

Wearing mountain-climbing gloves (the ones with metal picks for fingers), an iguana and a winged demon each the length of a pushpin scaled the lithe hindleg of a horse. Zakano, the iguana, had said it'd be a good challenge; Dedran right about now was wishing it wasn't. He glanced at the ground a relative fifty stories down and gulped. Whenever their steed would finish grazing, it'd begin trotting again, and the whole equestrian mountainside would quake; and Dedran would cry out, startled near-most out of his demon soul. To his great joy fifteen minutes later, they crept to the horse's tush and regained their breaths. They then walked the field of cherry fur to a vista and wowed, seeing the view. A great plains of gold enclosed by lushly formidable mountains blazed in the evening sun around their steed. One would say they were on top of the world; one might even say they were the kings of the world, would that any Kind Kings lived.

A dragon's shadow swept over the horse. "Bahdia," Zak and Dedran exclaimed in remarkable sync, recognizing the thirty-foot dragon's magenta scales groomed with queenly red spines. Bahdia circled the steed, and suddenly the steed whinnied and burst forward: clomp-dah-dah, clomp-dah-dah clomp. "Oh no!" the iguana and demon lamented, realizing the equestrian's place on the food chain relatively to the dragon's; "we're on top of this horse who'll be eaten for sure, so we'll be eaten too!" One idea Zak had was to jump, but neither he nor Dedran had anticipated skydiving thus brought no parachutes. Stranded atop the horse, they could only save the stallion's dear life to save their own.

"Bahdia!" They jumped and waved atop the muscularly furred posterior at their draconic ally. Bahdia, however, had just broken forward extremely. You and I would wish that once you break forward extremely, forward would be unusable. Alas, breaking forward was different from breaking, say, a record player, as forward could still be used.

Down she swooped. The millisecond before swallowing whole her prey, she could'a swore she heard a tiny duet screeching her name, but she dismissed it. Either the horse's butt was coaxing her to eat it or trying to trick her. Either way, her solution was this: her jaws corking slightly, crashing over the equestrian's second half. Crag in the plains tore wider to her thunderous landing; to a bleating horse's forehooves bicycling longily for the sea of dry grass who lost of them custody. The micros wailed as a kaiju's maw closed upon them, ivory stalact- and stalagmites shutting away the sun and then the horse's maned head, and then . . .

They freefell. Only because the horse got jammed between the leviathan esophageal walls did Zak and Dedran outspeed it; and the clamping of pillowy flesh quaked throughout the myriad stories of the esophagus, separating a screaming Zak and Dedran just as they'd come inches of each other's grasps. Like pinballs they bounced in their zigzagging descent till their paths intersected, and they took one another's hand, the cancellation of each other's momentum beating

them into a crazed twirl orbiting an invisible point between them, whose gravity was fairly similar.

"If only I had some clothes to take off!" Zak screamed beneath turbulent howls. "Using a shirt as a parachute could reduce my terminal velocity and thus the gravities upon which my mortal frame hits what it will!"

"Zak, you've been watching too much Bill Nye!"

"Who's that?" asked Zak. "Oh, hey, I am wearing clothes!" Indeed, the iguana had on a Fur-Really brand hoodie, the kind with the handsome double-sided pocket at the bottom; and also, some jeans.

He tried pulling the hoodie over his head. Alas, the incredible turbulence kept the hoodie pinned to him, the jeans as well.

Linking both of their paws, they locked helpless eyes and cried, ring-around-the-roseying to their deaths.

Flashes of epileptic seizures had the stomach going like a disco ball. Two little specks shot through the sphincter (which would've patted them down, but had not even registered them coming through the security gate), and a great tailed ass erupted after them like a fallen dwarf planet (not as in dwarf-inhabited, but dwarf-sized [relativistically to other planets {at least in this solar system}]), and reared down, down, down, a Destroyer of Worlds. The tremulous death-song rose to a pitch Zak and Ded, alas, could not even say their goodbyes over—or under—or around.

The horse ass detonated like a nuclear bomb, breaking the surface of an acidic ocean. White sheets like none you've ever seen (not even at Kinko's®) sprayed and assailed world-encapsulating stomach walls. White noises and crazy foams and the world itself capitulated, and for a time the gastrimundus was a chaotic dystopia of weather both catastrophic and Stygian.

Fasting forward from the involuntary ass kamikaze, we find ourselves viewing Zak and Dedran—two drearily sinking cadavers steaming bubbles—but where are they? And to where are they bound? Alas, one does not simply open their eyes and look around under the surface of digestive juices, so we shall never know the former. As for the latter, they climbed down to the bottom of the sea, where the rejected degenerates of the probiotics (think of Satan and his once-promising seraphim acquaintances) thrived. These degenerates, hairy, jelly things, admired

the aliens before they descended into the fleshy, gulpy crater of the seafloor, which would open and close in a pattern; its openings would suck up prey quickly as faucets sprayed out h2O.

Sucked in they were. Zak came out on the other side without clothes; the stomach acids had digested them. Fate thrust them through the futuristically vertical metropolis you and I call the large intestines, though [i]Endosome Adventures Special Issue #12[/i] recaps that odyssey and not this issue. The tales of Zak and Dedran hijacking a bloodcell from the intestines-neighboring bloodstream and accidentally riding the cell all the way to a biomechanized waste-making factory are omitted. We jump to the scene where Zak and Dedran need a lift from an intestines-climbing snake to the Upper-World, however have not enough cashola. They have just written up their resumes and turned them into the C.E.O. of the waste-making factory, a brawny-chested saccyloccocus (hairy purple organism).

Two minutes later, the C.E.O. declined them. Zak and Dedran feared they'd been discriminated against, and would be discriminated against no matter where in the ecosystem of pillowy tubes they applied for work. "Zak," Dedran said, "do you still have that laser from [i]Voyage Through the Humongous Bull's Body[/i]?" Zak said yeah, so Dedran felt him and frisked him of the laser then ran off across a lush pink field. "Wait!" cried Zak. "Come back!"

A premonition tingled within him: he feared that the long-dormant "demonic" gene within his demon friend had been triggered by the need to survive, and that Dedran was up to something wildly unethical. The demon, running up on an intestines-climbing snake, yelled, "Stop right there!" and brandished the laser. "Is-s-s s-s-s-something the matter?" the furry, neon-green, gelatinous serpent stuttered. "Yes!" said Dedran. "We can't even get a minimum wage job in this world! We'll surely run out of air or starve, and thus die and become product for the waste-making factory, unless we rob you."

"What are you robbing me of?" asked the serpent.

"We are robbing you of you," replied the demon.

"Oh," said the serpent, "well I can unders-s-s-stand that"; he then vocally reminisced the years of his life he'd wasted away doing slave labor, and bawled goopy, slimy tears.

Zak and Dedran got uncomfortable, but Dedran offered quickly, "What if we rob you to the Outside-World?" Zak turned white, shook his head, tried to pull on Dedran's shoulder, but Dedran was ejaculating promises now: "We'll bring you with us out of Bahdia and grow you to the size of a basilisk and keep you as a pet, and you'll be well-fed and clothed." It became the friendliest robbery in Bahdian history.

Zak gasped. "Dedran! No!"

But the damage was done. "S-s-surely you don't mean it?!" said the snake. "Will you feed me blood cells and probiotics?"

Dedran, knowing he'd convinced the gelatinous serpent already, did not bother to answer and instead jumped onto one of the two back-saddles fastened to the serpent's back, crying, "Yah!"

At once the serpent hissed happily, and coiled before springing up the intestinal walls. Zak, yelping, leaped high as he could and grabbed its tail, and he went flopping and thrashing along the wall like bells on Bob's Tail. Up one relatively miles-long stretch of squiggly gastrointestinal tract they'd go, and then down another just the same they'd go; and Bahdia, who'd been hunting alongside a mountain, felt their ascent and feared suddenly that digested food was attempting a comeback. Lo, she cried, "You'll never!" And pitched her long neck toward a nest of birds, engulfing the entire nest, mutilating the branch it'd rested on, swallowing the last 5'2" of it. It took the stomach some time, but by and by it rained needly splinters of wood from the G.I. tract ceiling; and the weather forecast in the futuristically vertical metropolis became HAIL; and the gelatinous serpent put on his snout's windshield wipers. "Hang on you guys-s-s!" he hissed. "I'll get you to safet—" a splinter appearing to be large as a tree trunk thrashed his head.

Like a banana the snake peeled away from the intestinal meat. He hung there for a good minute or two; but by then, his cargo had already been ejected, and they screamed as they fell.

"What're we gonna do?" Zak cried to his partner-in-crime in the business of falling to a grave death. Ded yelled, "Hold on—I have an idea!" For, lo, as the wood rained down round them, so did ravenous termites, foaming from the mouth. While falling, Ded breaststroked to increase his velocity and to get onto a termite's back then stamped into its rump and cried, "Iyah! Look what I've got!" And he procured from his palm a piece of bark he'd stolen from the HAIL. He'd lean real far out in front of the termite, so as the tempt it, like asshole riders do with horses, using a carrot-on-a-stick; and suddenly great inspiration hit the termite; and it vaulted upward, from piece of raining bark to bark, essentially climbing the storm. Wowed, Zak stole a bark, too, and then inspired his own ravenous 'mite. Together, iguana and demon went riding the storm. Outside, Bahdia felt queer vibrations adventuring up her G.I. tract and thought, [I]Well that won't do; I'll have to eat more to keep it down,[/i] and, galloping to a good tree, smashed her face inside a trunk, where she devoured all of its squirrel inhabitants. By and by, house-sized nuts that'd been eaten so forcefully they shot past the stomach undigested joined the rain of bark, turreting down at our termite-riding pals. "AHH!" These high-in-fiber invaders struck like meteorites into fleshy pink balconies, skyscraper windows and the gelatinous serpents ridden by

microorganisms climbing them; and destruction occurred all round Zak and Dedran, quite disheartening. One nut homed straight for Zak, and he knew at once he was done for; luckily, Dedran disagreed, and pitched him the laser with a "Zak, here!" Such optimism inspired the iguana. He caught the laser, aimed it at the nut and went trigger crazy. Five consecutive [i]pew[/i]s destroyed the nut and the next four that'd been coming their way. With that Zak and Ded made it, and their termites jumped through the G.I. tract's ceiling.

As they rocketed toward the stomach, Zak had a grave thought. "If we stay on these termites, they'll surely try to eat all the digesting bark. They'll trap us in the acid ocean, and then surely we'll die. Before that happens, best we get off." Hearing this, Dedran agreed. In the tunnel between large intestines and tummy, they spotted a friendly-looking serpent crawling toward the gut. A tapeworm white as hot steel glowed before them! Zak and Dedran hopped off their ride, landing on the tapeworm's posterior. "Take us outside of Bahdia," Zak shouted at the tapeworm, and held the laser to its head two-hundred relative feet away. It didn't hear. "Take us outside of Zak!" Zak demanded again.

"But you're Zak," Dedran said.

"I know," Zak said.

"Why did you say 'Take us outside of Zak'? "

"I said that?" Surely the lack of oxygen was getting to him.

The tapeworm only hissed in an archaic alien language, rebuking them both. It wasn't a bus, you see: it was a proud, independent intellectual. If it were a riding service, it'd be an Uber driver and were it a politician, it'd be of the Libertarian party. "It said it wants five-hundred dollars in Bahdian currency," Dedran interpreted. "How do you know?" Zak asked. "I studied tapeworms in my high school science class," replied Dedran, "but hurry; they get impatient." "I haven't got five-hundred dollars!" "Well, say something!"

Peer-pressured, Zak stole Dedran's idea from the gelatinous serpent, telling the tapeworm they'd free the tapeworm of Bahdia's body and then grow it to the size of a household pet. Dedran, Studier of Tapeworms, translated. He then translated to Zak the tapeworm's reply: "You must promise me on your Grandmother's Grave you are not lying." Getting chills, Zak knew he either died or made the promise; though, your Grandmother's Grave was not something to be thrown around lightly; it was usually at least two- or three-hundred pounds. "I swear on my Grandmother PLUS my Grandfather's Grave!" Zak cried. That infuriated the tapeworm, who said

just one or the other would have done. Nevertheless it sprang into action, training into the stomach.

At this point Bahdia, so paranoid to believe she'd had tapeworms, realized she'd probably eaten the horse too fast, was all. "I shall wash it down with smaller things," she said, taking her head out of the tree-trunk. So the dragon decided, and began to rush at and devour squirrels, pigeons, mice and raccoons, bludgeoning the mountainside with her voracious appetite. And down the herculean creatures rained, like comets, into the ocean of acids inside her. [i]Spwoosh! Spwosh! Spwelush![/i] These sounds I'm making with my mouth here only slightly grasp the essence of the sounds those animals made, as I've never really heard such giant creatures hit a surface of acids; neither have you.

The tapeworm was just rising from the stomach acid surface when the comets came crashing down, mortaring everything round him. His hunger instinct kicked in; and he yearned to devour all the critters around him; but Zak and Dedran, back in a heavily oxygen-deprived atmosphere, cried, "No, we must get out of here." But the tapeworm wouldn't listen; wham, like a bucking bronco it went, and began to train through the floating bodies and devouring them. Zak and Dedran, shaken to and fro on their mount, could hardly hold on any longer, a problem to which Zak answered, "He's not listening. We'll have to go on our own."

Just then, geysers of fire erupted from the lake of acids. Alas, Bahdia had decided her gut was too wobbly, and the things within would need to be roasted alive. Zak and Dedran, consistently dizzy from their hunting mount, could not think of a good plan, so one of them said, "WAIT! There's birds!"

Indeed there were: pigeons raining from the crater in the roof of the world. They seemed stunned as they went down, as though tased by unfair police officers, but a ritualistically powerful idea came to Zak just then. "To unstun one, why not just stun it again?" Channeling his avatar from Call of Duty, Zak aimed the laser at a bird approximately 44.375 micro-meters away then fired. Pew pew pew pew! Laser bolts went at the speed of Usain Bolt or quicker and wreathed his avian target in chains of electricity. Mid-fall, it spasmed and seized; though, Zak had counted wrong, and had fired one too many times, stunning it again; so he let off another Usain Bolt bolt, unstunning the bird in the nick of time; it saw the ocean approaching, dipped upward, and would live to see another day.

"Now, Dedran! As we discussed!"

Though Dedran and Zak had discussed nothing, the demon saw his friend hopping from crashing kaiju critter body to body in chase of the free bird, and thought it best to pursue Zak. They

avoided multiple head-on collisions with splashes of molten juices and fiery vertical ejaculations, reaching finally the end of a myriad-bodied pathway. As the platform upon which they stood (a weasel) sank, the bird flew farther away. However, Zak saw a spot on the sea bubbling five meters before them, and knew in his heart-of-hearts there was hope. He turned around, whipped out the laser, went "Pew pew pew!" (with the laser, of course), and saw the force of his gunfire blowing their weasel toward the bubbling sea three feet per second. The sea bubbled more intensely. "Dedran, help me out!" Zak said. So Dedran thought about how, then thought about his wings, and flapped in the same direction Zak was Usain Bolting. Their measly three feet per second sputtered to five, to six. They drifted over the angry bubbly spot just as belching upward went a gigantic faucet of flames.

"BRuuUAUAAAAAAAAAAAAAwWWWWP!" Bahdia said.

Up went the unconscious weasel they rode like a magic carpet! At the climax of the uplifting faucet, Zak got a running start then vaulted off the whiskery nose of the weasel, in mid-air looking somewhat like a skydiver. Bill Nye would have doubted he could catch the pigeon's tailfeathers in time, but scientists have never tested their theory of gravity inside a dragon's stomach; and with hard scientific statistics out of the way, faith won the war, here, and the iguana's hand gripped the very last tailfeather! And Dedran, who'd had wings all along, but played along for Zak's sake, jumped as hard as he could after him, and grabbed his leg. On their filthy winged steed they now ascended to stomach Heaven, the place where scientists will never go!

"Wee!" they both said.

Problem was, giant kaijus poured still from the Gates of Heaven, and trying to cross through would be like blatantly disobeying the laws of traffic. Moreover, their pigeon was not quite up to speed with Zak and Ded's true intentions, and only fluttered aimlessly about the stomach, though it coughed and hacked, and would love the outside world just as much as its riders. "Shoot," Zak said, "can you talk to birds, Dedran?"

Dedran shook his head, quite useless here.

Zak had been counting on Dedran's wings to bridge the dna gap between the filthy winged steed, but it was no use.

However, the tapeworm had seen the bird fluttering about; and it realized that it was the only creature he would not get to eat, if he did not address the situation immediately. It paused on devouring the critters and the ginormous horse, licked its lips at the bird then sprang! Coil upon

coil of tapeworm length, thick as a road, came after the bird. And Zak and Dedran, with their survival senses tingling, screamed and jumped in the nick of time. As wormy jaws devoured the pigeon whole, they landed rolling down the tapeworm's back, but luckily caught a hold of its slimy white tail. But the tapeworm, with all its velocity, continued, and exploded right through the sphincter roofing the stomach. It soared and soared up through the esophagus, worm jaws munching dozens of showering critters per second.

Bahdia, who'd been plowing across the ground with her jaws (because, for whatever reason, her food was blocking up her throat [thus she needed more food to wash it down]), went into hyperdrive with her plowing; and soon so many rabbits, weasels, ferrets, birds, and mice were plummeting down her throat, you couldn't rid of them all with a windshield wiper, even if that windshield wiper were sprayed with Windex beforehand.

The tapeworm swallowed down the rain of creatures, growing and growing till Bahdia was gurgling worryingly from her bloated throat. As the tapeworm's tail fattened, poor Zak could hardly get a grip on it anymore: his hands slipped more and more to the ripples of parasitic fat. Then the tapeworm shot out of a cavern of giant ivory stalact- and stalagmites into the outside world; but Zak lost his grip, and went sailing toward the steep plunge of the tongue. "Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!" They began a descent, wherein they'd indubitably die—

But then the unthinkable happened.

But after it happened, it was thinkable.

A giant gelatinous serpent lunged into Bahdia's mouth, catching the micros in its jaws! It was oddly familiar, and friendly, and . . .

"You're the one we robbed!" Zak cried, as sunlight swooped over him and the demon.

"Yes-s-s-s-s," the snake hissed happily.

It reeled them out of Bahdia's maw, spitting them out atop a blueberry bush. It turned, and faced two creatures: a wildly bewildered Bahdia, and an evilly hungry tapeworm. The serpent now measured 25' in length and stood at 9', while the tapeworm measured 32' in length and stood at 10'5".

"What's happening?" Bahdia cried. All she knew was that the white one had exited her mouth, and the green one came from deep in the woods.

Zak and Dedran wowed, and clung to a very large leaf. They watched this happen:

The serpent and the tapeworm duked it out. Treebranches got guillotined and leaves exploded from plumes of nature, as their tails lashed about. One of them, the tapeworm, finally wrapped the serpent in a python's squeeze. Weak gasps left the serpent's mouth, such as those from a lethargic swimmer. The tapeworm squeezed the aloe vera juices out of its shivering body, to the screams and cries of the two micros. And then the tapeworm swallowed its head, and devoured it gulp after ostentatious gulp. Horror spiked, and hope dwindled in the two micros to every swallow until finally the serpent's tail was gone.

The gluttonous tapeworm sighed, rolling belly up with an enormous, wriggling bulge in its serpentine middle. Out came a barbaric "BRAAAAAAAAAP" that dampered the serpent's attempts to fight back; and, within half-a-minute, the serpent's bulge dissolved, to be replaced by the growth of the tapeworm. It grew and grew, laughing villainously, till it finished its spurt at 44' in length and 12' in height. Then it uncoiled and rose higher, looming threateningly over Bahdia. "Once I eat you, I shall be the apex predator! Bwahahaha!"

"Wait," Zak said, "when did the tapeworm learn to talk?"

Ded was too shocked to reply.

What happened next answered them. And lucky them, the answer was a happy one.

Suddenly, the tapeworm started to itch and twitch and writhe, gurgling and foaming from the mouth. At first Zak thought it were rabid, but this was not so. Green light radiated from its body, and it cried, "No! You cannot have me!" But then its body shined white, and when it stopped shining it was green. Not only that, but it had twin heads like a hydra. Both heads looked like the gelatinous serpent it had eaten. The serpent turned to Zak and Dedran and purred a hiss.

"It's you!" they exclaimed.

The serpent hydra nodded with both heads, slithered forward and nuzzled each of them with one head consecutively. " 'Tis-s-s," "for" "we are a parasite of parasites," "which is to say we feed on tapeworms." It talked from either head, but never both at once.

The serpentine hydra went on to explain how it had escaped Bahdia's body: after being separated from Zak and Dedran, it remembered their Dedication to make a living despite being discriminated against; and, wanting to make its own living, it bypassed the Waste-Making

Factory and came out the backend. And in the forest, for a few hours, it had been growing by eating nearby forest animals and vegetation. The rest from there is history.

The two micros absorbed this information and nodded. They turned to the starstruck Bahdia, and Dedran said she deserved an explanation, too. Zak, however, disagreed. He led Dedran down the bush then zapped Dedran and himself with the laser's newly-installed "grow to normal" feature; then they appeared from behind the bushes and waved at Bahdia.

"Ho my!" she said. "There you guys are! You won't believe what just happened!"

"Bahdia!" Zak said. "You met our new pet!"

"What?" Bahdia seemed to forget there had been two serpentine creatures a second ago, giving the serpent hydra a second glance.

" 'Tissss true," said the serpent hydra, giving Zak and Dedran a friendly look. "Now hop on my back," "and lead me to your home. I am" "hungry . . ."

So they hopped on the serpent hydra's back, said a direction; and at once the serpent drove that way with great speed! Bahdia wanted to pursue them, but her belly was full and dragging to the ground. "Oof," she groaned, "I'll . . . catch up with you guys . . . later . . ."