

The Coming of the Apocalypse

by Jon Davies

The Operations Management Guru was visiting the twenty-fourth floor on Tuesday, and everyone at the company was wickered with fear. Kathy, Vice President for Verification, was already playing sick, staging her absence beginning Monday afternoon. Verificationist Derek claimed he would bar the door to his office come Tuesday morning and stay in there alone the entire day no matter how much boredom ensued. Associate Accountant Francis had taken on a "righteous project" that required he stay on the suddenly wonderful fourth floor with the cafeteria crew. Logistics Coordinator Rick had volunteered to set up the conference room for the OMG's once-a-recession epic meeting so as to avoid as much personal interaction as possible with him, and Assistant Andi was, as usual, along for the sexy ride. Assistant Laura went on vacation.

The other seven assistants, with not enough days off to their accrual, had nowhere to flee. They sat in cubicles--not offices--and their projects were lame and unimportant, as were they. No one was willing to pawn anything awesome off on them to get them off the hook.

"What's the big deal?" Assistant Patrick proclaimed, running his stupid mouth off next to the photocopier, where the assistants (minus Andi and Laura) and two verificationists had gathered to lay out the shiz.

"I'll tell you what the big deal is," Senior Verificationist Carrie proclaimed. The department had no shortage of proclaimers and thus no shortage of proclamations. "The last time the OMG was here, eighteen people got the hook. It was sick, I tell you, sick."

"It certainly wasn't cool," Junior Verificationist Elijah agreed, with his typical annoying redundancy.

"That's crazy," said Assistant Angela, who had lately gone emo weird and grown out her bangs so that they covered her cartoonlike eyes, which had made Assistant Tom slightly less horny than usual in her presence.

"I'm hungry," announced Assistant Brian, another proclaimer, whose observations were generally random.

"It's the apocalypse," proclaimed Assistant Phyllis, a woman too old for her position who was prone to dropping the bomb in every conversation.

"Don't be stupid," Tom said, with a reassuring yawn. "Everyone *dies* in the apocalypse. We're just losing jobs--and only some of us."

"God be with us," Assistant Steve said.

"I didn't know you were religious," said Assistant Samantha, whose tight buttocks were, in Tom's estimation (and private proclamation to Brian), hot, hot, hot--if only she weren't so married boring.

"I wasn't until now," Steve confessed and dropped his head to steepled hands. "Let's pray."

"The apocalypse is just a revelation," said all-knowing Patrick, "something coming to light."

"Like which of us survives," Carrie said.

"It's the end of the world," Phyllis proclaimed.

"Look it up in a dictionary," Patrick sighed. "I'm serious." The photocopier ground to a halt, and Patrick picked up his copies and left the room.

No one else moved.

"Who set the air conditioner to chill, man?" Tom asked, after a minute.

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The meeting with the OMG was moved from the afternoon to ten a.m. The bizzle for the move to Tuesday morning was, in order of proclamation, as follows:

- The entire company was getting the hook, and the OMG wanted to waste no time.
- Only Kathy was getting the hook.
- Kathy had already been given the hook, and the OMG was here to lay out the shizzle before everyone got excited.
- The company was being sold, and the OMG wanted to tour the facilities that afternoon--and, oh yeah, they were *all* getting the hook.

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The conference room seemed unusually dank as everyone waited for the OMG's arrival. Rick had draped the lectern in black before adding the company's seal, and despite his best efforts two of the fluorescent bulbs in the usual front of the room had gone dark. Hence, he'd reconfigured the whole setting so that the front was now the back, and to ensure that there'd be enough foreground light on the speaker, he'd had to cover the windows.

Everyone, in the past twenty-four hours, had made themselves double up on fright. Samantha and Angela hadn't gone to bed the night before, and how sleepy they were was obvious, the way their faces kept dropping into their oversized planners.

"Hey, facebook," Tom said, ever the funny guy. "Get it?" he asked,

when no one laughed. "Face . . . book."

Phyllis sat in a crouch, her knees to her chin. Patrick ran his hand along a nonexistent beard. Carrie spun hair in her fingers.

Rick stepped into the room, his face white. "The OMG's coming," he said. "Kathy just got a call. He's going to be late, but we're supposed to chain ourselves here until he arrives."

"How late?" Angela asked, her thong showing through her pajama pants.

Tom elbowed Brian and pointed. "Sweet," Tom mouthed. Brian nodded.

"I'm just a messenger," Rick said.

Carrie leaned back in her chair, pulled a tuft of hair. "Well, this is fun," Carrie proclaimed.

"Yes, quite a game he's playing," Elijah reiterated.

"It's the apocalypse," Phyllis reminded everyone.

Patrick shook his head.

"My hip hurts," Brian announced.

From the hall came the sound of barks. Eyes rose and looked to the door.

"Are you ready?" Steve whispered to Samantha.

Samantha dropped her head to open palms.

"Sorry, I'm late," the man said upon entry, then looked about the room--all the chilling corpses, the bodies white with fright. "What, is everyone dead in here?"

The OMG wore a black double-breasted suit with a red necktie. A red handkerchief stuffed into his lapel pocket, a black derby cap with a red band, and a black leash leading to a Doberman pinscher provided for fully coordinated intimidation.

"This here is my main bitch," he said, petting the dog's head. "Don't worry, she's harmless."

"We got a gangsta for an OMG?" Tom whispered to Brian.

Carrie wiped her forehead, pretended she hadn't heard. Everyone pretended they hadn't heard. Tom was an amazing idiot.

"Sit," the OMG commanded. Everyone glanced at one another, hearts racing--they were already sitting--but the OMG was talking to his dog, who immediately complied.

The OMG stepped behind the lectern and then stepped out from it. "So I bet you've all been wondering why the big cherry's here?" he began, hands stretched out like he was waiting for a hug. "I didn't want to bore you with another lazy memo, fire off some message just to have you hit delete. I'm bringing you the shiznit today, the big news. How does that sound?"

The audience was stone.

"You all on dope or something?" he asked to the blank faces.

"No, sir," a few strangled cast members squeaked out.

"Don't call me sir," he said. "I'm not your pimp." The OMG stepped

to the lectern again. "Today there's coming a new directive." He looked behind him. "We got a white board in here?" he asked. "Where's the white board?"

Everyone turned to Rick. Rick glanced around, saw he had no out. "Back here, sir," he said, "in the back of the room."

"Why'd you put it in the back of the room?" the OMG asked, but he didn't wait for an answer. He walked to the other side, commanded the employees to rise and turn their chairs around. They did.

The dog rose too.

"Sit," the OMG said, and they all sat.

On the board he wrote the following words:

Systematic
HAWT
Intelligence
Technology

"This is the shiznit," the OMG said.

Tom raised his hand.

"Yes?" the OMG asked.

"What's HAWT, sir?" Tom asked.

"Don't call me sir," the OMG commanded, then turned back to the board and said as he wrote next to the word HAWT, "= Helpful Agile Well-informed Thoughtful."

"This is what I've come to deliver to you today," the OMG said. "If it's

not HAWT, it's not part of the S.H.I.T., and it's no longer part of our company."

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After the meeting, the OMG began touring the floor with his dog and another double-breasted-suit-wearing company operative no one had seen before. The companion looked tired and bored, like he'd been on so many other downsizing trips that one more was hardly worth getting worked up about. "You're redundant and unnecessary, and the company is no longer in need of your services. Blah, blah, blah."

Patrick had set Tuesday aside for the Elgin project. Like all of his work, it was insignificant, but it was large and dull enough looking that it seemed like he might be able to waggle appearing busy even from such a not-so-fantastic project.

The OMG stopped next to Patrick's desk.

"What are you working on?" he asked.

Patrick turned, looked up from his papers, stood. "Elgin," Patrick said, bowing his head.

"I don't know that project," the OMG said.

"It's not very important," said the man in the other double-breasted suit.

"It's b-b-b-big," Patrick stuttered.

The dog stepped toward Patrick, tugging on its leash, then growled.

"Sit," the OMG said. It sat. So did Patrick. "Why are you working on it?" the OMG asked.

"It's what I was given, sir," he said, after a pause filled with long

vowels.

"Don't call me sir," the OMG said. "Who gave it to you?"

"Derek, sir," Patrick said. "He's a verificationist."

The OMG shook his head.

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Carrie heard the important parts of the conversation from her office next door and, after checking that the OMG was far enough down the hall, called Elijah. Derek had been fired. His work was not S.H.I.T. compatible. The OMG was making his way around the floor. Bodies were beginning to get the hook. Elijah called Francis, who called Associate Production Coordinator Penny, who called Rick, who called Kathy at home, who called that loser on the twelfth floor who everyone thought was a little weird because Mail Room Associate Terrance had posted that guy's creepy personals ad to the company's virtual bulletin board but who was actually quite an awesome guy, if just a little lonely, and who Kathy had secretly begun to date.

Somewhere in here, as was natural, the assistants heard about the ongoing carnage. Andi went to hide under the desk with Rick in his office. Phyllis hid out in Derek's, figuring the OMG wouldn't visit the same place twice. Angela did some heavy breathing, while Tom, one cube over, thought about going into the bathroom to masturbate. Brian pulled a flour tortilla from his backpack and ate it.

Steve and Samantha powerwalked to the conference room. The other proselytes were already there. Steve and Samantha closed the door behind them.

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"Balaam had a bad ass," Steve told the crowd. "It kept talking back to him. It was *his* conversion experience, like Paul on the road to Damascus. God was talking to him. Awesome, right? Only Balaam

wouldn't listen. But Paul listened."

The handle of the door jiggled.

The faces turned to watch.

Some people mumbled prayers.

"Paul listened," Steve repeated.

The door opened, and in strode the Doberman and after him the OMG.

"What is this?" the OMG asked, looking around. Some people were on their knees. Some were wrestling beads through their fingers. Some were rustling pages of the Bible. The dog sat, laid down, head between its paws.

"Is this a prayer group," the OMG asked, "on company time?"

"It's lunch," Steve said. "We can do whatever we want." Steve turned back to his audience. "You know what Paul heard, right?"

"Jesus," the OMG said, bowing and shaking his head.

"That's right," Steve said, and took him by the arm and led him to a chair.

That afternoon, the OMG saw the light.

