

THE PROLOGUE OF THE ATHEIST'S TALE: At the conclusion of the 20th tale, the atheist looked sheepishly around him before realizing that he was next in line. Embarrassed, he began to speak for the first time since the Drifter began his tale.

“I have heard all of your stories, and have enjoyed many of them. I apologize in advance that this story may not entertain you all. The only story I know is an allegorical legend I conjured up while thinking one day. Actually, I lied. It took me about six years. It’s simple and silly, but . . .”

“Just go already! We don’t have 6 years to wait!” commanded the bartender.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” the atheist quietly replied. “Just one more thing. If there still is any chance of heaven in my future, please listen to this, God.”

“You don’t have a chance in hell! You have forsaken our Creator!” resurged the Pracher. “While I made one mistake in life, your whole life was a mistake!”

HERE BEGINS THE ATHEIST'S TALE: My story will follow the lives of four brothers. They are clearly not identical quadruplets, but my goal is to allow you to see through their fraternalism and view the four as a pair of identical twins. First we’ll learn about the character of each boy and then jump to their teenage

days, the most critical in their development and also most interesting, as any psychologist or author would agree.

First born was Skoufos. He was ready to come into the world and found his niche immediately; he spent almost all of his time at his church. He was an altar boy, acolyte, and candlelighter from the age of three. By age seven he was considered the foremost Bible scholar in the world. His knowledge of his religion was beyond compare, and he was offered many positions as congregation leader and as an advisor to the Pope and Desmond Tutu, but according to the Bible he was still supposed to be learning at his tender age of fourteen, so he tried to live a normal life by the scripture.

The second brother out was Bedim. Though he became an altar boy at three with his brother, he dropped the cross on his first outing. He cried for several weeks, depressed with the horrible sin he had committed. The church couldn't punish a three-year-old boy for that minor infraction, however. How would that look in the press? Encouraged by his brother and the other church members he continued his job as altar boy, and dropped the cross again a month later. This time, only the Bishop whom Bedim dropped the cross on cried. At age fourteen, he still attended to church, to the ridicule of his friends, but often broke a commandment or two to affirm his coolness. After confession, however, he again became a poster child for the church.

The third brother born was named Lavey. When he was three years old, he was also an altar boy, walking behind his clumsy brother, Bedim. When he

burst out laughing for a little over eleven minutes after the cross hit the ground, this rude behavior made him lose his position as altar boy. Believing that Bedim should have been the person to lose the job, he never returned to the church again. He officially renounced his Christianity, and founded a notorious gang called the Anti-Christ's at the age of fourteen. He spent all of his time with them, acting on his every whim, lawful or not.

Occam was the last brother to emerge. He was offered a job as an altar boy at 3, but respectfully turned it down. No one ever explained to him the significance of the ceremonies. Instead of teaching him, the religious community shunned Occam. No one accepted him since he was banned from the church and disagreed with the actions of the Anti-Christ's. He did not have a declared religion, but still did not believe due to his lack of education. By age 14 he was introverted by nurture, not by nature.

The examination of the brothers' introduction to the 9th grade is dynamic. By some twist of fate, all four brothers landed in the same Leadership class taught by Mr. Assay in their first year of high school. Mr. Assay was an experimental teacher, always attempting to enlighten his students through new methods. In order to get himself acquainted with his new class and to get them to know each other, his first exercise was a group project. Groups of four had to attain an apple, pear, orange, and banana and bring it back to Mr. Assay in the shortest amount of time possible. In an attempt to be random, the teacher split

up the groups alphabetically, not realizing that the four brothers would be in the same group.

The boys began with a discussion of their strategy. Skoufos spoke first. “As Moses asked god in Exodus 3:13 how he should proceed to complete his goal, I pose the question: Should we work together or split up?”

Bedim had an answer. “Clearly, as it states in Peter 1:1-4, some men are better than others based on their faith to Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is better to split up the work so that the most faithful get the hardest jobs so that we will work most efficiently.” No one heard his continuation, “And so that Skoufos and I get the most praise from the teacher,” because Lavey was so excited with the idea.

“I think that will work perfectly!” Lavey never did well in school and he felt no reason to help his family do any better. If he did happen to decide to work on a whim, he realized that this was an opportunity to be able to do the easiest job. Knowing how to manipulate his brother, he announced, “Bedim, since you came up with the idea, you can find the banana, the hardest job since they are not very common in our area. Skudy should find the orange, Bancam can find the pear, and I’ll get the easy apple.” Lavey almost always addressed his brothers by demeaning nicknames.

Skoufos was confused. “I am not sure if that’s the right way to interpret Peter, and even so, I do not believe that is the correct distribution of jobs based on Bedim’s idea. . . .”

Bedim would hear nothing of it. With his head the size of a beach ball, he proclaimed, “Then it’s settled! Everyone meet back at the school in two hours with their fruit.” He already had his victory speech planned out for the teacher, so no one could impede his banana hunt now.

Occam began to protest, “I’m not sure if that’s the best strategy. Not everyone is guaranteed to finish at the same time. I have a sneaking suspicion that some people don’t plan to complete the task at all! If we all work together, then we’re guaranteed to finish at the same time and not be bogged down by one member of the group.”

It was too late; Bedim and Lavey had already left. Skoufos shrugged his shoulders at his baby brother and followed. After contemplating the best way to deal with this unpleasant arrangement, Occam finally began his search as well.

Skoufos remembered the mention of the distribution of kinds of fruit in Genesis 1:12 in creation and used this information combined with his (Biblical) Geography skills to quickly find an orange tree. After a twenty-minute walk, Skoufos had completed his part of the task.

Bedim was not so successful. The Bible contains no mention of Bananas! After searching for 30 minutes, a banana was not in sight. He spotted another group of students, however, who already had acquired a whole wheelbarrow full of bananas. In desperation, Bedim dressed up as a homeless man and begged the group for something to eat. The group couldn’t refuse such a hopeless request and granted Bedim a banana and even peeled it for him. “(Surely this wasn’t in

the rules of the assignment, but I am doing this for a good cause! I'm only trying to help my brothers, the opposite of the sinful cheating in Corinthians 6:1-8!)” thought Bedim as he ran to the school as quickly as he could, hoping no one would notice his treachery.

Lavey walked towards his favorite apple orchard in the center of the town. His self-assignment was so easy; he could easily the juicy fruit back to the school. “(What’s in it for me?)” Lavey asked himself. “(I guess I can earn false trust from my brothers.)” As he began to make his way back, he passed members of the Anti-Christ. He realized he had another 110 minutes until he had to return to the school, so he called his buddies over to hang out in the meantime.

Occam, knowledgeable in pomology, knew that pears grow on one of the few fruit trees that can withstand temperatures as cold as 25 degrees Celsius below zero. Using this information he quickly located a pear tree in ten minutes. Upset that his quickness would likely not help the team effort with the division of labor system, he began to run back to the school. On his way, he passed the center square and was encouraged by watching Lavey pick an apple.

Back at the school, Occam arrived first, followed by Skoufos and finally Bedim after 45 minutes. “We’re making great time!” exclaimed Bedim.

“I’m not sure whether Mr. Assay will accept a peeled banana. Maybe you should go find another and not peel it this time,” Occam thought out loud towards his beaming brother.

Bedim was in a pickle. He still had no idea where the bananas were. “(A white lie was fine as long as it helped the group (and himself) bring back the banana quickly,)” Bedim convinced himself. He exclaimed, “Good idea! I forgot where I found the banana, however, so we should form a group like the priests in Acts 6:7 to find it together!” as sincerely as he could.

“I figured out where bananas were through my (Biblical) Geography study! Follow me, brother!” said the excited elder brother. Normally, Bedim would never accept Skoufos’ help, but he knew that his teacher’s praise would outweigh any jealous grudge he held and ran to his side.

Bewildered how Lavey could take more than triple the time to return than he spent going to the orchard, Occam called out to his excited brothers, “Meet back here soon! I’m going to check on Lavey. He should have been back already!” Occam couldn’t tell whether his fleeting brothers had bothered to expend the energy to listen to him.

Occam quickly ran back to the center square to see Lavey sitting in the exact same spot in the orchard eating apples with his gang. “What are you doing? You’ve had an apple for over a half-hour! Let’s go!”

Lavey was not ready to leave his friends or finish eating his apple. “I’ll be there in a minute.” He murmured under the deafening snickers of his friends, “Maybe ten. Maybe an hour.” Lavey intended to go back eventually, once he got bored with his gang, though not even he knew how long that could take.

“Let’s go now! We could finish the assignment in under an hour if we run at this moment!” yelled Occam, irate that Lavey was slowing the team down. Occam, who always had good grades, wanted the team to be in first place.

“Leave me alone Banccam! Can’t you see I am busy?” yelled Lavey, irate that his baby brother wouldn’t go away. Seeing that Occam had no intention to leave without him, Lavey punched his brother hard in the jaw. As the Anti-Christ’s surrounded Occam, he snatched an apple off the tree and ran to the school as swiftly as his body would allow.

The three brothers arrived back at school 80 minutes after the group test was assigned. Skoufos carefully carried his orange, Bedim held a banana (not skinned this time) above his head in triumph, and Occam carried both his pear and apple, which was as red as his burning face. Bedim, seeing that the group had all four items ran up to Mr. Assay. “Check it out, sir! It was the hardest task you assigned, but eventually I was able to find this banana.”

“I see all four objects, but only three people! Where is your fourth member? In order to count the assignment as complete I need to see all four of you.”

Occam began to explain what occurred at the orchard with the half of his face that was not in excruciating pain, but stopped short of his first letters when another fist slammed into the other side of his jaw. This time it belonged to Bedim. “Finding Lavey was your job! How dare you destroy our (my) chances at being the first team finished! You didn’t follow through!” Bedim didn’t believe

anything was wrong with his actions since Jesus got plenty angry with Judas Iscariot too.

“Oh my gosh!” shrieked Skoufos, while scooping up his bloodied brother and running to the school infirmary. Like God in Ezekiel 34:16, he felt a need to bandage the injured.

Bedim remained alone with Mr. Assay who was backing away, wary of another swinging appendage. Instead of attempting to track down Lavey, the sole remaining brother was content with trying to flatter the teacher while he had time alone with him. Bedim used the logic from Acts 20:35, that it is important to help the weak. Unfortunately for the group, Lavey and his crew were far from weak! Bedim believed the danger of his brother's wrath was the reason he was only required to aid the frail. Instead, he unrealistically hoped he could make an instructor appreciate him more than Skoufos for the first time.

After three hours of time for the project Skoufos returned from the infirmary and Lavey ambled back to the school munching on the half-eaten apple in his hand. Finally glimpsing the fourth member of the group, Mr. Assay announced the group's grades, “Bedim and Lavey receive A's for their outstanding work and quickness. Lavey, you were very late and have eaten part of your apple, but you kept at your job for almost three hours. For this effort I cannot fail you; you get a C-. Your fourth group member, Occam, however, blatantly flaunted the rules of this assignment. He clearly took away Lavey's part that he was working so hard at just because he could complete it faster, as we

could see by him bringing me two fruits! This is a leadership class, not a horticulture class! What kind of leadership is displayed to me by capturing the project of another and then not even being present when I distribute his grade? Occam receives an E, which, mind you, is the lowest grade one can receive at the high school. Keep up the good work, you three. I'll have to talk to Occam if he ever shows his face around here again."

"That's the end of my story. I think it's quite sad, don't you? I hope you all understood my message. I've never been a very good storyteller. Actually, I don't think I've ever told a story to a crowd before. I'll explain the meaning if anyone still cares to listen to me ramble anymore." The atheist blushed bright red and sat down.

The Zebra mused loudly, "Yo, that was deep man, but I think I get it. Clearly it was representing basketball! That Banccam guy was like Robe Kapist, who doesn't share the ball and can't win a championship! That Skudy character on the other hand. . . ."

"Umm. . . I think you're a little mixed up," the Atheist politely corrected, "Occam actually represented. . . ."

"That's enough! I want to hear another tale!" asserted the Bartender.

"I'm on deck!" shouted the Zebra. "It's quite fitting, especially since we're already on the topic of basketball! Instead of boring you with an acelorigal thing,

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you're going to hear about my awesome life that was cut short by the evilest of
villains, OJ Sampson.