

WALTER ROUZER

# Where The Earth Sings

SAMPLE CHAPTERS



# WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

Copyright © 2019 by Walter Rouzer

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, scanned, or distributed in any printed or electronic form without permission from the author. Thank you for respecting the hard work of this author.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Peak Wave Publishing

ISBN 978-0-9971215-3-7

## **A Pair of Young Geniuses Have 10 days To Lead The World To Global Peace.**

Technology has vanished and people are desperate to get it back. Lucky for them, Ziggy knows what to do, but there's a catch. She and her partner must convince nations across the globe to work together in peace to save our oceans, forests and the animal kingdom.

Imagine being twelve years old and waking up to discover technology is no more. Mobile phones don't exist. Automobiles, airplanes and modern conveniences aren't part of the fabric of lives.

Well, if you're Ziggy Zee, this is what your new reality is.

All the cars in the world turn into horse and buggies overnight. Commuters don't have enough horse sense to drive them on modern freeways.

Electronic stop and go lights are no more. Chimpanzees sit on top of wooden poles directing traffic with STOP and GO signs.

Can Ziggy and her partner achieve the monumental feat of uniting the world to work together in peace to save our planet and get technology back in time?

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

### 1.

# *Robo City*

THE TWELVE-YEAR-OLD INSPECTORS had no idea that they would be chosen to lead one of the greatest peace movements in history.

“MAYOR GORDON, CAN YOU TELL US a little about your robots?” said Inspector Ziggy Zee.

“All the robots work as family units twenty-four hours a day,” said the mayor.

“What exactly are you paying your robots to work twenty-four hours a day?” said Inspector Wigless Knight.

“They get happy birthdays.”

Ziggy grinned, “Do you really give birthdays for robots?”

## WALTER ROUZER

The mayor nodded, "Absolutely! We make sure that each and every robot gets a special celebration once a year. You're in luck today."

"Why's that?" said Wigless.

"Because there's going to be a robot birthday party in a few minutes from now in Factory Number 7. Would you like to attend?"

"Sounds awesome!" said Ziggy.

Mayor Gordon opened the passenger door to his convertible. "Step right in. It's just a five-minute ride from here."

MAYOR GORDON DROVE down Technology Lane and then made a sharp turn onto South Beaker Street.

Ziggy gazed up at the mayor from the passenger seat. "How are humans affected by all this new technology?" she asked, "Did some lose their jobs because of robot labor?"

The mayor smiled, "Oh no, it's people who maintain the robots. In Robo City each and every robot is given a name. The people who take care of them are given numbers."

Wigless wrinkled his nose and shook his head,

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

“That doesn’t sound right. It should be the other way around with humans having names and the robots given numbers.”

THE MAYOR PULLED HIS vehicle into the parking lot in front of Factory #7. Ziggy stepped out of the car and walked up to a twenty-foot-high statue of a robot holding a lightning rod. “This looks awesome,” she said. Ziggy knelt beside its base and ran her fingers across gold letters that felt as smooth as glass. It said, “Zipner Industries. We Make the Best Cars in the World.”

Ziggy rubbed her eyes and looked up. The sky looked very strange and gloomy. It was almost like a rusty orange color.

Wigless peered off in the distance and saw monstrous size containers on a hill beside the factories. They appeared to be the same size diameter as the cylinders used on rocket ships. “Mayor Gordon?”

“Yes, Wigless.”

“I’m just curious . . . what’s inside those containers?”

“They’re filled with a green solution used to clean the machinery at all of our factories.”

He scratched his chin. “Is it possible for those containers to ever leak?”

## WALTER ROUZER

“Not a chance. Those storage tanks are made from special alloy steel.”

Robo City is located in a valley surrounded on three sides by a mountain chain and on the other by the ocean. The mountains are steep and jagged. Pine trees cling to its rocky cliffs keeping watch over the valley below.

There are only two ways to get in and out of Robo City. The first is by boat; the other through a thirty-mile train tunnel that runs through the mountain to Quantum City.

2.

*Micro Chip Cake*

Ziggy and Wigless followed Mayor Gordon's lead across the white marbled walkway up to Factory #7. "The official birthday party will start in just a few minutes," said the mayor. "Step right in and make yourselves feel right at home."

The factory ceiling was covered with sheets of silver foil, and the walls and floors were shiny white. Five-foot-wide pipes blew cool air to keep the robots comfortable.

There were six cars in a row on the assembly line. On working days five families of robots put automotive parts on the car bodies.

At the far side of the factory were birthday presents tied with colored bows.



## WALTER ROUZER

Wigless walked over and picked up one of the presents. "What do you think is the best birthday gift for a robot?"

"Um, let me think. How about an oilcan so they won't squeak like a mouse?"

"No. A whistle. That way they can whistle while they work."

Ziggy chuckled.

Next to the presents was a seven-layer birthday cake decorated with two hundred microchips.

"I wonder if eating that cake can make you smarter?" said Wigless.

"Why don't you try and find out?"

"Okay." He swiped his finger across the top of one of the microchips and gave it a taste. "Not bad. It has kind of a tangy electrical flavor."

"There's a saying," said Ziggy, "you can't have your cake and eat it too. I wonder if the robots can have their chips and eat them too."

"They would probably get a short-circuit overload trying to digest too many chips all at once."

The birthday officials started to filter in through the front doors. Advertising photographers started taking pictures.

Derek Johnson, one of six journalists walked up to

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

Ziggy. "I couldn't help but notice your badge. With whom do I have the honor of speaking with?"

"I'm Ziggy Zee, inspector 747." Ziggy had puppy eyes surrounded by a face of sheer determination.

"Aren't you kind of young to be an inspector?"

Her eyebrows dropped, "I assure you that I'm well qualified, even at 12. I have an IQ of 180 and graduated from Syracuse University with a major in Natural Resources Management."

Derek grinned, "I'm impressed." He shifted his attention to the boy standing next to her. "Who's your companion?"

Wigless stepped forward and shook Derek's hand, "I'm Wigless Knight, also 12. I have a 178 IQ and graduated from Yale. I majored in philosophy and law. Zipner hired me as one of their inspectors as well."

Derek scratched his chin, "I'm curious. How did you come by that name?"

"I was born with a super thick crop of hair. My parents said the first moment they saw me that I should be Wigless for the rest of my life."

Derek gave a lopsided grin. "Where are you from?"

"We're both from Quantum City," said Wigless.

"Is there anything else you two have in common besides being geniuses and working for Zipner?"

## WALTER ROUZER

“We belong to The Witmore Society.”

“Can you share with me a little about that organization?”

“We visit children’s hospitals once a month. Kids love it when we tell them witty stories. It brings smiles to their faces and brightens their day. There is some truth to the saying: ‘Laughter is the best medicine.’ We may not be doctors, but we do the best we can to bring healing.”

Ziggy and Wigless stepped over to the car assembly line. Every robot had a wig, baseball cap and different style shirt. They were even dressed in jeans for a more casual look. Each family was composed of a mom, dad, son and daughter.

Ziggy pointed toward a red button next to one of the robots. “I’m curious Mayor, what’s the number on this button for?”

“A person is assigned to that number. This one is 574. If this robot needs something, it pushes that button and 574 will come to give it service.” He raised his index finger, “Remember . . . people have numbers and the robots have names in Robo City.”

From the corner of her eye, Ziggy saw something flutter onto a high window ledge. She turned and looked up. A brown speckled bird stared back down at her.

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

That looks like a starling, she thought.

Every few minutes Ziggy glanced up at the window ledge and saw the same bird staring back at her.

Ziggy rolled down her sleeves. "It's getting chilly in here."

Wigless stepped over to one of the birthday robots, "What's your name?"

The robot turned her head and blinked, "My name is Gloria," she said in a sweet robotic voice.

Gloria had on a baseball cap turned backwards. The words "Gloria Rules" were embroidered on the front. Her blond hair curled up at the shoulders. The whites of her eyes surrounded her pink pupils. She was dressed in a hibiscus-flower-patterned shirt and full length faded blue jeans which were ripped at the knees. Her neon green running shoes looked quite like Ziggy's.

Wigless smiled. "You look really glorious today, Gloria. Happy Birthday!"

Gloria giggled. "Thank you." Her eyes blinked. "You're kind of cute. What's your number?"

"Me? My number?" He pointed at himself. "Um . . . Oh, yes. Now I remember . . ." he put on a big smile, "I'm number one."

Gloria grinned. "I never met a number one before."

## WALTER ROUZER

“I like chocolate chips. What’s your favorite kind of chip?”

“Doesn’t compute.”

“I mean, do you like micro, memory, flash, or accelerator chips?”

A light flashed in her eyes. “I like memory chips because knowledge can help change the world.” She turned and glanced at the robot families. Their feet were attached to metal platforms. Wigless saw an oil teardrop swell from the corner of her eye.

“Are you having a conversation with that robot?” said Ziggy.

“What can I say? She has a magnetic personality. If you don’t believe me, watch this.” He placed his pen next to Gloria and it snapped to her metal arm.

Ziggy tilted her head to one side. “Interesting . . . if you became like one of them, you’d have to change your name because they all have wigs.”

“I can’t stop laughing,” said Wigless.

The motion picture crew finished setting up their equipment and the cameras were in position. The movie director gave the signal to start filming. An actor with tall frizzy hair stood in front of the camera and gave a big smile. “Our cars are manufactured by our special robots. That’s why they come out perfect every time.

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

There's no chance for human error." He walked up to one of the dad robots and wrapped his arm around his shoulder like they were buddies. "We're proud that our robot families are always happy and content." The dad robot gave a big smile for the camera. "They're the happiest employees in the world." One of the families on the assembly line waved toward the camera. The actor continued to say, "They never get tired of working. Each family robot member gets a special happy birthday party once a year. This is our way of showing our appreciation for building the best cars in the world."

"That's a wrap," said the film director. He gave the actor a pat on the back, "Great job!"

Wigless rolled his eyes and mumbled, "Big deal. Only one robot birthday a year? That's it?"

3.

*Chased by a Robot*

Wigless gazed up at Mayor Gordon. “Can you explain to me why you have robot families?”

“Here at Robo City we want to set an example by showing that a family that works together sticks together.”

Wigless placed one hand on his hip and squinted. “Well . . . since the robots’ feet are attached to the floor, they really don’t have any other choice, do they? They have to stay stuck together. Isn’t that right?”

The mayor’s eyes narrowed as he stared at Wigless stone faced in silence.

Ziggy looked puzzled. “I don’t understand. Why are the robots’ feet attached to the floor anyway?”

The mayor grinned, “The robots’ feet are attached to

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

metal platforms so they can't get lost. The only exception is our special super secret security robot. I'm not at liberty to tell you who that is."

Gloria flashed a glance at Wigless and then looked away.

Wigless spoke up, "It's not a good thing to have the robots' feet anchored to one place."

Mayor Gordon sighed, "Why's that?"

"Because working twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week in the same spot might drive them mad. You don't want angry robots making cars now; do you? That would be weird and unsafe."

Mayor Gordon chuckled, and his face reddened. "I heard of mad scientists but never mad robots. Our robots have some artificial intelligence. But they're not programmed to feel tired or bored with their work."

Wigless swayed his head side-to-side. "Only one Happy Birthday for working 364 days a year and only one day off! That doesn't seem fair." He turned and looked for a moment at the families of robots on the assembly line, and then looked back at the mayor. "I think at least they should get three breaks during the day. Instead of fresh tea you can serve them teacups of oil. You wouldn't want them to have an iron deficiency; would you? You could provide different flavors of iron



## WALTER ROUZER

enriched oil. How about extra light oil, medium, heavy or iron-rich vegetable oil? Or even Castor oil if they get sick from an overheated computer chip.”

Mayor Gordon’s smile dropped from his face. “How about you keep your ideas to yourself? Let me run this city my way, okay? Do you have any more questions?”

“Yes, as a matter of fact I do,” said Wigless.

The mayor’s cheeks started to boil lobster red.

“Why is it that most everything with nature around Robo City is brown?” said Wigless, “Why is the sky a rusty orange color?”

Mayor Gordon stared down at Wigless in silence with a twitching left eye.

Wigless jotted down a note on his clipboard that said, “Mayor Gordon has a bad attitude and his eye twitches.”

Ziggy spoke up, “It’s depressing. Even the pine trees look like they’re struggling to survive.”

The mayor took a deep breath and tried to keep calm. “Junior inspectors, that’s the price of technology. Here in Robo City we put our resources where the profit is.” The mayor’s cheeks were changing deeper shades of red with each passing question.

Ziggy wrote on her pad. “Just so you know Mayor, I’m putting down in my report that you need to spend a lot

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

more money to clean up the environment. Mankind and nature need to live healthier, happier lives. People and the environment are more important than robot profits.”

The two junior inspectors had even more questions to ask. The mayor stepped forward and frowned at them. “I’m sorry, but this ends your inspection.”

Wigless gazed up at the mayor and squinted, “Thanks for your short tour, Mayor. We’ll be seeing you again real soon.”

Mayor Gordon’s cheeks flushed Mars red. He pointed at Wigless, “I wouldn’t count on it. By the way, we need to examine your phones. Don’t be alarmed. It’s just standard procedure.”

“What’s your standard procedure?” asked Wigless.

“We check for unauthorized photography in our factories.”

Ziggy wrinkled her nose, “That’s crazy. We didn’t take any pictures.”

Gloria glanced back at Ziggy for a split second, and then looked away.

Two security guards wearing sunglasses and dark blue suits appeared out of nowhere. “Your phones please,” they demanded.

Ziggy and Wigless reached into their pockets and pulled out their phones. They gripped them in their

## WALTER ROUZER

hands a moment, and then handed them to the guards.

“Okay,” said Wigless, “So you had the chance to look at our phones. Can we have them back now?”

Mayor Gordon gave a hint of a smile, “You’ll get them back in the mail after we’re through examining them.”

The security guards gripped their arms and escorted them out the door. The moment they got outside, Wigless shouted, “Run, Ziggy! Run!” They broke free and raced across the artificial lawn.

“Up there!” Wigless shouted, pointing to a trail leading up the side of the mountain.

Ziggy followed Wigless up the winding dirt trail that snaked its way through the pine forest. They sprinted as far as their legs could carry them until they finally ran out of breath.

Ziggy gazed up at the pine trees. They looked withered and twisted. Their needles were brown except for a little green at the tips. A scrawny looking squirrel popped its head out of a hole from the side of a tree and squinted at the two strangers.

Ziggy sniffed the air. It had a stale odor like the mustiness of a closet that hadn’t been dusted in over a 100 years.

Something caught Wigless’s attention from the corner of his eye. He turned and looked down the hill.

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

“Oh no! It can’t be!”

“What?”

“It’s Gloria!”

“Gloria!” Ziggy shook her head, “I can’t believe it. She must be the super-secret robot agent.”

Wigless stared down the hill and saw Gloria searching in all directions. She turned her head to the left and right, and then in back of her. Wigless put his finger to Ziggy’s lips. A twig snapped beneath her foot. Gloria flashed her head up and stared in their direction. She sprinted up the trail with her arms pumping side-to-side, legs springing forward. A minute later Gloria stood right in front of them. “Come with me. You’re under arrest,” she said. “Come with me. You’re under arrest,” she repeated.

“Why?” said Ziggy. “We handed over our phones.”

“Come with me. Come with me. You’re under arrest.”

Wigless noticed that the whites surrounding her pink pupils turned glowing red. He got down on his knees and looked up at Gloria like he was proposing. “Oh Gloria . . . you’re the prettiest hunk of steel I ever set eyes on.” He clasped her right hand. “Don’t you remember me? I’m your number one.”

“Doesn’t compute. Doesn’t compute. Come with me. You’re under arrest.” She gripped his hand with her steel

## WALTER ROUZER

fingers. Wigless grimaced and tried his best to keep smiling. "Wow! What strong hands you have, Gloria."

She squeezed his hand tighter.

"Okay, I admit it," said Wigless, "I may not be number one, but I could be your perfect ten."

"Doesn't compute. Doesn't compute." Her head rotated from side-to-side, eyes squinting. "Come with me. You're under arrest."

Ziggy shook her head, "Come clean, Wigless. Tell her the truth."

"Okay . . . Okay . . ." Wigless looked up at her from the kneeling position and gave her a warm smile. "Gloria . . . I'm your one in a million."

"Doesn't compute. Doesn't compute. Come with me. You're under arrest."

Ziggy raised both palms in front of Wigless, "Come clean . . . Wigless. You know what you always told me."

"What's that?"

"Flattery will get you as far as a flat tire. If you want to survive, follow the Golden Rule: Honesty is the best policy."

He nodded and took a deep breath, "Okay." He glanced back at Gloria. "I'm your number one billion."

"Affirmative. Affirmative." The red in Gloria's eyes quickly faded back to white.

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

Wigless gave a warm smile, “Gloria I hope you live to see two hundred more birthdays.”

She blinked and loosened her grip and Wigless was able to slide his hand free.

“Are we still a security risk?” asked Wigless.

“Negative.”

Ziggy bit her lip, “Can we leave now?”

“Affirmative.”

“Awesome.”

Wigless locked eyes with the robot. “Nice meeting you Gloria. Hope to see you again soon.”

“Negative. Negative,” she said, rotating her head from side-to-side. She made an about face and headed back down the trail toward Factory Number 7.

Ziggy took a deep sigh of relief. “Good job at short-circuiting Gloria’s programming with your confusing talk. But I don’t think those two security guards are going to be that easy to brainwash.”

4.

*The Starling*

Wigless checked his watch. “There still might be time to catch the noon train back to Quantum City.”

“Let’s hurry!” said Ziggy.

They traveled along the outskirts of town to keep out of sight. The scent of sagebrush filled the air, and they could hear the sound of dry leaves crunch beneath their feet.

The train station came into view. The security guards were hiding behind a tree. But the sun’s rays reflected off their sunglasses and gave away their position.

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

Ziggy was first to spot them. "There they are!" she said. They took off running in the opposite direction.

"Come back here!" they shouted. "We need to talk! Come back here!"

Wigless and Ziggy sprinted up a steep trail. The dirt was light and powdery. With each step forward, puffs of dust circled their feet. They kept going until they were completely out of breath.

Ziggy leaned forward and rested her hands on her knees, "Did we lose them?"

Wigless peered down the trail. "I can't see them. They're probably not far behind."

Ziggy felt something strike her back, "What was that!" she shouted.

Wigless pointed at a bird sitting in the middle of a side trail about twenty feet away.

Ziggy's mouth dropped open. "I saw that exact same bird back at the factory. It was staring at me from the window."

"Are you kidding me? You must have been dreaming."

She shook her head. "No, I'm serious. It was watching me every second."

Just then the bird said, "What do you think?"

"Am I hearing things? Did that bird just say something?" asked Ziggy.



## WALTER ROUZER

“That’s a starling. They can talk like parrots.”

Ziggy turned her back and the bird once again swooped upon her from behind. She felt its beak pierce through her green shirt and prick her skin.

Ziggy snapped her head back and locked eyes with the annoying bird. “What’s your problem!”

It stared back at her and said, “What do you think?”

Ziggy shook her head, “Why does that bird keep bugging me?”

“Maybe it’s trying to build up its ego by picking on someone bigger than itself.”

Ziggy shook her head, “Yeah, right. Birds don’t have egos.”

“Maybe it doesn’t like your green shirt. Or maybe you got near its nest.”

The moment Ziggy turned her back, the starling swooped upon her again. She felt the bird’s beak poke through her shirt.

“What do you think?” said the bird.

Ziggy shook her head, “That bird is mocking me. I just know it.”

“Maybe it mistook you for someone else,” said Wigless, “Or better yet, maybe it’s a mockingbird and wants to mock you.”

“It keeps dive bombing me no matter where I stand.”

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

“Maybe it’s trying to tell you something. Maybe it wants you to follow.”

THEY HEARD FOOTSTEPS. Wigless leaned forward and peered down the hill. “It’s the security guards! They spotted us!”

“Hey you kids!” they shouted, “Stop where you are! Don’t move!”

Wigless glanced at Ziggy, “Maybe we can lose them if we take the side trail.”

“I can’t think of a better idea. Let’s go!”

They took off running with the starling leading the way.

5.

*The Cave*

They raced through the forest leaping over fallen logs as they went. After traveling for nearly a mile, the starling disappeared through a wall of vines. Wigless reached out and parted the plants. “There’s a cave behind here,” he said.

Ziggy stepped forward and peered inside.

There he was, that pesky bird sitting on the ground staring right back at Ziggy.

“What do you think?” said the bird.

“Looks like a good place to hide,” said Wigless.

He was just about to enter the cave when Ziggy reached out and grabbed his shoulder from behind. “Wait a second. Do you see any spiders in there?”

“Why?”

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

“They freak me out.”

Wigless chuckled, “You? You’re afraid of spiders? Are you joking? I’ve never known you to be afraid of anything.”

Her left eye started to twitch. “I hate to admit it, but it’s true. It doesn’t matter what size they are. They could be as small as a head of a pin or as big as a bird. I’m telling you they freak me out.”

“The time will come when you’ll have to confront your fears face-to-face.”

“I don’t want that time to be now. I avoid spiders like some people avoid broccoli. I have been battling the fear of spiders since I was a baby. One of those eight-eyed monsters sat on my milk bottle and dared me to take a drink. Everyone has a fear of something. What are you afraid of? You must have some kind of fear.”

“I’m afraid of losing my hair. I want to stay Wigless for life.” He held out his hand. “Come on. Trust me. I promise not to let anything with more than two eyes touch you; definitely not eight. You can be certain of that.”

“Well . . . okay. But I’m putting my life in your hands.”

After entering the cave, they pushed the vines back in place to hide the opening. The little bird swooped against Ziggy. “What do you think?” it said before disap-

## WALTER ROUZER

pearing through the cave.

“You wait here a moment,” said Wigless, “I’m going to see where that bird flew off to. I’ll be right back.”

Wigless discovered something beautiful and magnificent! His eyes stretched wide with amazement! He ran back to Ziggy and tugged her arm. “Come on,” he said, taking her hand, “I’ve got something to show you.”

“What is it? What did you find?”

“You wouldn’t believe me even if I told you!”

Ziggy’s mouth dropped open in sheer wonder the instant she saw it. “Wow! Awesome! I could never even imagine any place like this, ever.”

Before them was a man-made archway thirty feet wide by fifteen feet high. It stretched as far as the eye could see.

Along every inch of the wall were inlaid mosaic tiles; tiny squares of different colors. They brought to life magnificent scenes in nature from one end of the world to the other. The ceiling looked like blue skies and puffy white clouds. Farther down the sides of the walls, many types of trees appeared. Birds, wildlife, insects and fluttering butterflies filled the branches. There were distant views of mountains and valleys; scenic spots around the world beyond description. The artwork showed animal species from all over the world in their natural habitat.

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

It spanned the globe from Australia to Japan, from North America to South America. Nature from all other countries were displayed as well. It was all the there. The tiny square tiles displayed a hundred shades of color. They captured the real look of the animal kingdom and nature in all its glory and splendor.

Along the archway ceiling were six-inch-wide holes three feet apart. They extended the entire length of the archway. The sun's rays pierced the openings and lighted the way.

The starling fluttered in circles before them like it was in heaven. Moments later, it flew straight ahead and disappeared from view.

Wigless and Ziggy continued through the tunnel. They looked up, sideways, to their left and right. It was overwhelming trying to absorb all the natural beauty of nature along the way.

At the end of the tunnel was an ancient-looking doorway. To either side of the door were two medieval knights dressed from head to toe in armor. They held eight-foot-long spears out from their sides blocking the way. Dusty cobwebs covered every inch of their armor.

Ziggy stood frozen fifteen feet away from the knights. "Tell me those webs don't have spiders."

Wigless walked up and glanced over the webs.

## WALTER ROUZER

“There’s nothing alive.”

“Meaning what?”

“I can only see skeletons.”

Ziggy took a deep breath, “What! . . . Did you say skeletons?”

“I wonder who’s inside those suits of armor?” said Wigless.

Ziggy locked eyes with Wigless, “Why don’t you lift one of their face shields and find out.”

“Not me. How about you? I may be curious, but not that curious. Didn’t you ever hear the saying; ‘Curiosity killed the cat’?”

“That’s just a fable.”

“Personally, I think the hairball killed the cat?”

“They look like the Knights of the Round Table,” said Ziggy.

“More like Knights of the Rust Table, if you ask me.”

Their little friend, the starling, flew in through the doorway. “What do you think?” it said before flying past the guards and back through the doorway.

“I think it wants us to follow,” said Wigless.

6.

*Nature's Prayer*

Wigless and Ziggy crawled on their hands and knees through a narrow space at the base of the spears.

After traveling through another stretch of hallway, they entered a large stone room with a dome ceiling. It was eighty feet across and thirty feet high. Mosaic tiles covered every square inch of the wall showing images of nature. Rays of sunlight filtered through six-inch openings in the ceiling.

They looked about and saw flowers, shrubs and bushes in planters; but there was something dreadfully wrong. They had lost their color. The leaves looked dry and brittle. All the life-giving color had long since faded away.



## WALTER ROUZER

The room looked like a black-and-white world with added hues of gray and brown. Stone canals connected all the planters to a large bowl. Not a single drop of water was to be seen anywhere.

They headed to the far side of the room and passed through an open doorway to a smaller room. Something stopped them dead in their tracks. Their mouths dropped open in shock. A woman was lying on a quilt bed covered with dust. Her height appeared to be nearly six feet. She looked like she fell asleep snoring with her mouth open for over a hundred years. Her teeth were a dusty gray.

Wigless stretched his neck forward and wrinkled his nose. “She looks like an unwrapped mummy—not my mummy, but someone else’s mummy from a long time ago.”

Beside the woman was a large book that appeared to be as old as the room itself. Wigless picked it up and blew the dust off its cover.

Ziggy coughed, “Thanks a lot.”

“Sorry about that. I’m bad.” He opened the book and read the heading at the top of the page. It said, “Nature’s Prayer.”

“Looks interesting,” said Ziggy. “Can you read it to me, Wigless?”

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

“Okay. Here it goes. From the soaring heights of eagles’ wings, to the pounding drums of elephants’ feet. From baby bears barely big, to bumble buzzing bumblebees. From the tiny marching ant to the prancing, dancing antelope. To all creatures of mother earth, let us care for, love, cherish, honor and respect. From the humming hums of a hundred hummingbirds to the mammoth-mouthed hippopotamus. To all creatures great and small. Mighty, weak, tender, rough, stubby, medium and tall, I pray to keep and preserve for all.”

Droplets of water started to trickle over the waterfall. The stone bowl quickly filled with liquid. The water flowed faster until it overflowed into the stone canals that fed all the plants in the room. Brush strokes of green, blue, red, and orange started to appear on the flowers. Living color spread through the entire room refreshing nature in a misty rainbow of life.

The moment Wigless ended the Nature’s Prayer, the room filled with the sound of someone weeping.

7.

*Earth Angel*

The powerful words of the Nature's Prayer brought the lady on the bed back to life. They watched as she patted tears from her eyes with a white handkerchief. "That was so beautiful," she said. "The Nature Prayer lifts my spirit like eagle wings."

Her appearance revived like the flowers and nature in the room. Her hair was like a fluffy white cloud. Her eyes were the color of the deepest ocean blue. She had honey dew rose colored lips, baby plump cheeks, forest green fingernails and pearly white teeth.

Out of nowhere, the starling flew into the room and landed on Ziggy's shoulder. It looked at her and said, "What do you think?"

The lady leaned up in bed and a smile blossomed on her face. She held out her hand and the starling flew

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

onto her fingertips. "What have you been up to, Danny?"

"What do you think?" said Danny.

"Interesting," said Ziggy, "How did you know its name?"

"My child, I know the names of every creature because that's my nature."

She stretched her arms back and gave a big yawn. "I've been asleep a long, long time." She gave another yawn. "Come now. Step forward. Introduce yourself."

"My name is Ziggy Zee."

"Ziggy, your hair looks wild as nature. Tell me. Are you interested in preserving nature?"

"I love all nature and would work very hard to keep it beautiful."

"And you young man; do you like to preserve nature?"

"I like preserves on my sandwich. I'm also a natural at being a naturalist."

The woman squinted, "Are you being smart with me?"

"How does an IQ of 178 grab you?"

"I don't like to be grabbed."

"I was just using a figure of speech."

"How do you become a figure of speech?"

"If you write an autobiography of yourself you could

## WALTER ROUZER

become a figure of speech.”

“Is that so? What name do you go by?”

“Wigless Knight.”

“I don’t know if I like that name, Wigless.”

“You can call me Awesome Knight, or how about Valiant Knight, if you like.”

“The title of Valiant Knight has to be earned. For now, you must be satisfied being Wigless.”

“Okay by me.”

“What’s your name if we may ask?” said Ziggy.

“I’m Earth Angel, keeper and guardian of nature.”

She slowly got up out of bed and did three squats. Wigless and Ziggy heard her knees crack each time.

“How long has it been since you did a squat?” asked Wigless.

“Over a hundred years, I imagine. You see, when nature is abused and gets sick, I become sick too. I dozed off and never woke up. By the grace of God, you awakened me with something powerful. Words have great power. Nature’s Prayer is my favorite. The pen is mightier than the sword. Don’t you think?”

Wigless nodded. “I once knew a boy who wrote so many words that they called him William Pen. He looked pretty powerful to me.”

Earth Angel stepped forward and motioned with

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

her hand for them to join her in the large outer chamber. "Follow me." She stood before a pool of water and dipped the tip of her index finger at the center. The water rippled out in all directions. It became as clear as crystal; like a looking glass. Wigless and Ziggy saw patches of clouds floating above the earth.

Earth Angel moved her hand over the water; continents and oceans passed before their eyes. She crossed both hands across the water and then slowly moved them apart for a closer view of our planet. She gasped. Her alabaster cheeks suddenly flashed cherry red. She pointed down at the water. "What's that!"

"What's what?" said Ziggy.

"My babies! They're behind bars like convicts! Prisoners of war!"

"What do you mean?"

"Look at that! Look at it!"

Ziggy leaned over the pool of water for a closer view. "Those are what we call zoos."

"Why are they in prison? Behind iron bars! Did they commit some horrible crime?"

"No," said Wigless shaking his head.

"Did they murder anyone?"

"No."

"Are they robbers? Thieves?"

## WALTER ROUZER

“No.”

“Did they turn into party animals and throw pies in people’s faces?”

“What do you think?” said Danny.

“Did any monkey do anything naughty like toss a banana peel in front of somebody and watch them slip?”

“What do you think?” said Danny.

“Why are my babies behind bars?”

“They were moved to continents thousands of miles away from their native home so people can see them in person,” said Ziggy.

“I can’t believe this. How could this happen?”

Danny looked back and forth between Ziggy and Wigless. “What do you think?” he said.

Earth Angel wagged her index finger at them. “Danny asked you a question. What do you think?”

8.

*Nature's In Trouble*

"I CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT'S happened since I was asleep. The one and only true God has made mankind caretaker over the earth and all its creatures. Don't they know we are one and if nature dies, mankind will follow? Don't you know that most of the oxygen you breathe comes from the oceans and rain forests? Do you want to stop breathing? Do you want to poison the ocean and cut down the rain forests so we can't breathe?"

"Personally," said Wigless, "I like the ocean, rain forests and especially breathing."

Earth Angel moved her hand across the water showing more of the earth. She zoomed in for another look. "What's that!" she asked? "I can't believe it!"

"What's what?" asked Ziggy.

"That!"



## WALTER ROUZER

Ziggy leaned forward. She saw hundreds of miles of plastic bottles and debris floating on the ocean's surface. "That's what we call trash."

"Trash! It looks horrible! How did it get there?"

Wigless cleared his throat. "Hundreds of thousands of bottles; millions of them are there because technology made it possible. People use bottles once, and then throw them away. They end up in our oceans."

Earth Angel's cheeks turned crimson red. Her hand moved across the water, and they saw a different part of the globe. Tears formed in her eyes and rolled down her cheeks into the pool of water. "What happened to my beautiful forests?"

Ziggy's throat suddenly felt dry and raspy. "They were cut down to build houses."

Earth Angel's hand once again passed over the earth until the view stopped over major cities. Her vision blurred and she started to cough. "What's that?"

Ziggy was so ashamed she could barely raise her chin. "That's pollution from technology. It's called smog."

"Why is it you make technology if it destroys the earth?"

Wigless's voice cracked, "We do it for the progress of mankind."

"Progress?"

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

Ziggy sighed. “The comforts of life. Like portable phones and computers. We can communicate with each other in seconds from one end of the world to the other. People no longer talk with each other at meals. Everyone stares at their phones and texts messages.”

Wigless spoke up, “It’s like eating with somebody and staring at a blank wall. Everyone is so busy looking at their phones they don’t even bother to talk with each other.”

More tears dripped across her cheeks and into the pool of water. Puffy white clouds turned gray, then black. Thundershowers drenched the earth with millions of tears.

Earth Angel slowly turned and faced them with bloodshot eyes. “I’m going to take away mankind’s techno toys. They need to be more responsible. They need to take better care of the earth. They need to learn how to live in peace.”

Wigless looked puzzled, “Techno toys?”

“Technology. I’m going to take away technology. I’m turning it back.”

“Technology can’t go back,” said Wigless, “It can only go forward.”

Earth Angel locked eyes with Wigless. “It is written: if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you can say

## WALTER ROUZER

to this mountain, remove here to there; and it would remove. And nothing shall be impossible to you.”

Wigless rolled his eyes in disbelief. “So . . . what are you planning on moving?”

“I’m moving time,” she said.

Wigless grinned and shook his head, “Time? Seriously? Really? You think you can move time? Prove it.”

9.

*Peace Mission*

**E**arth Angel stepped up to Wigless. “Hold out your arm.” She passed her hand over his Swiss watch.

Their eyes bulged in shock. They couldn’t believe what they were seeing.

“Fantastic!” said Wigless. He raised his wrist for a closer look.

Ziggy leaned forward shaking her head in disbelief.

“How? How did you turn my watch into a miniature sundial?” asked Wigless.

“Hold out your arm again.” Her hand passed over the sundial and it turned back into a Swiss watch.

From that moment forward they were believers. If she could do this, then there was a chance she could

## WALTER ROUZER

reverse technology on a larger scale. Perhaps even the entire world!

“Tragedy has struck my family,” said Ziggy in a panicked voice, “My mom is in Quantum City Hospital as we speak. She has stage 4 cancer and is going to have an operation in ten days. Technology is necessary as part of the operation. Without technology she will die.”

Earth Angel’s eyes narrowed. “Shall we sacrifice one life for millions of lives? Shall we forsake our planet by keeping technology? If you want technology back in time to save your mom and the world, you must do two things. First, help bring world peace to all nations on planet earth. Get them to work together to take better care of our planet.”

Ziggy sighed. “You’re saying that my mother is going to die in ten days if I can’t convince you to bring back technology within that time? My mom is my life.”

“Trust me Ziggy. Your mother is going to be okay. You will find a way. You can make things happen.”

“My mom can’t survive even one week without modern medicines.”

“Very well then. I’ll keep medicines and liquids the same.”

“I can’t afford to lose my job by telling my company that technology is going to disappear,” said Ziggy. “They

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

will laugh me to scorn and have me fired. My dad works hard, but he still needs my income to help pay the hospital bills.”

Wigless sighed, “All I learned in school was philosophy and law. I’m not trained to be a peacemaker. I have no idea how to create world peace.”

“I know we can do this together. Your job is to figure out how. I don’t believe you came here by accident. I believe it was fate that brought you here. Remember, a rudder is a small thing, but it can change the direction of a mighty ship. Become that rudder and change the course of history.”

Wigless stepped forward, “How are we going to create world peace for mankind?”

“Have them work toward a common goal like cleaning up the oceans.”

Ziggy bit her lip, “What’s the second step to get back technology?”

“You must prove mankind is serious about taking care of all the world’s creatures.”

Wigless looked confused, “How can we best show our appreciation for nature?”

“Give them entertainment. Educate them. Do special things. Make them feel important in the world. Maybe even jobs.”

## WALTER ROUZER

“You want us to get jobs for the animals?” said Wigless.

“Animals aren’t lazy,” said Earth Angel. “They want to be important to the earth; the echo system; the human system; the natural system. Why not?”

Ziggy bit her lip, “I just don’t know if they’re smart enough to do human jobs.”

“I’ll give them more intelligence. At least during the time technology is gone.”

Wigless’s eyes stretched wide. “You can do that?”

She sparked a hint of a smile. “I’m Earth Angel . . . right? I will help them and you. That’s the least I can do. Now get out there and work for world peace.”

Ziggy shook her head. “But it’s impossible to bring about world peace and take better care of the creatures in just ten days.”

Earth Angel squinted. “This is no time to be sheepish. You are not a sheep. You’re a shepherd for the people of earth. Ziggy, do you have any fears aside from losing your mother?”

“Uh yeah, spiders. I can’t stand to be around them. Especially big ones like tarantulas.”

Earth Angel turned toward Wigless, “And you. Do you have any fears?”

“I’m afraid of losing my hair. Then I would have to

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

change my name to Wigee.”

Ziggy stepped forward. “How can we possibly motivate the people of the world to do so much in so little time?”

“When they see technology disappear, they will work hard to get it back.”



10.

*Getting Back  
To Nature*

**H**ow will the world believe us if we tell them technology is going to disappear?" said Ziggy. "I'll be like a crazy girl to everyone. They won't believe me."

"True, they won't believe at first, but I'm not going to do it right this moment. You have to make yourself appear crazy before it happens. You have to tell them their technology will disappear before it happens. That way when it happens, they won't think you're crazy anymore. You two will become the authority. They will listen to you and pay attention to you because they're going to come to you for the answers. Give them details so they'll have to believe you. For land transportation, they will only have steam locomotives and horses and buggies. Tell them they will have roosters, other birds

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

and sundials to help tell time. And for phones, tell them they'll have to do without." She locked eyes with Wigless. "Can you stick by Ziggy to help her save her mom? Are you tough enough?"

Wigless swiped his hand in the air, "Tough? Me? Tough? Are you kidding? My dog gives me a licking every day, and I never cried once."

"Can she truly count on you?"

"If Ziggy gets into a pickle, she can count on me to preserve her. If she gets canned, she can count on me to lift her to safety. If she gets into a jam, she can count on me to make her day sweet as jelly. If she has trouble sleeping, she can count on me instead of counting sheep."

"Can the earth count on you also, Wigless?"

"From here to infinity, it can."

"Lazy people are of no use. Are you a slacker?"

"You'll never catch me slacking in slacks. I'm a lean jean working machine. I may not be able to move mountains, but I can bull-doze in my sleep."

"Are you strong enough to stand the pressure required to achieve world peace?"

"I once punched my way out of a paper bag. Does that count?"

"Are you being smart with me?"

## WALTER ROUZER

Wigless shook his head.

Earth Angel gave her nod of approval. “Well done Wigless. I’m going to give you both a hint of how to get technology back faster. Think up wild ideas to help bring world peace. Wild ideas will give you extra points to get technology back quicker.”

Ziggy’s eyes narrowed and breathing deepened, “You’re cruel.”

“I’m not cruel. I’m giving you a chance. A chance not only to save your mother but also to save future generations. The endangered species of today can be the human race tomorrow. You and nature depend on each other. They feed and give life to each another.”

“When did you say you’re turning technology back?” asked Wigless.

“Pay attention. Remember. In three days technology will go backwards for the whole world.”

Ziggy stepped forward. “How will we know that we’re getting close to accomplishing your goal and get technology back?”

11.

*Quantum City*

Earth Angel disappeared into her bedroom. A moment later she reappeared holding envelopes and pieces of paper. "I'll return technology if you pass the test."

"Test?" asked Ziggy. "What test?"

"For technology to return, you must get a Five-Dove Star Rating."

"Did you say a Five-Dove Star Rating?" asked Wigless.

"That's correct."

Wigless had a curious expression, "What do the doves look like?"

She dipped the tip of her feathered pen in an inkwell. They watched her sketch an outline of five doves on a piece of paper with stars beneath each one.

## WALTER ROUZER

“You have an inkling for drawing. You must be an artist!” said Wigless.

“Don’t flatter me.”

Ziggy held the Five-Dove Star Rating in front of her a moment and then looked back at Earth Angel. “Can we get a progress report? For example, maybe on the first day we could earn a One-Dove Star Rating and then the next day another and another.”

She nodded. “I can do that. My bird carriers will deliver your reports. Now hurry. You don’t have much time. You must warn the world. Technology will be gone soon.”

Ziggy sighed, “Uh, we have a problem getting back.”

“Problem?”

She pointed toward the hallway leading outside. “Two security guards are hunting us. They’re dressed in blue suits with sunglasses.”

“Did you commit a crime?”

Ziggy shook her head. “We did nothing wrong. They want to stop us from reporting that the mayor isn’t taking good care of the people and nature.”

“Caring for people and nature?”

They nodded.

She touched the tip of her finger on the surface of the pool of water. An image appeared—two men

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

dressed in suits wearing sunglasses. They were walking along a stream looking about in all directions.

Earth Angel crossed her hands behind her back and leaned toward Wigless and Ziggy, "Are those the men?"

They nodded.

Earth Angel touched the tip of her index finger on the pool of water.

White clouds turned black before their eyes. The sky rumbled louder and louder until it sounded like a bowling ball making a lightning strike.

Two bolts of electricity flashed upon the security guards. Their hair stood straight up. They looked like they were sitting in a movie theater and got scared to death watching the boogie man. As a matter of fact, they got so hot the wrinkles on their coats and pants received a free steam cleaning. They sniffed the air. Something didn't smell right. They flashed their heads back and saw white smoke trailing out of their pants. Their eyes bulged as wide as goldfish. They leaped into the river to cool off a spell.

One security guard stepped out of the stream and stood in the exact same place where he was struck by lightning. His wet pants clung to his skin showing off his chicken legs.

Wigless and Ziggy could hear the guards talk.

## WALTER ROUZER

“Why are you standing where you got struck by lightning?”

The other guard responded, “Don’t you know lightning doesn’t strike in the same place twice?”

Earth Angel laughed, “We’ll see about that.” She touched the tip of her finger to the water. Another lightning bolt came down and struck the security guard in the exact same spot. He took a flying leap into the stream splashing a wave of water across his partner’s face.

The security guards looked up and saw flashes of light flickering in the dark clouds. They raced out of the stream and flashed away at lightning speed.

Earth Angel’s face broke into a smile, “I don’t think they will trouble you now. You need to believe in yourselves. Dare to conquer the impossible. Believe you can do it. Dream it. Do It. God be with you. Farewell.”

WIGLESS AND ZIGGY MADE their way back out of the cave and down the trail. They heard the trains’ horn echo in the distance. Wigless glanced at his watch, “If we hurry, we might catch it. We don’t want to be stuck out here at night. This is the last train for today.”

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

They sprinted ahead so fast the pine trees on either side of them appeared as a blur before their eyes. The station came into view and the train sounded its last call. They were able to board the train moments before departure.

The train sped across the rails and disappeared inside the thirty-mile-long mountain tunnel.

They seated themselves on red cushions.

“You know Wigless, when we tell people what’s going to happen, no one is going to believe us. As a matter of fact, it’s hard for me to believe it, too. But I can’t risk my mother’s life by not telling the corporation.”

“They’ll take you seriously when they see it happen.”

“But what if . . . what if this was all just a wild dream?”

Wigless leaned sideways and gave her a pinch.

“Ouch! What did you do that for?”

“I wanted to prove something.”

“What?”

“You’re not dreaming. Remember what Earth Angel said. We should try to use wild ideas if we want to get technology back faster.”

Ziggy stared blankly ahead and tapped her finger on the armrest. She locked eyes with Wigless, “Maybe



## WALTER ROUZER

it's good to play it safe and not use too many wild ideas. You know the saying: 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.'"

"I have a different saying; if you have patience, an egg in the hand could be worth a chick and a date."

"What does that mean?"

"Nature's the chick and the date is the time to get technology back."

"Awesome, Wigless. Sometimes you amaze me."

12.

*Cuckoo Time*

The train approached the light at the end of the tunnel and Quantum City came into full view in all its splendor.

The sun peeked through misty clouds. A double rainbow arched over towering skyscrapers. The buildings looked like giant pyramids stretching toward heaven.

Drones crisscrossed the aerial skyway. They were busy as bees flying into open windows to deliver their goods. Seconds later, they could be seen buzzing back to Hive Central to pick up another order.

Ziggy said goodbye to Wigless and caught a bus to Quantum City Hospital. Minutes later, she took the elevator to the second floor and headed down the hallway to Room 39.

Ziggy leaned forward and kissed her mom, Carol Zee,

## WALTER ROUZER

on her forehead. "I love you, Mom," she said, holding her hand softly.

Carol tried to sit up in bed, but her strength gave way and she had to lie flat again.

"Ziggy, could you please call the doctor," said Carol. "I need a prescription of potato chips."

"Potato chips? You want a prescription for potato chips? I could ask but I doubt that's on his patient foods list."

"Thanks, sweetheart."

Ziggy didn't want to tell her about technology going back in time until it actually happened. She gave her a kiss on the forehead. "Everything will be okay. You'll get through this. We're looking forward to having you home soon."

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, Ziggy and Wigless reported for work at Zipner Industries, located in one of Quantum's newest skyscrapers. They took the elevator to the sixteenth floor and headed down the hallway.

Riley Jones stepped in front of Wigless and Ziggy, "It's about time you two showed up," he smirked. "You're a day late with your reports."

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

“Progress doesn’t happen overnight,” said Ziggy.

Riley’s eyes narrowed, “If you think a couple of twelve-year-olds are going to take over my job, you better think twice.”

Ziggy raised her palm, “Mind your business . . . not ours. Come Wigless.”

CEO DEVRA DAVENPORT and the company employees gathered in the conference room for their 9 o’clock meeting. It was so quiet you could hear the ticking of Devra’s cuckoo clock mounted on the wall directly behind her.

Devra had woolly hair and thin lips like a sheep. She got up from her seat and said, “Staff and colleagues . . . it is time to present your reports.”

Fifteen minutes before the end of the hour-long meeting Devra pointed at Wigless and Ziggy. “Please present your findings and suggestions. We’re most interested in hearing about your cost-cutting ideas for Robo City.”

Instead of telling about ways to save money, Wigless and Ziggy argued for a 20% increase in spending. They said the increase was necessary to help the factory

## WALTER ROUZER

workers and improve the environment.

Devra and staff couldn't believe what they were hearing.

"Listen carefully to what I have to say," said Ziggy. "Two days from now technology will go back in time. Zipner Industries as well as the entire world will have to make rapid changes. We must all do a better job at promoting world peace and taking care of the environment."

Wigless stood for his chance to speak. "Everything you heard from Ziggy is a hundred percent true and correct. The only land transportation available will be by steam locomotives and horses and buggies. No cars. No airplanes. The only ships left will be wooden sailing vessels. To help tell time, there will be roosters, other birds and sundials."

There was a moment of silence. Devra suddenly burst out laughing. "Is this some kind of joke? Are the two of you cuckoo!" At that moment the clock on the conference wall struck 10 o'clock. A little bird popped out and chirped, "Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

The other employees laughed along joining in like a pack of hyenas. Riley had a deep-throated laugh like a seal and clapped his big hands together like flippers.

After the meeting ended, Ziggy and Wigless headed

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

past Riley's computer station. He gazed up at them with a big grin on his face and made his seal laugh. He shifted his attention to his keyboard and started typing a hundred words a minute. He couldn't wait to spread gossip on social media about their report stating that technology was going back in time. The news spread at lightning speed. It was only a matter of hours before the whole world knew about it. The twelve-year-old employees at Zipner Industries became the biggest joke in the world. Even Ziggy's cousin got wind of the news and called Ziggy's dad.

13.

*Techno  
Time Travel*

Later that evening, Ziggy found herself sitting across the dinner table from her dad. Patrick sighed. “How could you throw away your career by making up some crazy story about technology going back in time?”

“You heard?”

“It’s all over social media.”

Ziggy’s eyes narrowed, “I bet Riley spilled the beans.”

“Riley? Who’s Riley?”

“Someone at work. I couldn’t risk not telling my company. You’ll never understand. Not until you see it happen for real.”

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

“You read too many fairy tales, Ziggy. They’ve all gone to your head.”

THE NEXT WORKDAY ZIGGY and Wigless were called into Zipner Industries executive office.

Devra glared at them from across her desk with narrowed eyes. She got up from her chair and leaned forward. “You made this company the laughing stock of the entire world. I’m sorry, but we have to let you go. Pack up your personal belongings and leave your badges on the way out.”

WHEN ZIGGY ARRIVED home, she dragged her feet into her bedroom and locked the door behind her. She plopped face down on her bed and wept.

Patrick stood at the base of the stairs and called out, “Ziggy, please come down to eat. Your supper is getting cold.”

Ziggy raised her head and looked toward the door. “Sorry, Dad. Please excuse me. I don’t have an appetite this evening.”



## WALTER ROUZER

THE NEXT MORNING, Ziggy awoke to the wails of kids crying outside her window. It was like a nightmare. They were hysterical. It sounded like the world was coming to an end.

“Where’s my phone!” they screamed.

“Call the police!” they shouted.

“Call out the National Guard!” they whined.

“We want our phones! Call the Secret Service!”

Ziggy glanced toward her dresser and noticed that her phone was missing. A five-inch pencil and pad of paper were in its place.

It turned 7 o’clock and the crows of roosters filled the neighborhood. As a matter of fact, a rooster was crowing in her very bedroom. It was perched on the top ledge of her closet door. It had bright red, black, gold, and yellow feathers with a red mohawk atop his head that flopped to one side.

One crow.

Two crows.

Three crows! All the way to seven!

“Where did the roosters come from! What happened!” Ziggy ran to the window and looked out. The cars parked by the street curbs were gone, and in their place were horses and buggies.

“It happened. It actually happened!” She pinched

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

herself just to make sure she wasn't in the middle of a dream. She swung the bedroom door open and rushed downstairs. Inside the glass casing to the grandfather clock wasn't the usual swinging pendulum. In its place was a small rooster. It was alive and swinging back and forth on a metal rod. "Unbelievable!"

She shouted upstairs. "Dad! Dad! It happened!"

Patrick stumbled out of his bedroom. "What's wrong, Ziggy?"

"It happened," she shouted excitedly.

"What are you talking about?"

"Technology's gone! It disappeared just like I told you it would!"

Ziggy ran into the laundry room and opened the side door to the garage. She couldn't believe her eyes. Her dad's car was gone. In its place was a Mustang pony hitched to a covered buggy. She ran back to the entrance hallway and cupped her hands around her mouth, "Dad! Dad! There's a horse in the garage! Your car is history!"

"What do you mean my car is history?" said Patrick tripping on his way downstairs. When he saw the Mustang hitched to a buggy in his garage, his eyes bulged wide. He stared straight ahead in disbelief. "Impossible!" He stepped forward and placed the palm of his hand against the horse's neck. Its coarse hair

## WALTER ROUZER

twitched beneath his fingers. The Mustang glanced back at Patrick blowing puffs of air out of his nostrils.

Patrick rubbed and blinked his eyes, "Fantastic!" he said. "I would never have thought this could really happen. Not in a million years." He faced Ziggy and placed his hands on her shoulders. "I'm sorry for ever doubting you."

"That's okay, Dad. I have to confess I had a lot of doubt too. I'm worried about Mom. With technology gone, the hospital will have a hard time keeping her health stable."

"You're right . . . let's get this horse and buggy backed out of the garage. I never drove a horse and buggy before, let alone on the freeway. I guess there's a first time for everything."

MEANWHILE, BACK IN Robo City, Mayor Gordon was having a fit. As a matter of fact, he was hysterical. He was pulling his hair out. All of his prized robots turned into life-size rag dolls.

Poor Gloria. She wasn't the girl she used to be. As a matter of fact, she wasn't even a robot anymore. She turned into a rag doll with yellow yarn hair, two big

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

button eyes and a red triangle for a nose. Even her clothes were from an earlier time. She wore a black and white polka dot dress and yellow apron.

All the cars on the assembly line turned into horses and carriages. The doll robots were useless now. They couldn't even put a wooden wheel on a buggy. The horses in the factory were bucking mad. They wanted to get fed, and they wanted to get fed right now! They went on strike and trotted out of the factories in search of greener pastures.

Mayor Gordon's daughter, Lydia saw Gloria as the life-size security rag doll. "Dad! Dad! I want that doll for my bedroom."

"But honey, that's our super-secret security doll."

"I want a super-secret security doll next to my security blanket."

"She can't give you security now."

"I don't care. I want her! And I want her right now! I want to play house with a life-size doll!"

There was only one major intersection with electronic lights in Robo City. It disappeared and in its place chimpanzees stood on tall poles directing traffic. Mayor Gordon didn't know how to drive a horse and buggy, and he crashed his carriage against the street pole. A monkey got so mad he threw eight banana peels on

## WALTER ROUZER

top of the mayor's head. All the other monkeys stopped what they were doing to admire the mayor's banana split hairdo.

14.

*Monkey Trouble*

*Quantum City*

The moment Patrick backed his horse out of the garage, a large white goose flew on top of the carriage awning.

Ziggy locked eyes with the strange bird, “Where did you come from?”

The goose honked at her.

When their buggy got too close to another carriage, the goose honked like a car horn. All the other horse and buggies had goose horns, too.

They approached the main intersection. There were no electronic stop and go lights. Instead, two chimpanzees holding signs sat on top of wooden poles. The red

## WALTER ROUZER

sign had white letters that said STOP and other sign was green with the letters saying GO. The monkeys' names were Bongo and Bingo and they loved to play Stop and Go.

Patrick's buggy was stuck behind three other carriages at the intersection. They had to wait for Bongo, the monkey holding the red STOP sign above his head to lower it so Bingo could raise his green GO sign.

The driver of the horse and buggy closest to the intersection was getting very impatient. The goose on top of his buggy was honking like crazy. The driver shouted up at Bongo, "Hey you! Put down your STOP sign so your monkey buddy can raise his GO sign. Do you understand me? I'm going to be late for work."

Bingo couldn't understand his lingo and scratched his head. Bongo could understand the lingo. He stared down at the driver and shook his head refusing to lower his STOP sign.

"Very well then," said the driver. He took out a banana from a brown paper bag and tossed it up to Bongo, and another banana for Bingo. Bongo nodded and lowered his STOP sign in a banana split second. He chatted monkey talk to Bingo so he could understand the lingo and he raised his GO sign. The driver jingled the reins and his horse and buggy shot forward.

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

Unfortunately, another horse and buggy was going through the intersection. The driver's horse slipped on a banana peel and the two buggies crashed into each other. Instead of getting whiplash, the owners got a good dose of horse-lash from their horses' tails for being bad buggy drivers.

A police officer riding a black-and-white pony galloped to the scene of the crash. "Please step down and show me your buggy license."

"What do you mean buggy license?" said the driver, "I just got this like yesterday?"

The police officer lowered his sunglasses and gave him a stern look. "If you don't have a buggy license, then you need to trot on over to the DBV and get one."

"What's the DBV?"

"Department of Buggy Vehicles."

"That's nonsense. There's no such thing as the DBV."

"There is now." He handed him a piece of paper.

"What's this for?"

"A ticket for being a trouble maker."

Patrick guided his horse and buggy around the accident.

"Dad," said Ziggy, "I just learned something of great importance."

"What's that Ziggy?"



## WALTER ROUZER

“If you want to get ahead in life, never try to bribe a monkey.”

“Well spoken.”

Minutes later, Patrick’s horse and buggy got on the freeway. He sighed. There was a massive traffic jam or what might better be described as a horse jam. People who owned large cars and trucks had Clydesdale horses pulling their buggies. People who drove fast cars had their buggies pulled by racing horses. Those who drove small economy cars had their buggies pulled by Shetland ponies. Overall, there was a whole lot of horsepower on the freeway.

People didn’t know how to drive horses and buggies. Many horses ignored their drivers because they didn’t have any horse sense. Several horses trotted off the freeway taking the driver and buggy with them. The horses took their time grazing on patches of wild oats and grass by the side of the road.

Patrick trotted his Mustang along the freeway until they reached Quantum City Hospital. By the time they arrived, the parking lot was nearly filled with horses and buggies. Patrick trotted his horse up and down the aisles looking for a place to park.

Ziggy pointed, “Look Dad! Over there. That looks like a nice place and it has some shade, too.”

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

“You have a good eye, Ziggy.”

The Mustang must have liked his shady spot because he turned his head and gave Patrick a big smile.

They stepped down from the buggy and headed toward the hospital’s front entrance. Ziggy couldn’t help but notice that some of the horses and buggies had alarm systems. Right next to the goose on top of the buggy were pictures of the owner. Ziggy saw a suspicious man who looked back and forth to see if anybody was paying attention, and then he stepped into one of the buggies. The goose looked back and forth between the driver and the picture of the owner. They didn’t match. The goose sounded the alarm and started honking like crazy. He stretched his long neck down and pulled a patch of red hair from the stranger’s scalp. The man jumped down from the carriage with one hand covering his new bald spot and took off running.

15.

*GPS Monkey*

Nurses and doctors rushed from room to room trying to help their patients. All the technology for tracking vital signs had disappeared.

Patrick and Ziggy hurried as fast as their legs could carry them to Room 39. They saw Carol Zee resting in bed with her eyes closed.

“Mom, I love you so very much,” said Ziggy.

Carol gazed up at Ziggy and gave her a warm smile. She seemed breathless and hardly had the energy to speak.

Patrick clasped her hand, “I love you darling more than you’ll ever know. We’re all praying for you. Everything will be okay. I love you sweetheart.”

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

Ziggy leaned forward and kissed her cheek. “I know what’s happening around you is scary and hard to understand. I’m going to make sure you get the medical equipment you need.”

ON THE WAY BACK FROM the hospital, Ziggy felt more relaxed about Dad driving the horse and buggy. She felt like he had more horse sense now.

Since they weren’t in such a hurry to get back, Ziggy decided to check out some of the buggy’s key features. The buggy had a wooden box with a dial. There were three choices: GPS, Country and Christian Music.

Patrick grinned. “Why don’t you turn the dial and see what happens. I wouldn’t expect too much though. After all, this is a turn-of-the-century buggy.”

Ziggy reached down and turned the dial to GPS.

A capuchin monkey flashed the lid open and jumped out wearing a baseball cap with the letters GPS. Beneath the monkey’s cap was a black wig that trailed hair onto his shoulders. He looked like a rock star from a swinging galaxy.

“What’s that!” said Patrick. He was so surprised at the monkey’s appearance he nearly drove the buggy

## WALTER ROUZER

off the road. Fortunately, he was able to hold onto the reins. He swerved his horse and buggy back into his lane without causing an accident.

Patrick noticed that they were going slower and slower with more horse and buggies passing them by. "I think our horse might need to be refueled. Let's see if the GPS monkey can give us directions to the nearest gas or horse station."

Ziggy stared into the monkey's beady eyes, "Where's the nearest gas station?"

The monkey excitedly jumped up and down and pointed toward the next freeway exit.

"Shall we try it, Dad?"

"We have nothing to lose but time and a little monkey business. Let's do it."

They got off the freeway and traveled about two blocks. A gas station came into view.

Patrick's eyes stretched wide, "Would you look at that. Our GPS buddy really knows his monkey business."

The gas station had a large sign out front that said Pony Express Gas.

Patrick and Ziggy loved the service they received at the Pony Express. The moment they entered the station, a man hurried out to their buggy carrying a bucket of water for their horse.

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

“Can I check under the hoofs?” he said.

Patrick nodded. “Wow! This station has great service.”

The attendant lifted each of the horse’s feet to make sure there weren’t any pebbles stuck in the horseshoes. Next, he pulled out a large thermometer and slid it under the horse’s tongue.

Patrick grinned, “What’s that for?”

The serviceman smiled. “Just making sure your horse didn’t get overheated.” He slipped the thermometer out. “His temperature seems to be in the normal range. We have a special going on today. For each bale of alfalfa you buy, you get a free horse and buggy wash. It will really make your buggy and horse shine.”

Patrick’s Mustang looked back and shook his head like he didn’t want a shine.

“Thanks, but I don’t think I have room for a bale of hay this trip around.” Patrick scratched his head. “I’m kind of new at getting fuel for my horse. Do you have any suggestions?”

The attendant put on a big smile. “Well . . . we have regular fuel, which is plain hay. That’s the cheapest. Then we have alfalfa which costs a little bit more, but you get more trots per mile. You might want to try our extra horsepower blend for long-distance trotting.”

## WALTER ROUZER

“What’s in it?” asked Patrick.

“It’s a combination of alfalfa and our premium grain.”

Patrick thought for a moment. “Okay. You sold me on the idea. I’ll try your premium formula. Thank you.”

16.

*Monkey Music*

The gas station attendant brought out a wooden box filled with their premium horse blend. The alfalfa had a sweet aroma. Ziggy felt like snatching a straw from the horse's bucket and giving it a chew.

Right after their horse was through eating the service man came out and started brushing its teeth.

"Is there any extra charge for cleaning the horse's teeth?" asked Patrick.

"Not at all. Here at Pony Express we want to make sure every horse comes out smiling."

When he was through brushing the horse's teeth, they looked sparkling white.

"I think our horse liked getting his teeth brushed a lot," said Ziggy.



## WALTER ROUZER

“Why is that?”

“Right after he got his teeth cleaned, he started smiling at the other horses.”

Ziggy glanced at the horse and buggy wash station. Three attendants were trying to pull and push a customer’s horse to the wash area. The horse refused to budge an inch.

“You see that, Dad? That horse doesn’t want to get a bath.”

“Maybe it likes to drink water but doesn’t like to be in it.”

“I remember a saying Dad, and that is, ‘You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t force him to take a bath.’”

Patrick chuckled. “That’s a good bit of advice. Perhaps someone should tell that to the driver.”

In the next lane over, they saw a little old lady pouring a jar of molasses over her horse’s food as it was eating.

Patrick swayed his head side-to-side, “Why are you doing that, ma’am?”

“A street vendor was selling bottles of molasses,” she said. “I was complaining that my horse was the slowest one on the freeway. He said if I added this to his food, he would get the runs in a hurry.”

“Well,” said Patrick, “I think you’ll find out soon

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

enough if your horse will get the runs.”

“That’s what I’m hoping for,” she said smiling.

As soon as the lady left the gas station, Patrick noticed that her horse was already starting to get the trots.

A short time later, Patrick’s buggy got into more traffic on the freeway.

“I wonder what’s causing the delay this time?” said Patrick.

The air started to smell bad. Patrick looked over the side of his carriage and saw horse apples steaming off the hot pavement. Up ahead they saw a black and white police pony. The officer stopped the lady who gave her horse molasses. Patrick’s buggy slowly went by. He couldn’t help but overhear what the officer was telling the lady.

“But officer, I wasn’t speeding,” she said.

“I’m not giving you a speeding ticket. I’m giving you a ticket because your horse is a gross polluter. Did you fill your horse with some cheap fuel?”

“Absolutely not officer. I gave her some alfalfa, grain and added molasses to help give her the runs.”

“Did you say molasses?”

She nodded.

“That explains a lot of things.”

## WALTER ROUZER

“What do you mean officer?”

“Molasses will give your horse the runs okay. The diarrhea runs. You need to be more careful what kind of fuel you give your horse in the future.”

“Ziggy . . . Did you learn anything from what you heard and saw?”

“Yes, Dad. If a person or horse is moving as slow as molasses, don’t give them molasses. It might give them the runs going in the wrong direction.”

Patrick smiled, “That pretty much sums it up.”

Ziggy glanced at the buggy dial and turned it to country music. The monkey jumped out, slipped off its GPS hat and reached into the box. He pulled out a small cowboy hat and guitar. The monkey strummed the cords and howled like a coyote under a full moon.

Patrick tried to cover his ears and shook his head, “Ziggy, please! I can’t concentrate on my driving with that monkey howling! Find something more peaceful to listen to.”

“Okay, Dad.” She turned the dial to Christian music.

The monkey reached into the box and pulled out a miniature gold harp. His tiny fingers plucked the cords to produce some heavenly notes.

“Now that’s more like it,” said Patrick.

Everybody on the freeway started to get the hang of

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

how to turn on monkey music. The freeway became a real life outdoor symphony of country Christian music.

AN HOUR AND A HALF LATER, they finally reached the exit and their horse trotted down the road toward home.

Patrick squinted ahead, "I wonder what all those people are doing in front of our house?"

Ziggy put her hand above her eyes to block the sun's glare. "That's weird."

"What's that?"

"I can see my former boss and one of her assistants, Riley Jones. He's the one responsible for leaking my story about technology going backward. Now the whole world knows."

Patrick and Ziggy stepped down from the carriage.

Eight journalists with notepads and pencils surrounded them.

A tall man with thick black rimmed glasses stepped forward. "What are the instructions for getting technology back?"

A man with a shiny bald head wearing a tan leather jacket squeezed between the other reporters. "How can we best go about restoring technology?"

## WALTER ROUZER

“Who’s your source of information?” asked a reporter with curly red hair.

Ziggy raised her open palms in front of her, “No comment.” She took three steps back. “I’ll provide more details as soon I’m able.”

Devra stepped up to Ziggy. “I would like for you and Wigless to come back to Zipner Industries. That is, if you’re still interested.”

“Yes, I am, and I’m pretty sure Wigless would be too.”

“I’m glad to hear that. A special task force has been formed to help get technology back. Everyone wants you and Wigless to lead it? Are you up for the task?”

“You bet I am. I think Wigless is too.”

17.

*Peace Message*

Everyone remembered the story of the twelve-year-old geniuses from Zipner Industries. They recalled how they predicted the reversal of technology and their plan to restore it.

The Quantum Convention Center was selected as the official meeting place to discuss how to get technology back. International flags waved in the wind beneath blue skies and puffy white clouds. People from many countries lived and worked in and around Quantum City. They were all eager to attend the convention and contribute their ideas for world peace.

At one in the afternoon, all the seats in the convention center were filled. Everyone in the audience was chatting about the loss of technology and sharing their

## WALTER ROUZER

ideas how to get it back. Ziggy and Wigless stepped up to the podium, and the audience gave them their full attention.

Ziggy spoke first. "I'm honored and privileged to speak before you this day. You're an awesome group." She cleared her throat. "God has placed man as custodian over the earth and all its resources. We have an obligation to manage and preserve it the best we can for this and future generations."

"Amen," shouted a woman wearing a t-shirt with the peace symbol printed on the front.

"We're all behind you, Ziggy!" shouted a man wearing blue suspenders. He held up a sign that said, "Let's Work Together for Peace."

Wigless took his turn to speak, "We are a world of different cultures, customs and peoples. There is one thing that we should always be mindful of and that is in helping our fellow man. True, we made mistakes in the past. Humans are not perfect beings. For us to restore our technology, we must prove that we are a united people. We must take action now in creating world peace."

Nods of approval waved through the audience. A man with a curly mustache stood up, "We stand united, Wigless."

## WHERE THE EARTH SINGS

Another person shouted out, "Let's all make the world a better place to live for everybody! Peace rules! Conflict drools."

"As of this time," said Ziggy, "Millions of pieces of trash are floating in our oceans. Fish and birds, along with other sea life, are eating these poisons. We, as consumers of sea life, are also slowly being poisoned by our own careless acts."

A tall man stood up in the back row and shouted, "Trash is bad! Let's get rid of it!"

Another person said, "Let's take better care of our world!"

The audience raised their hands and shouted in agreement, "Yes! Yes! Let's do it!"

Wigless continued, "Now is the time to act! Now is the time to prove that we stand united! Send messages now through bird carriers to all countries around the world. Launch every seaworthy vessel to aid in the cleanup up of our oceans. Let all boats be a United Nations chain, from bow to stern, country to country, working in unity to clean up our oceans."

A large man with a white beard stood up and said, "I devote my ship and crew to the cause!"

Another person shouted, "I give my ship, too! Who else is with me?" Everyone in the audience stood and



## WALTER ROUZER

shouted, "Here! Here! You can count on us!"

Ziggy gave her closing remarks. "Every idea you contribute at this convention will help in restoring our technology sooner. But most importantly, it will help bring us closer to world peace. It is important for us to love, care for, cherish and manage all living creatures that God created."

People representing countries from all over the world stood united. They were eager to take action in cleaning up the Earth's oceans and environment.

Albatross bird carriers stationed next to each national flag were given written peace letters. They took flight in every direction flying North and South, East and West. Over land and sea they soared to deliver the urgent letters about world peace.

(END OF SAMPLE)