

ALLEN COOKE

The Earth is My Ant Farm



Dedication

I dedicate this to the late great Spike Milligan, a lunatic genius, who wished for his headstone to read "I told you I was ill".

A huge thank you to my proof readers, Nicky Larner and Ann Hancox, I am surprised they didn't go goggle eyed from all the grammar checks.

Another big thank you to the illustrator, AJ Hateley, an amazing effort, if anyone requires her artistry then you can browse her work and contact her directly at:

<http://www.pknives.studentartfolio.com/>

Lastly but not least I would like to thank myself for my perseverance and sufferance in writing this story, if you have any comments you can email me directly at:

allencookeemail@gmail.com

I hope you enjoy reading this; it's a personal thing I know.

'O mother, mother!

What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope,

The gods look down, and this unnatural scene

They laugh at. O my mother, mother! O!

William Shakespeare,

'Coriolanus'

CHAPTER ONE

The Earth is my Ant Farm, The Creational School gave it to me but I'm a bit bored with it now.

A bigger boy threw a rock at it in the classroom and wiped out all my dinosaurs, I liked them.

Now I'm stuck with the ants and they like to multiply.

I have a favourite Ant, his name is Derek.

This is about him, he likes to travel.

He doesn't know how but I will tell him one day.



A long line of plastic detergent bottles attempted to stand to attention but it was no easy matter on a moving conveyor belt as they raced along on a designated path. Occasionally a few defect bottles would be pulled from the line as if they had forgotten to polish their boots on inspection.

Derek Hill, the line supervisor was busy checking his troops and keeping count with his trusty clipboard and pen, furiously scribbling notes that no one could see or even dared to question. Such was the power of the note scribbler, notes meant order and quality control being the order of the day.

Derek was king of the production line, his minions, dressed in overalls and silly plastic hats were tasked with making sure he did as little scribbling as possible.

The Supersuds Detergent factory dominated the industrial landscape of Runcorn in Cheshire, it had long been a hive of chemical processing since the 19th century, producing the greatest number of Soaps & Liquids ever seen in the UK and kept armpits, nether regions and hair as grime free as possible.

Derek was proud of his post, he had probably been the unwitting catalyst of social grooming, fathering the greatest number of offspring through the fact that no one wanted to date anyone stinky and unclean.

Derek was a modern day marvel of Darwin's Natural Selection theory, mind you, Darwin would have been grateful for some Supersuds Shaving Foam and razors in his day; he may well have spent less time with primates.

Derek's red lobster face matched his levels of stress, he had already been remonstrated by the Line Manager for allowing an extra ten plastic bottles to fail inspection yesterday. He was only half way through his shift and had almost reached the shocking limit of sixty rejections per 10,000. Heads will roll for this he thought, probably his own red head before long.

A portly man appeared with spectacles and shaven sideburns that carried on up to an alarming inch above his ears, he came walking steadily over to Derek, decked out in a Marks and Spencer blue checked business shirt and polyester tie combination, a top dog on the line and one that Derek feared the most amongst them.

"Derek, have you seen these rejections, they are appalling!" the fat man was waving around reams of figures as he had the

benefit of a printer which made his social status higher than a clipboard.

“I’m so sorry, Mr. Driver, I don’t know what’s happening today...”

“Don’t know! It’s your job to know, you are the line supervisor aren’t you?”

“Yes Sir, I am” came the weakened reply

Mr. Driver took on a different persona this time, he loved sarcasm.

“Am I speaking to the Line Supervisor?” he hummed back to Derek, then studied him for a moment before allowing him to speak.

“Yes Sir, the line manager yes”

“Good, well bloody well manage then! I had better not see another repeat of yesterday, pull out all the stops, Derek.”

A line of workers seated at the belt were busy looking around at themselves and smirking, they were glad they weren’t Derek.

The fat man raced off and left Derek to turn a greater shade of lipstick red as he furiously scribbled notes onto his clipboard.

“Everyone get back to work, nothing to see here, no more mistakes” he managed to yell in a high pitched wavering tone.

Every order had a chain of command and each chain shouted down to the other until the work was done or heads were bitten off and left in a pile as a warning to others.

The hours seemed to wind down very slowly as he paced back and forth hoping that not a single plastic soldier was rejected until the end of his shift at five. The pressure was definitely on, sooner or later a ticking time bomb would come rolling down, a misshapen container, a defect plastic cap, maybe a printing error, there were so many possibilities.

Some nights he would wake up from sheer panic after dreaming of disfigured armies of plastic bottles advancing towards him with his general screaming at him from behind the front line to do something to stop them.

Hopefully his workers, who seemed to like the hapless man, would turn a blind eye to a few defects, they would bail him out, they may get a worse replacement if they were too eager, at least Derek let you off for a prolonged cigarette break outside.

The time had finally come, it was 4.58pm but the seconds seemed to slow to a dramatic crawl, not a single error, his clipboard tally had been stuck at sixty since 3.30pm, everything may just be fine after all, he could see the brooding Mr. Driver staring out back at him from behind his glass walled office.

Then it happened, it could have waited till a minute past five but it was on a long headrush to his destruction, Derek eyed it as it made its way through the weaving line and onto Quality Control, it was only a matter of time before its pathetic and weak shape landed as a mark on his clipboard.

Derek began to sweat, his face looked like it was boiling over, like a kettle with a malfunction; His boss had sat up and began to watch him intently as Derek wiped his forehead with the cotton sleeve of his white overall. He had but a few seconds to spare before someone raised the bottle in the air and announced it defunct. Mr. Driver would see the arm and come storming out of

the office, he knew the tally, he knew his authority, he knew Derek Hill was heading for a written warning sooner or later.

Derek's eyes bulged out of their sockets as Mavis Cutter, one of the line workers caught the wretched container and pulled it out of production, she eyed Derek, she knew the rules, she decided to shout out...

"Mr. Hill, would it be okay if I had a fag break? I'm gasping, I don't clock off till seven, be a luv would you?" she winked at Derek as she placed the container in her oversized handbag.

His nervousness took hold of him before he blurted out, "Cert...Certainly Mavis, you could do with a break, you've worked really hard."

A smile spread upon Derek's face as the clock struck five, everyone in the line was in no doubt about what had happened back there, it was a dangerous move by one of their colleagues but it was a life or death situation.

Derek loosened his collar to let out the steam and thanked everyone for their efforts as he placed his clipboard contents into the Control processing tray ready for Mr. Drivers verdict, he eyed his boss nervously as he walked past his office and could see him scowling back as he punched his card and hastily made his way out of the building.

"Thank you Mavis, you're a star," he called as he passed his saviour outside and headed over to his silver Montego estate to escape back to normality; it had been a very close shave indeed.



God Boy was trying hard to understand the theory of social interaction as a micro change mechanism and he had wished his beloved dinosaurs were still around, the only social interaction they did was with their sharp pointy teeth as they devoured each other in the steamy swamps of Pangaea.

He was one of several God Boys attending the Creational School and each had a task of tending to their own designated clusters of galaxies, the figure was huge, in fact billions of them, but only a few within each had anything meaningful to tend, develop too much and you were constantly busy creating and it left no time to play outside.

The grand Visioneer, draped in a white light robe, came around the class inspecting the progress of each of his pupils, he had a few surprises up his sleeve for them today, of course, a day was not an earth day, its size couldn't be fathomed by any other minds except for his own flock.

“Class, I must say without a doubt, that you are one of the most gifted groups I have ever had the pleasure to nurture, a great many variations of species have been achieved over the course of this semester but there is one thing I think you may have overlooked.”

Every pupil seated around the large hovering universe twinkling with luminescence and life couldn't for the life of them think what it was.

The teacher cut all their vague ideas off in an instant, he could see their thoughts floating around the room, “Come, come, I do not expect anyone here present to have the faintest clue as to what I am leading to, so I will enlighten you!”

There were many puzzled looks about the room.

“It is of course, a higher learning and I do not mean instinct, I can see that a great many of you have opted for a barbaric existence, kill or be killed, the great food chain, your savage monsters have wrought a good deal of destruction upon your worlds and as a child I can imagine it has been fun, but...”

He walked around the universe until he had made a complete circle back to his starting point, during that time he had studied all of their creations, admired some, snorted at others and noted a single God Boys unique avenue of thought.

He stopped suddenly and continued his speech. “The semester is almost over and you will all be aware of the prize at the end; Now! I propose a series of experiments I believe will eventually determine the champion amongst you all.”

Instantly, each God Boy received a parchment within his grasp, on each was written the first in a series of four experiments to achieve the ‘Higher Understanding’ Merit, the quality and presentation of each document outshone any printer or clipboard by miles and denoted absolute authority, the first experiment was quite clever, it simply read...

“1. Select an individual specimen, direct it to another colony, marks will be lost for a specimen that perishes, marks will be gained if the specimen survives to experiment number 2”

The Teacher noted with interest his favourite pupils reaction, it was clear to everyone that he was smiling as if he knew something they didn’t. This particular God Boy had seen one of his designated planets and its life almost destroyed by a flying rock 65 million earth years ago, thrown in by his larger, more envious brother.

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