things like love, and breathing, and such, you see. Therefore, your onion cereal breakfast habit might prove to be repellent to my sacred, secret ‘Mission.’ But you don’t have to quit cold turkey. We’ll ween you off gradually, according to your level of culinary self-control, as well as your ass-muscle-clenching abilities.”

I realized this applied to everyone present and I addressed **IT** right away.

“Perhaps this is a lesson for all you good Souls and newly enlisted helpers to my cause. Looks like we’ll have to start you all out by having you customize yourselves to a semi-nutritious diet ... along with some stringent new hygiene habits. Cleanliness has always been next to **GOD**liness, as the biblical saying goes. And for very good reason, of course. So, anyone else care to introduce themselves? Don’t be shy now. You’re clearly among kind friends here.”

A confident, muscular fella, who would soon come to be known as “Bluto the Apostle,” stepped forward, boasting about his extraordinary story—an incredibly disturbing tale, indeed.

“I am Bluto, but not the one you know from those hysterically funny Popeye cartoons that make me pee all the way down to my socks and into my toes.”

“You can assume people will have enough sense to ascertain you’re not an animated character, my dear Bluto the Sailor, I mean apostle. Now what, if I may ask, were you doing in life that led you to these difficult, indigenious circumstances you find yourself dwelling in?”

He took a deep breath and then bared his Soul to all.

“I was a fireman for many years and a fairly proud one at that. But then one horrid, dark day, I found myself being kicked out of my beloved occupation. Poor firefighting skills, you might guess? Nope. No, your new ‘Bluto the Apostle’ fell fiercely from fireman grace, due mainly to ... the pole.”

“Dare I ask?” I replied, in a state of **UOC**. (Uh-Oh Consciousness)

“I will gladly fess up to my past actions, because at long last, I’ve made my peace with it. Y’see, sliding down that long, smooth, shiny cylinder back in those days was very arousing for me—both physically and psychologically. Probably a lot more psychologically, I must confess.”

“Well, no need to elaborate any further, my son. I think we all get the picture here.”

Despite my interjection, he continued. “So I began sliding down it every few minutes. At first, I told the guys it was my new workout regimen. And it worked beautifully! Everything was fine and dandy, and I could get my jollies on ... in-between emergencies, that is.

“But then, one day, I found myself being unable to do my share of the firefighting. Why, you may ask? Mainly because I couldn’t stand erect, due to the severe penal blistering and the whopping case of incurable blue balls I acquired over time. Yes, I suffered, what you might call—the very gold standard in crotch pain. But even that wasn’t the worst part of my nightmare. It was the company-wide ostracism, the perpetual humiliation, and the daily mirror-avoiding.

“So, there you have it. I was thrown off the force for going down on the pole ... And the Dalmatians as well. Can’t forget them Dalmatians, eh? Love me one of them sexy, spotted beauties, with a few shots of J. Daniels down the hatch! Y’know what I’m saying here, friends?”

No one there knew what to say after listening to Bluto’s sordid past. Even I was stunned.

But then, our soon-to-be-anointed “Audrey the Apostle” finally broke the long, long awkward silence with a sweet, bright smile and a joyous exultation to the group.

“I’m a washed-up crack whore, without a tooth stub left in my gums! Yet I can chew on a thick hunk of medium prime rib and be entertained for days! So chew on that—ya f’n mo-fos!”

She said this with such exuberant pride we all simply burst out laughing, patting her on the back with loving approval and heartfelt vibes of fellowship and benevolent revulsion.

A thirty-something British guy, named Harry, was especially tender-hearted to her as he spoke in his thick, pleasing-to-the-ears accent.

“Terrific, love—you should be proud of your **GOD**-given gums! They’re your blessing.”

He then turned his jubilant attention to the rest of the group.

“Hello, Dalai! And hello, cherished colleagues! I am Harry, and this is my brother, Itchy. And we, my dear my brothers and sisters—are the Balls brothers!”

His brother wasn’t quite as jubilant in his response. “It’s Richie, not Itchy! He has trouble with his Rs, this one does.”

Harry quickly took offense, and it was obvious from his tone these were a pair of bickering brothers. “We were originally from Sussex, where we owned our own pharmacy. But then someone couldn’t keep his pesky little paws outta the damn Vicodin barrel—could he now!”

“Well whose lame-ass idea was it to store them all in one big barrel in the first place—you dim-witted, incompetent oaf?” replied Ritchie.

“It was only meant to be a window display to attract new customers into the store! Not some bloody candy dish for you to snack on every time you passed by it with that drugged-up sweet tooth of yours, ya bloody, druggy dildo! I blame you for our demise, ya sonofabitch!”

Ritchie replied, “Same breeding as you, dumbass! And creator of the Vicodin barrel!”

Now, Nicholas (whom I had been training to be my top assistant) saw how things were quickly spiraling downward. And so, he took it upon himself to play “bad cop” to my “holy cop.”

“Boys, boys!!” he admonished them. “You are in the presence of a great Holy Man!”

“Who?! Where?!” was the response most of them had.

I wasn’t sure whether I should smile in bliss and be above the fray or simply frown at them in some mocked-up expression of discontent (solely to establish boundaries in our new order). I immediately realized this was an important teaching moment, and an opportunity to establish a proper tone for the relationship between me and my newfound disciples. So, I tightened all my abdominal muscles, forcing a shitload of blood up and into my head. (But only to where the network of capillaries in my face could handle it, without bursting in multiple locations beneath my facial skin.)

This ferocious infusion of facial plasma rendered my complexion pink. But not just any ol’ pink. This was a sizzling hot pink. **A freakin’ Malibu Barbie pink! ...** Well, as you might imagine, everyone gasped at the ominous spectacle. (And I looked pretty, damn ominous, folks.)

Nicholas continued to take charge of the moment, but by unwisely allowing his anger streak (the one he had long struggled with, i.e., the nunchucks) to inform the tenor of his speech.

“Look at what you’ve done—you pathetic, derelict losers! You’ve gone and fired up the wrath of **GOD** through his personally chosen courier on Earth!!! This is exactly what happens with shoddy apostling. And now we’re all doomed! Doomed, you pathetic, putrid pieces of—”

I immediately knew I had to take control of the ship’s wheel to alleviate false fears. And so, I spoke to my apostle-elects ... while still holding in my breath!

Camel Commentary: Just so you understand—I did this all strictly for appearances sake. Most people need to witness some sort of stupid miracle performed, to be convinced of someone’s validity, in my field, that is. Messiahhood has its unique challenges, so I found out.

“Please, everyone, I must explain. You see, my Vice Messiah, acting in the role of Sacred Sergeant, struggles with a vice of his own and, therefore, knows not what he speaks. For in real Reality, there is no such thing as ‘**GOD**’s wrath.’ It does not exist and never has. It is only a gross misreading of **GOD**’s true nature—which is **PURE LOVE**. Therefore, if you think **GOD’S** got wrath ... then you desperately need a spiritual bath.

“So please do not worry and drop all delusional fears. I am merely demonstrating to you that the ways of your former states of consciousness will no longer do, in our sacred task ahead.

“For if we are to bring upon positive change to this planet, we must first remove ourselves from all conflict. Conflict creates tension. And tension will only tighten the knob of your Divine Faucet, henceforth restricting The Flow to a drip ... which will render you a dip. Consider this the first of many of my discourses to you. And so, with a warm and hearty welcome, and an excitement for what is to come—I wish you all Bliss & Bewilderment.”

Bluto the Apostle pointed in amazement and declared to everyone, “Will you look at that! The man continues to maintain his Malibu Barbie pink complexion and locked-in breath—while still being able to spout off wisdom beyond all human comprehension!”

“This ain’t no ordinary human being!!!” added another apostle.

“Exactly so,” Nicholas boasted to the group. “Because he is no ordinary man! He’s Super Soul! Yes, it’s Super Soul—strange visitor from another dimension, who came to Earth with powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men!”

“Ahhh, Nicholas—” I interrupted. But there was no stopping him.

“Super Soul, who can change the course of gnarly livers, bend wills with his bare hands, and who, disguised as Camel Cunt, mild-mannered snorter—”

“I think we get the point!” I said forcefully, “whatever the hell that may or may not be.”

I quickly realized that “pious awe” was the last thing I wanted to inspire in my divinely chosen helpers, for concern they might foolishly idolize me as being someone superior to themselves and other Souls, which was the very antithesis of my long-held beliefs and teachings.

So I immediately relaxed my abdomen muscles, and the fiery look of **pink wrath** swiftly diminished to a much more agreeable, calming shade of **lilac**. With my softer and more pleasing pastelish-toned hue—looks of relief and peace washed across their dear and darling weathered faces. And I was happy to see glowing countenances back in my warehouse, once again.

And so, I smiled to my lowly subordinates (not “lowly” in the sense of being “less sacred” than anyone else, just slovenlier). And I spoke to them with intense Nurturing Love.

“My dear children: The last thing I would ever want to inspire is fear. That is an old trick of religious leaders from the past, who felt it necessary to control their flocks. Because in Truth, there is nothing in life to fear, you see. Nothing at all. Not even fear itself, if you don’t mind me correcting some president who shall remain nameless, FDR I mean, FYI.”

“Well what about death?” asked a young enthusiastic male apostle. “Personally, I’m scared to death of dying.”

“But there’s no need for you to suffer that illusion,” I replied in full guru mode. “Physical death is actually something to look forward to, and yes—even to get excited about! Death happens to be the most underappreciated experience in life. It is wondrous and amazing.

“Now, don’t get me wrong. I’m not talking about dying here. The process of dying usually sucks the big one; let’s face it. Anyone liking the process of dying is either nuts or a liar.

“Yet once death is thankfully achieved, you’ll find it is so amazingly wonderful that, well ... let’s just say you’d be doing back flips in the spot you’re standing on now, if you knew the jubilant, miraculous wonders awaiting you ... the miraculous wonders awaiting us **ALL**.”

Inspired by my words, the young enthusiastic male (would-be) apostle pulled out a gun and shot himself dead, right there, on the spot.

This certainly tarnished some of the delight we had all been feeling up to that point. But it also reaffirmed my Inner Knowingness that I would somehow end up with the customary twelve apostles, which would fit neatly into my Inner Apostle Egg Carton. (Without having to squish in an extra Soul and make it all gooey-like. No one likes a squashed apostle—it just ain’t right.)

Still, someone just brutally killed himself! And so, here I was, yet in another **WHIM** (Wisdom He Imparts Moment). And I realized I’d be going on plenty of **WHIMs** with this group, at least until they were whipped into respectable spiritual shape ... however long that might take.

“Worry not, my freshly enlisted apostles! For although we have just witnessed a violent and most unfortunate destruction of physical life, all is as exactly as it should be. In fact, all is always as it should be, in all ways. Too bad for this deceased apostle wannabe, though.”

“Why is that, your Holy Turd?” asked Apostle #5.

“Well, he’s now going to have to face the consequences of an idiotic suicide. Oh, but he’ll soon reincarnate and go through a similar life all over again. Hopefully avoiding any brainless acts of self-demise in his next life. Ah, but such is the perfect system of Karma.”

“The Dalai Camel is wise,” one commented in vapid awe.

“The Dalai Camel is esoteric,” said another impressed apostle.

But then, one of them asked me a question—something that I found remarkably astute and perhaps even spiritually precocious in retrospect.

“But for a guy claiming to be the Messiah ... is The Dalai Camel humble?”

I turned to the spiritually precocious apostle (soon to be “#8”) and humbly answered his astute inquiry with a factual explanation ... for my greatest spiritual achievement.

“As far as humility goes, well ... I don’t like to boast or anything, but there have been those I’ve encountered who consider me to be the humblest person in the history of mankind. Yes, this is true. In fact, I would love to tell you where I’ve been ranked this past year by the **NHS**—i.e., the National Humility Society—but it behooves me not to, since they might drop me a rank or two from the top. Hardly worth the risk of a quick brag—eh there, #8?”

Apostle #8 just stared at me, with his jaws as wide apart as they would go (even beyond that, perhaps). And then he said with a heart full of conviction: “You are truly a genuine, spiritual master, and I am deeply humbled to be in your presence.”

My reply was to the whole group: “**IT** is not just my Presence. **IT** belongs to **ALL!** Including the lot of you, you lovable ragbags. So, welcome aboard, maties.”

“We are your loyal devotees from this point onward, Dalai Camel!” one of them shouted.

“Do with us as you please!” they all exclaimed in extraordinary unison.

“I thank you for joining me in my ‘Mission,’ and I welcome you all to the fold. What lies ahead won’t be easy, you should know. The spiritual training I’ll be putting you through, might even seem unBEARable at times. Yet we must often squeeze ourselves through moist, narrow openings to get deeper into life’s crevices, which is where you find—The Truly Sublime.”

I could see a gentle **BOB** (Breeze of Bliss) blowing about the room, and I knew we were full steam ahead in our unexplained, yet obviously monumental “Mission.” For momentum was now on my side! **IT** had to be all up from here, for there was no other direction to go. Right? ... Right???