

## The Visitors

No. 8018

It was hard to believe that the Greek crowd should be milling in the ~~the~~ marketplace at in this awful, excruciating weather. The heat just lay there, suspended, unmoving, honouring the memory of a ~~static~~ sepulchral silence. Big Ben winced, which ~~added to the grotesque~~ contacted his mouth further, in addition to the squinting against the profuse illumination. The perpetual Greek chatter, occasionally adorned by interjections of bewilderment at the hiked price of a potato, riled him all the more.

"Damn it's hot," he said, wiping the sweat off his brow, glancing down thereafter to scowl at a ~~couple of~~ <sup>that</sup> couple of brats who tugged at his white attire, <sup>ridiculously</sup> hung ~~to~~ till his toes. He had invested no less than forty-five minutes of his precious time arguing with that Italian ethnuch who called himself a fashion designer. The deadline, however, made him bow eventually.

"Hey Fleff, all set?" he barked into the talkie.

"Yeah Ben, this harp needs some adjustment. One of the strings is broken, and the ~~first~~ sound kinda like..."

"The harp isn't your concern. You got the main stuff?"

"It's locked and loaded baby."

"Man, you set?"

"I am ~~the~~ standing besides the meat shop, and it smells like shit. Presently I am cursing you, but I am set."

"Great. We will be out in 5 minutes. <sup>I promise</sup> Standby."

Big Ben now held an apple in his right hand, shoplifted from an establishment under an awning while the shopkeeper had indulged in <sup>raucous</sup> bargaining with a customer beside. The brats had multiplied in number, and ~~now~~ <sup>now</sup> gallivanted around in movement as their little feet sent ~~the~~ dust intermingling with the already sparse air. He bit into the apple, feeling a tinge of relief trickling down his throat. The digital face of his watch now displayed two minutes till the fireworks. He checked out a bootycious dancer who, ~~checked out~~ <sup>was</sup> busy ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> scurrying some trinkets, but let out a gasp of disgust as soon as her the hair on her armpit became evident.

"Could ~~at~~ have atleast procured a decent hoop..." Fluff  
murmured.

~~Concentrate~~ man.

"Focus on the trigger goddammit! Any moment now..." Ben  
replied.

~~And a~~

"An ~~smooth~~ aluminium dummy would have worked  
wonders as well. Now it is heavy AND hot." Max vented  
out his ire.

"Blame ~~it~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~that~~ Italian idiot. ~~But~~ All that later, 10  
seconds remaining. All the best. Max, take your best shot," said  
Ben.

"Of course, I never miss a target."

Big Ben opened a display on his ~~left~~ palm, indicating the  
positions of his crew amidst the labyrinthine alleys of this  
~~medieval~~ ancient city, and the yellow dot that edged closer.  
He threw the half ~~even~~ <sup>derailed</sup> apple away, ~~looking down~~ <sup>retreating</sup>  
sufficiently before coming to a halt. The pronouncement was  
the collective surprised emotion, that ~~went~~ <sup>evoked from the plebs</sup> the all, before  
the personality himself followed.

"And here comes Archibius." said Big Ben, "You  
know what to do guys."

And indeed he came, sprinting along the wake of a  
~~discovery~~ so scintillating ~~that~~ years later scintillating discovery,  
something that made him throw his arms out in jubilation,  
~~and~~ emitting hoarse cries of "Eureka! Eureka!"

It was damn funny, thought Big Ben. ~~The~~ <sup>one</sup> of the  
Greatest Thinker's ~~in~~ <sup>the</sup> ever to have walked the planet  
had a paunch, ~~and~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ conspicuous over the bounding ~~and~~  
cheer and flabby arms. Women shrieked at his incoming  
figure, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> cringing, grabbing their children away from harm's  
way. And even though he tried, he couldn't evade the  
grotesque  
sight of his masculine endowment, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> animatedly  
grooving in unison with his stride.

Big Ben's heartbeat quickened as he ~~was~~ <sup>he</sup> approached  
the square, from where he was supposed to take a left,  
or the street ~~directly~~ <sup>now</sup> adjacent to him. Max had better  
Further along the street, Max waited for his cue. Big Ben  
could imagine him now, ~~the~~ <sup>he</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>at</sup> his arms holding

the ~~strings~~ taut strings of his bow. He better not miss, ~~the~~  
Big Ben thought.

There was a <sup>sudden</sup> melee behind him, and out of nowhere came a pig squealing its lungs out. This new horror was too much for the onlookers, who flattened themselves along the walls and the shops. The pig made its way towards the half-finished apple with its owner in tow, ~~and~~ Big Ben simultaneously slapped his forehead at his stupidity, gaping helplessly as the Great Greek ~~took~~ ~~the~~ deflected, taking the other route.

"Max! Fluff! He went the other way! Shit... shit... Fluff, take the alley to your right and sprint straight forward. Max, you run straight along, I will catch up."

"And the harp? <sup>Who...?</sup>"

"Screw the harp! <sup>Take the small can.</sup> Now go! Go go go!"

Big Ben glanced down at the pig, arresting still with its owner, now being ~~let~~ given a hand by ~~the~~ other young men in the vicinity. He lunged on the ground, grabbing the apple, and stood straight as Max flew past, pursuing at a ~~break~~ break neck speed. Big Ben ~~is~~ pursued too, but was falling back. Before long Max vanished.

"Ouch! Sore..." there was a burst of static.

"Fluff, you OK?"

"I am. That must be Max."

"Max? Max? Answer me geddommit!"

"He seems to have lost contact, Ben. we will have to wait." Fluff's voice sounded ~~quite~~ <sup>more</sup> ~~quite~~ credible. Big Ben glanced back to see him hobbling through the crowd.

"Sprained the ankle. This is a shifty day."

"Ben!!" a voice came from the distance.

Max had returned, the bow slung across his chest. He was on ~~an~~ a jovial trot, smiling as he neared.

"Did you...?" enquired Big Ben.

"Best shot ever. Let's get the hell out of this god-forsaken place."

Big Ben flicked a switch. A woozy sensation was experienced by all before they found themselves in a containment cell of a laboratory. ~~A scientist scribbled some~~ An anxious scientist bounced on the balls of his feet outside, and immediately blurted as soon as ~~the~~ conversation was operational.

"How did it go?"

"This footage is gonna jack those TRP's big time bro!" drawled Max with a swagger. ~~Just~~ "You guys gotta

see the pair where those boats started sunning after him.  
Damn cheeky they were too."

"Excellent, you will have to stand by. Your former self  
former selves are yet to leave."

~~Fluff was~~

"Hey Ben." asked Fluff ~~suspiciously~~

"Yeah?"

"What's that apple doing in your hand?"

"Nothing. Liked it. Took it."

A relentless jabber filled their ear drums, the Italian  
coming into view. He gesticulated towards Max's armour, giving  
him the thumbs-up. What an ostentatious bastard, Big Ben  
thought.

→  
Last para

"What a bastard." declared the former self of  
Big Ben, ~~was priming himself to~~ while <sup>glaring</sup> ~~glaring~~ at the  
Italian fashion designer. ~~and looking.~~

"Let him be. - I suggest you acclimatize yourself here  
Somehow. It's gonna be damn hot." said a nervous scientist outside  
the containment cell.

~~Ma~~

and

"This keep looks nice. So does your costume Max." said

Fluff, ~~at Max's~~ ~~knocking~~ the metal.

"Thanks buddy."

"The History Channel has invested heavily in this  
~~National Geographic~~ one. I suggest you guys ~~to~~ cease ~~with~~ the  
tamfoolery." said Big Ben. "And remember, try to make  
as little a change as possible, <sup>possibly none at all</sup> we couldn't like to alter history."  
Max, check the can."

"5 seconds remain... 4... 3... 2... 1..."

The ~~competent~~ scientist's voice gave way to <sup>the</sup> wind and  
the void.