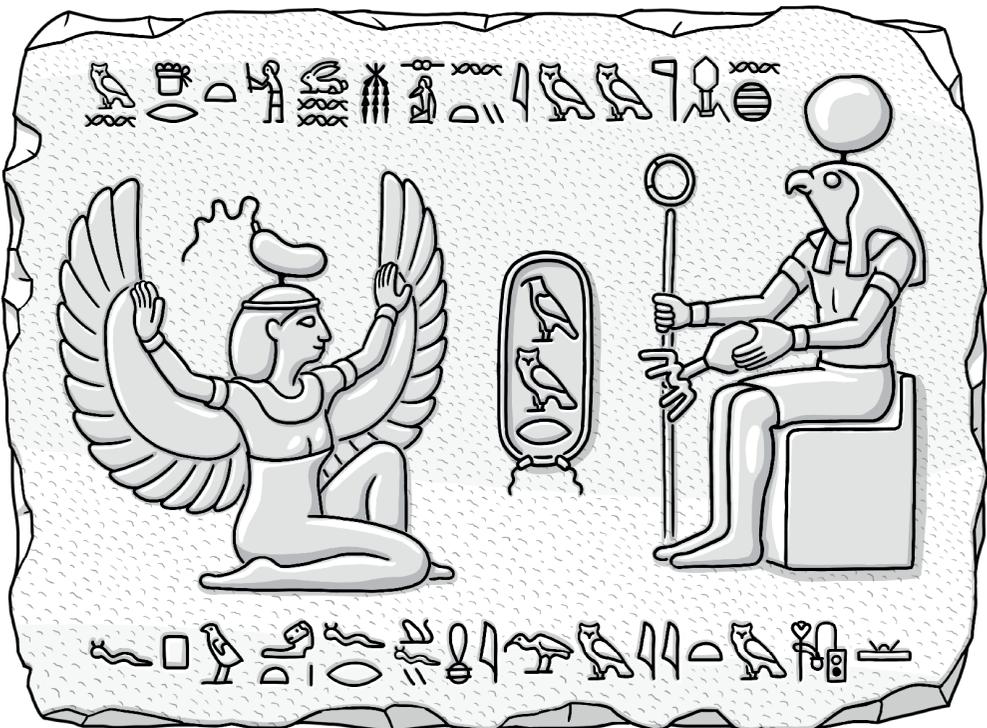


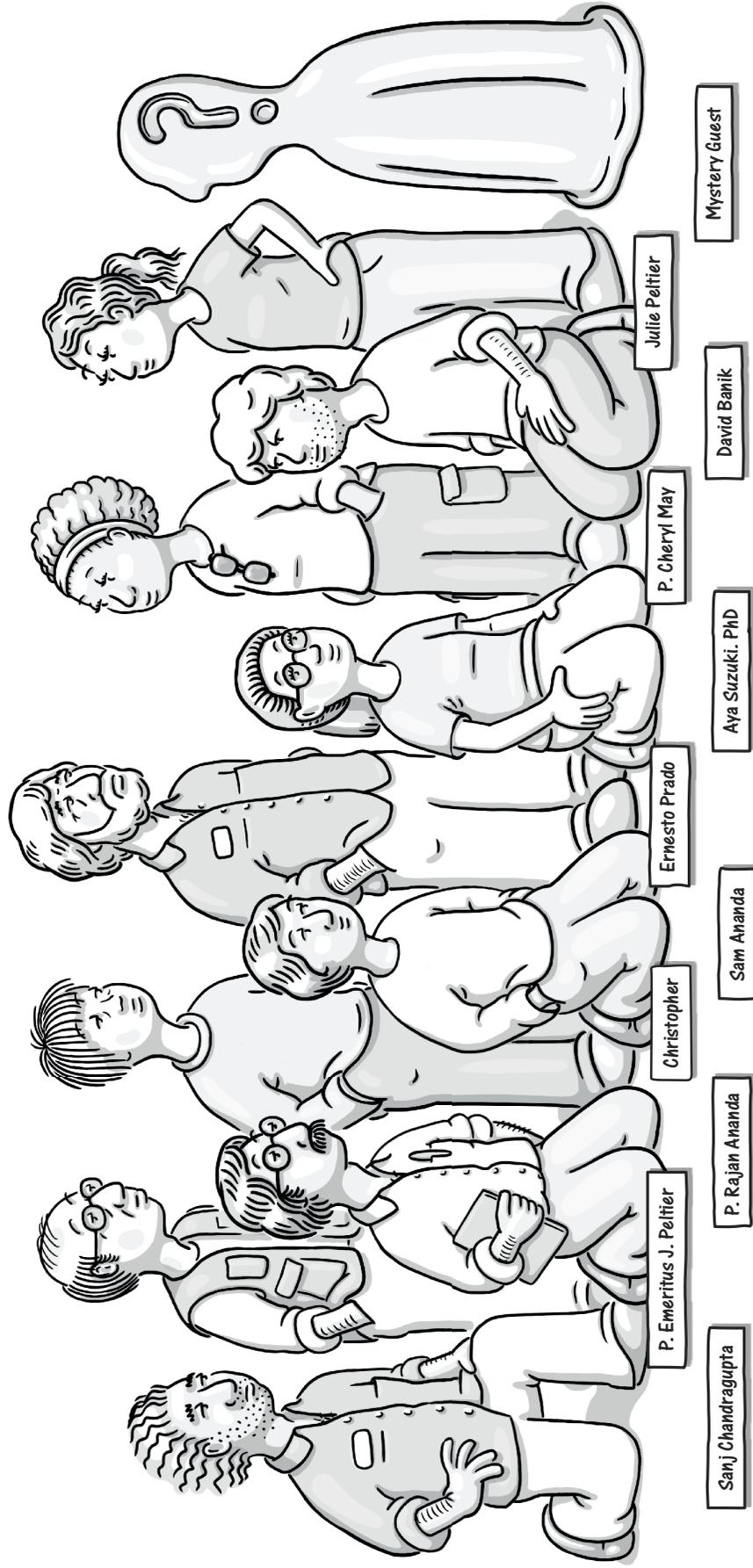
THE PRIMORDIAL B PLUS



BY CHRIS TAYLOR • VERSION 2019-021

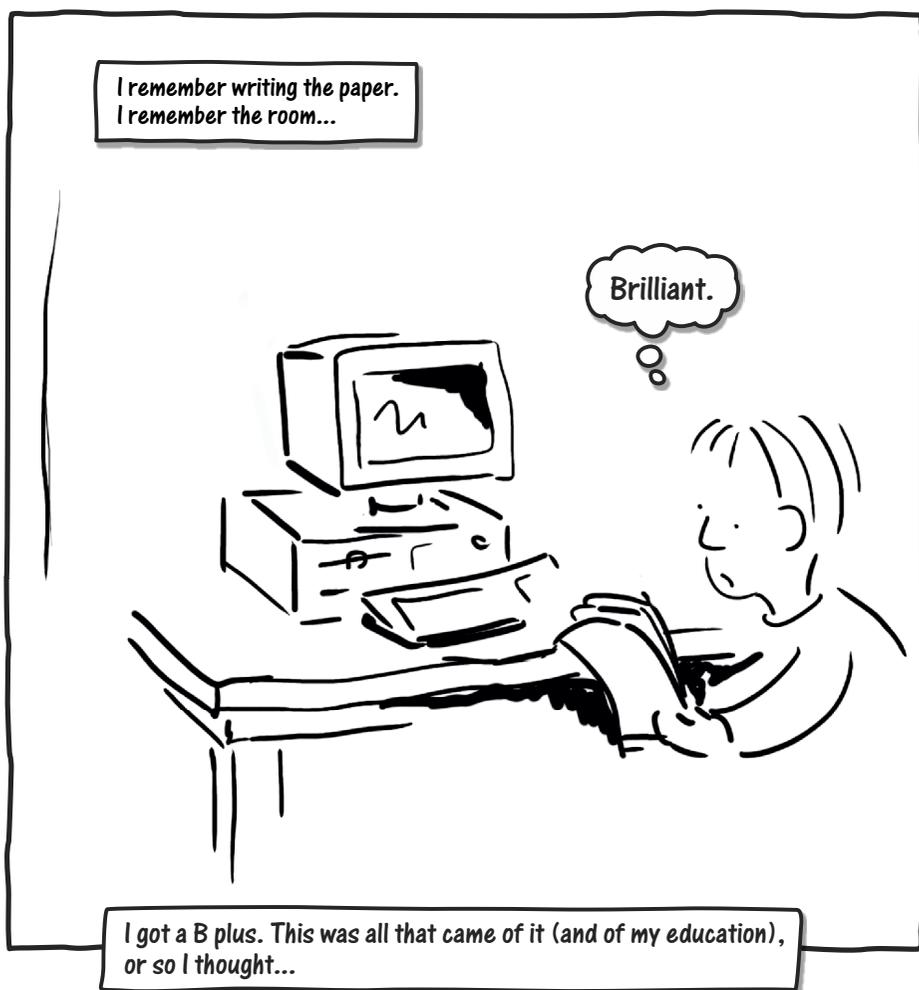


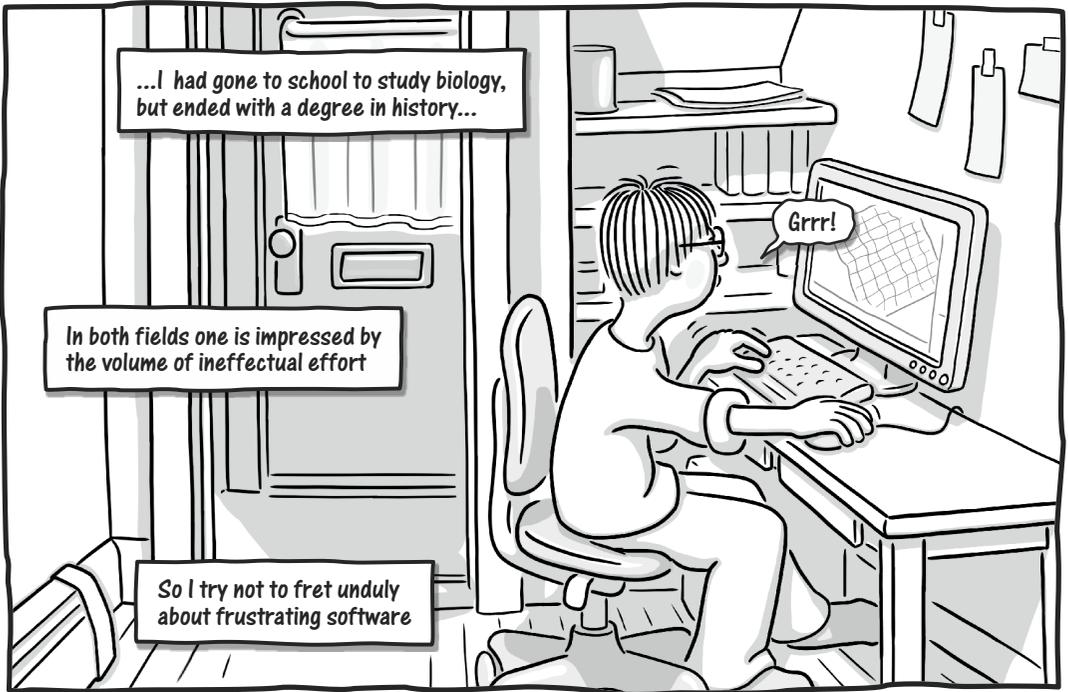
Dramatis Personae



Chapter 1

An unexpected visitor does something unexpected





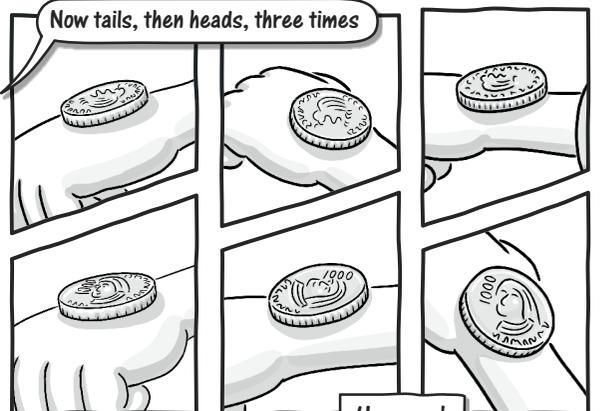
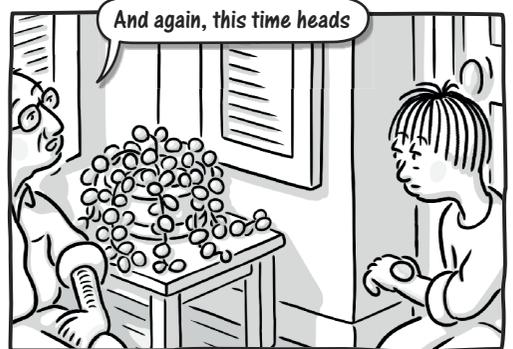
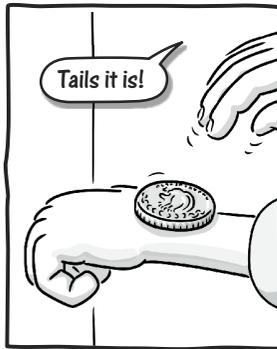
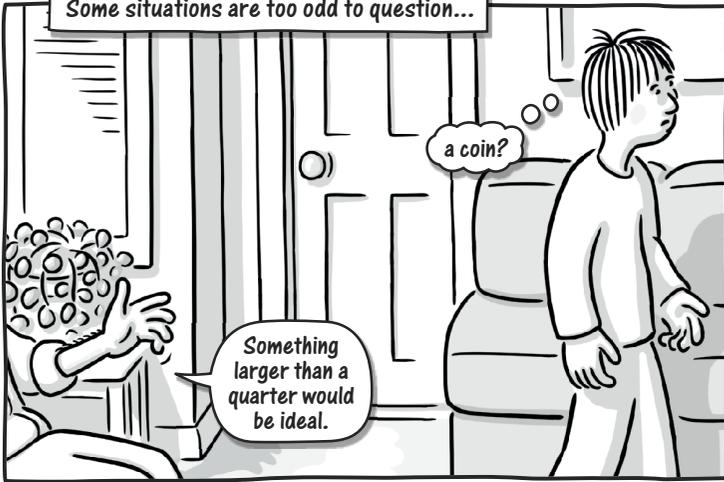


The balding elder on my porch looked oddly familiar...

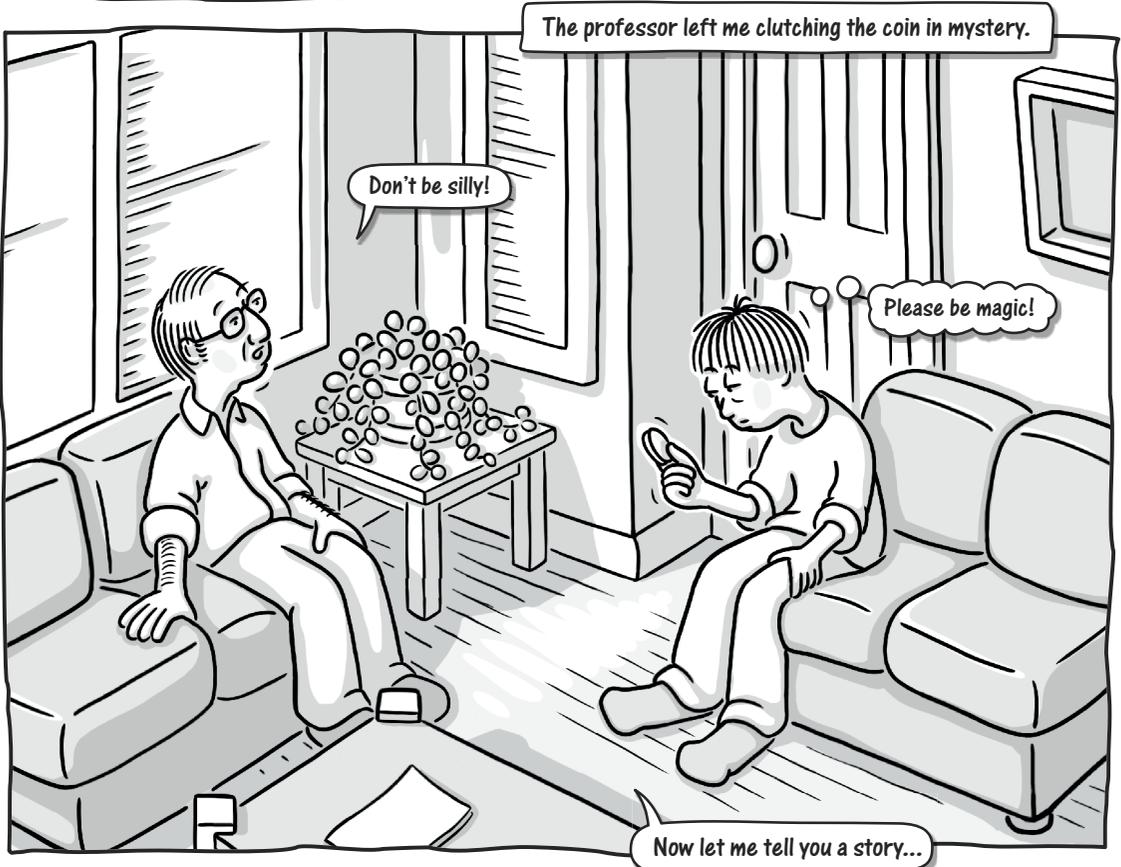
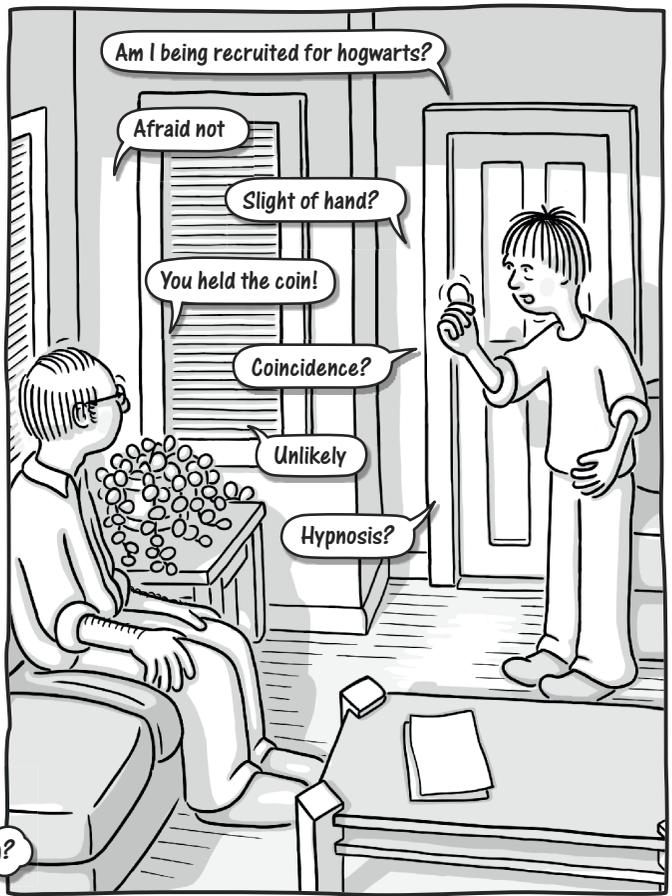
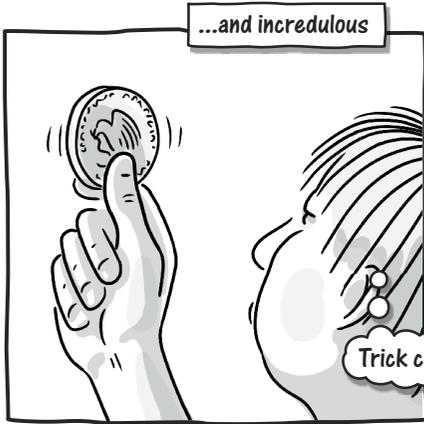




Some situations are too odd to question...



Uncanny!



Chapter 2

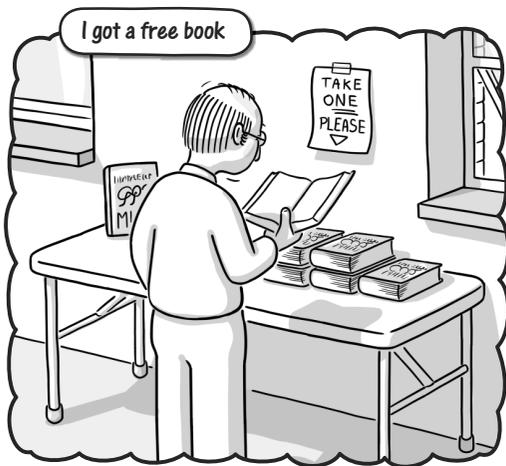
A chain of events leads to a big discovery...
Or does it?





I'm the only non-science faculty here

...at a reception for Dr Wilson, who had given our commencement address one year



I got a free book



and struck up a conversation with a bio professor

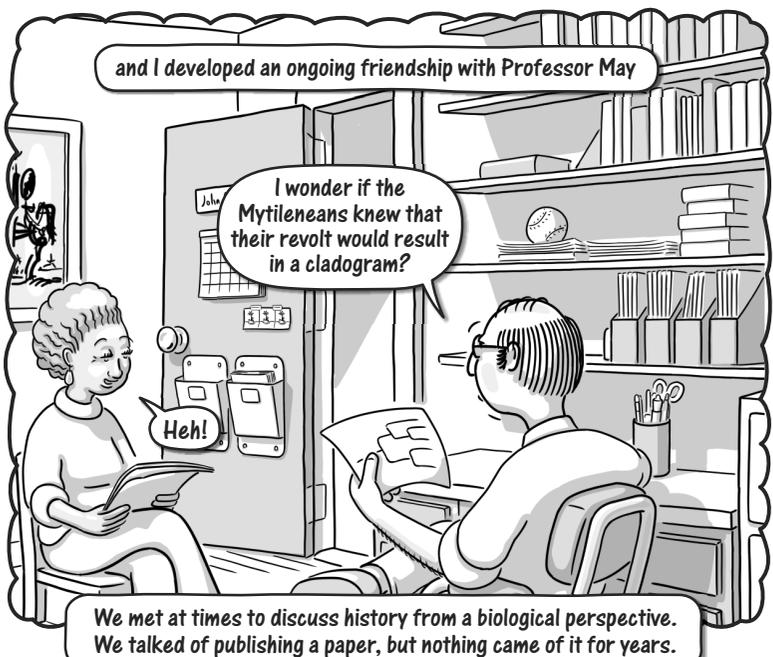
I read an interesting paper written by a bio major

It was your paper that we talked about



The book, on insect supersocieties...

found a place on a shelf



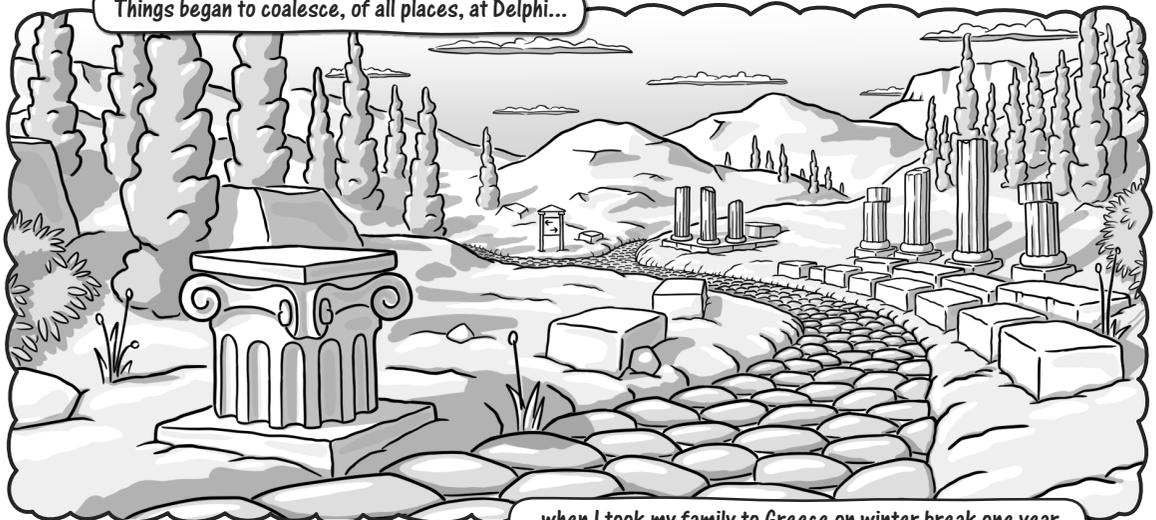
and I developed an ongoing friendship with Professor May

I wonder if the Mytileneans knew that their revolt would result in a cladogram?

Heh!

We met at times to discuss history from a biological perspective. We talked of publishing a paper, but nothing came of it for years.

Things began to coalesce, of all places, at Delphi...



...when I took my family to Greece on winter break one year

My daughter was drawn to a re-enactor dressed as a priestess

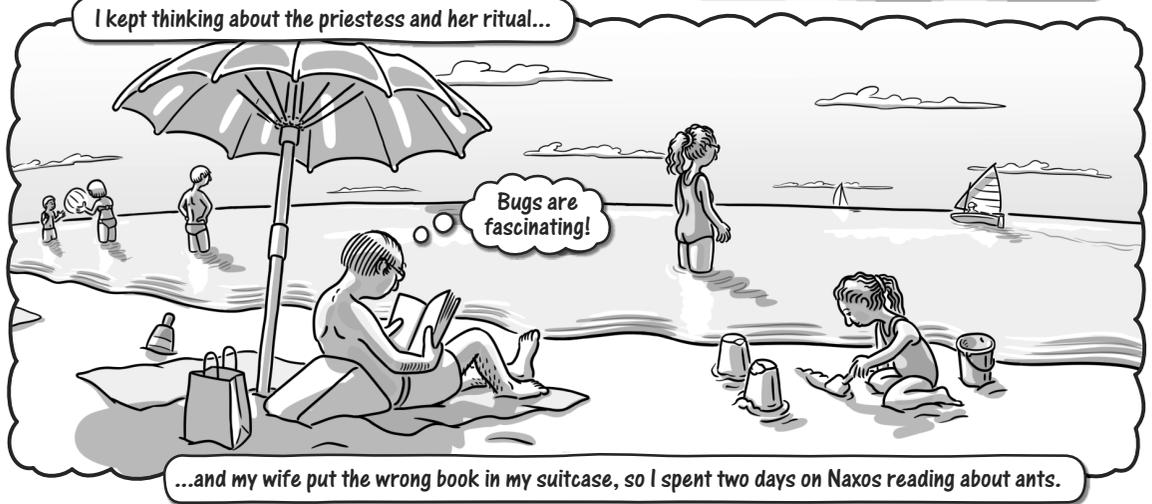


The priestess was an archaeology student...

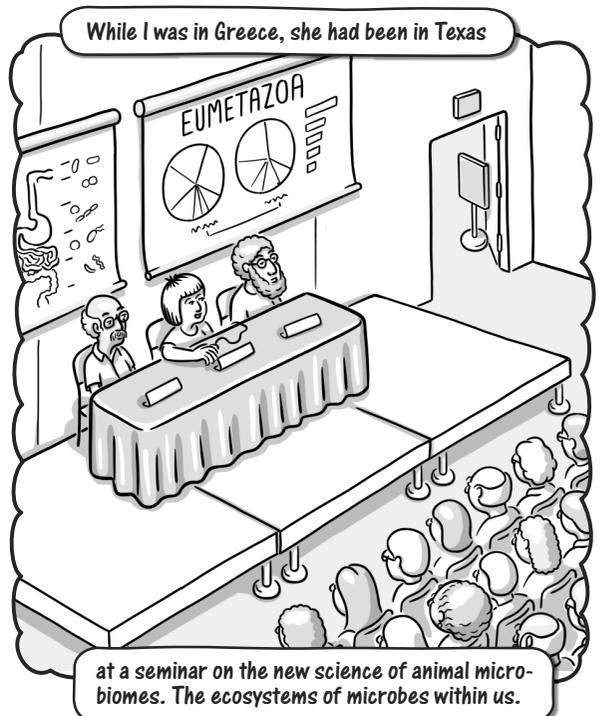
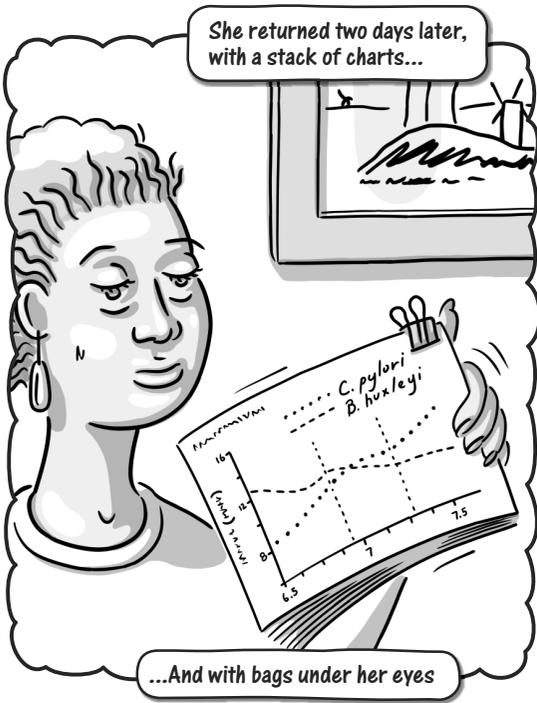


...she gave an unexpectedly detailed answer

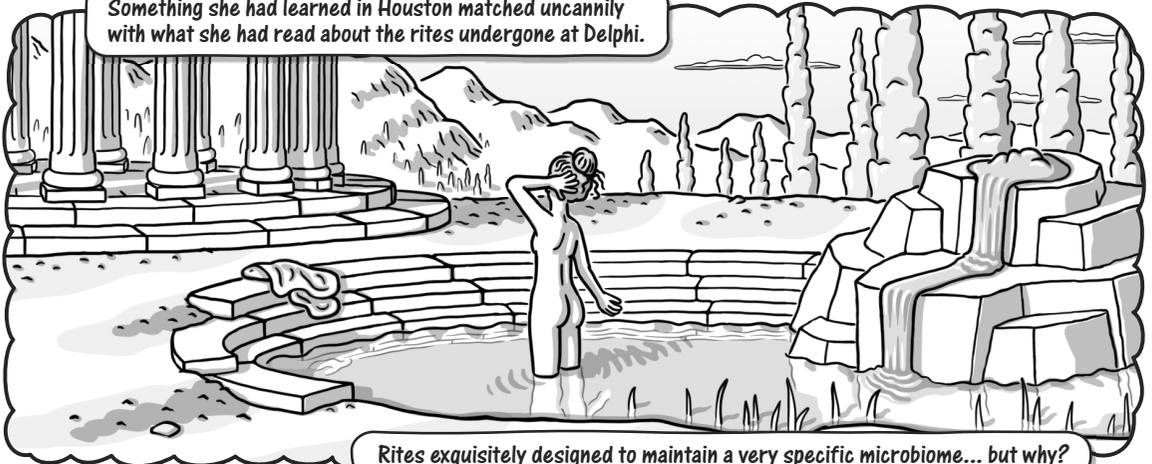
I kept thinking about the priestess and her ritual...



...and my wife put the wrong book in my suitcase, so I spent two days on Naxos reading about ants.



Something she had learned in Houston matched uncannily with what she had read about the rites undergone at Delphi.



Rites exquisitely designed to maintain a very specific microbiome... but why?

They couldn't have done better with a 21st century knowledge of microbiology!

I've got a question...



The book on ants gave me an idea...

...do microbes form such superorganisms?



...which brought it all together!

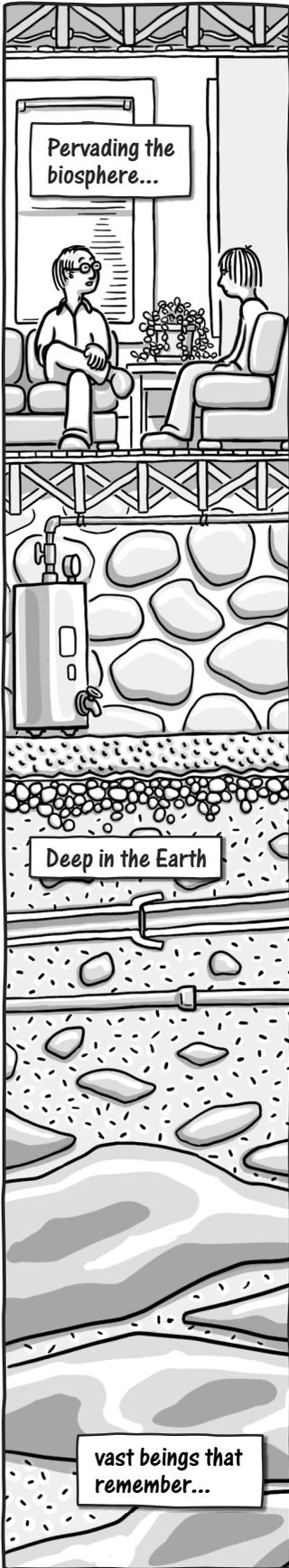
The Oracle had been directed by a prokaryotic superbeing



A real living god

Wow!

Wow indeed! As a historian, I was thrilled by the implications...

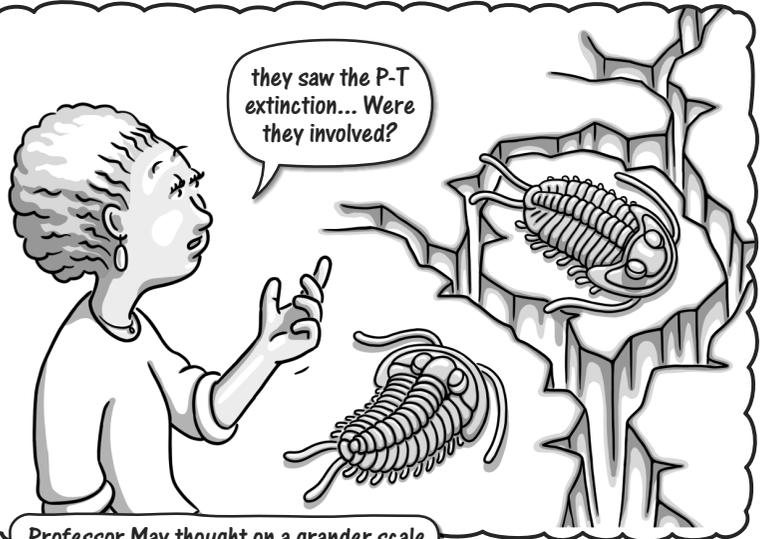


Beings for whom Thutmose crossing the Euphrates is living memory...



They can read the Indus script and Linear A

...and countless events of greater importance, that went unrecorded



they saw the P-T extinction... Were they involved?

Professor May thought on a grander scale

Fascinating... If true

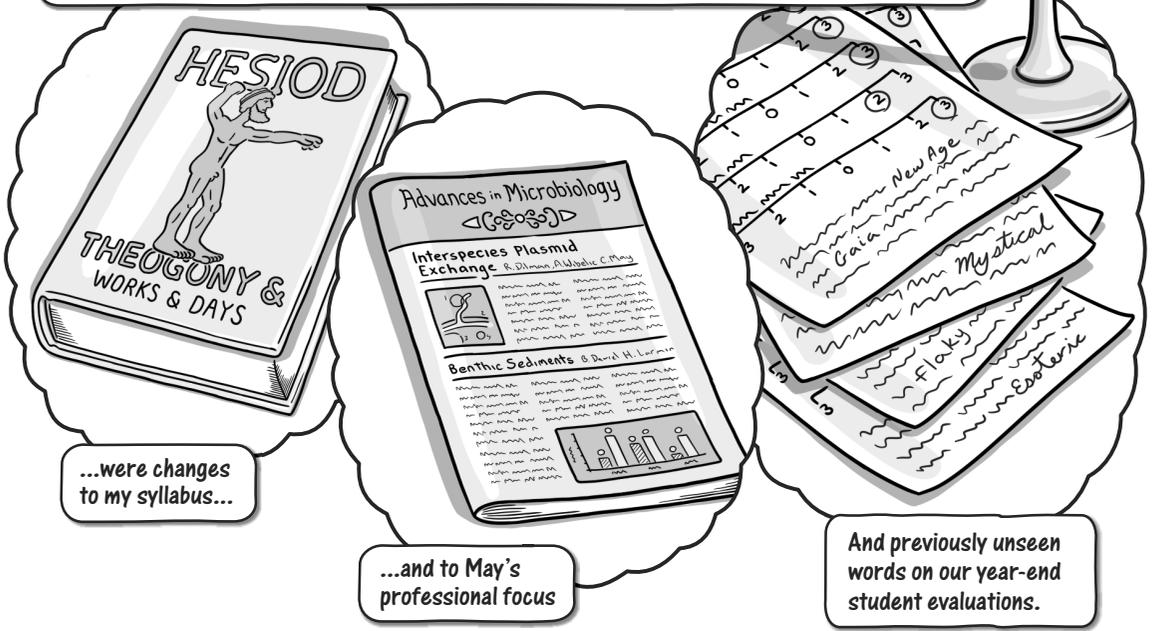


Nah!

Must be coincidence

But such things don't happen in the lives of liberal arts professors...

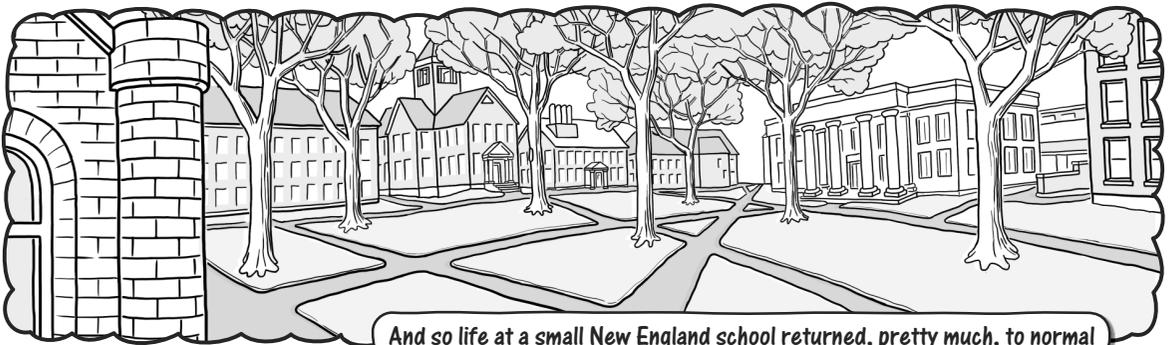
Decades of training in incredulity took hold, and so the only immediate results of this revelation...



...were changes to my syllabus...

...and to May's professional focus

And previously unseen words on our year-end student evaluations.



And so life at a small New England school returned, pretty much, to normal



Just two more eccentric professors on campus

Chapter 3

*Mathematics sheds light on our discovery,
and then uncovers a surprising twist.*



Some years later, May was doing a study...

Hey Raj, can you look at this data for me?

...Stress induced spore formation in *Apibacillus lignax!*

scintillating!

and she recruited help from the math department

Professor Ananda, by coincidence, traded securities in his spare time...

That's odd

It appears these bacteria sporulate in response to the stock market!

And as a result, he noticed an unexpected correlation.

May was impressed by his powers of observation

But the following day she saw...

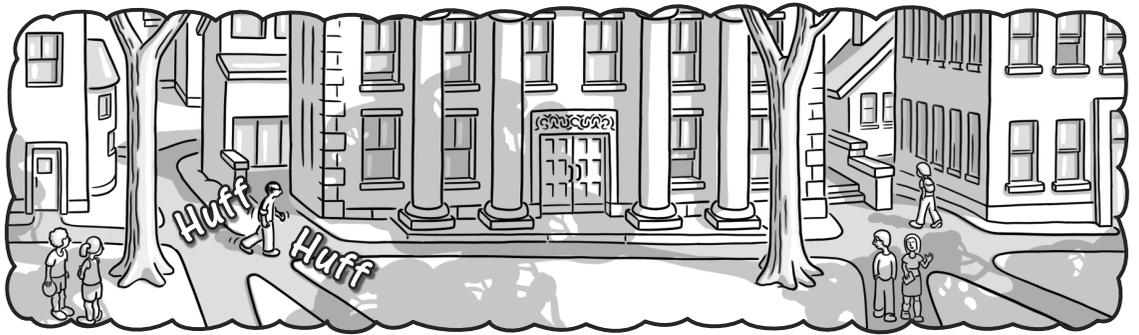
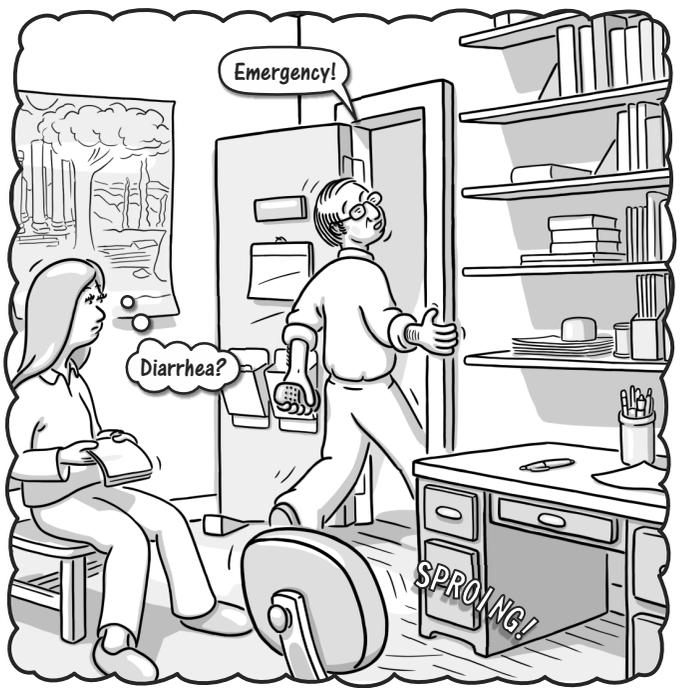
The dates...

Wait... they aren't responding to markets...

markets are responding to THEM!

That he had failed to observe one thing...

And so for a short time, Cheryl May was alone with most significant bit of information ever known to man



the results of general disclosure seemed unpredictable...



...so we opted to tell only Professor Ananda...

...who took the news with surprising calm

Now that I can reliably make money trading securities

I no longer care...



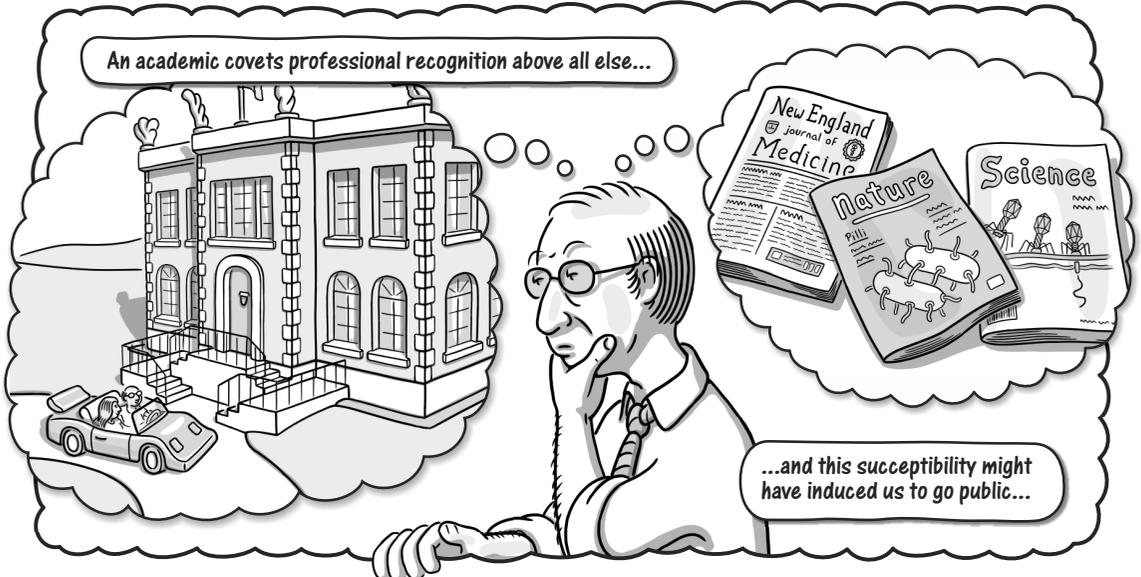
He reflected on psychological paradox...



rooster crows at midnight

...and found humor in the atmosphere of intrigue

An academic covets professional recognition above all else...



...and this susceptibility might have induced us to go public...

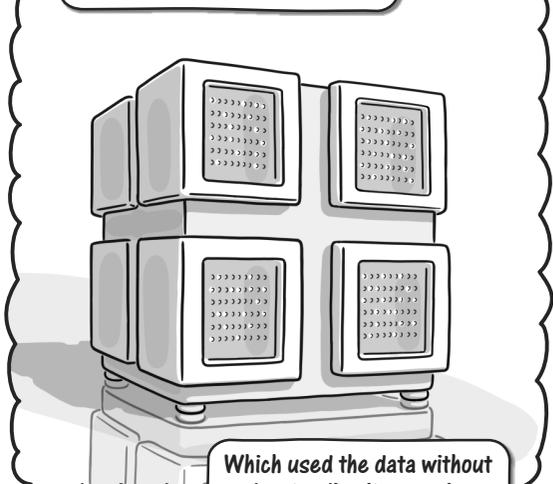
...had not another surprise appeared in the data



...Was it greedy microbiologists?

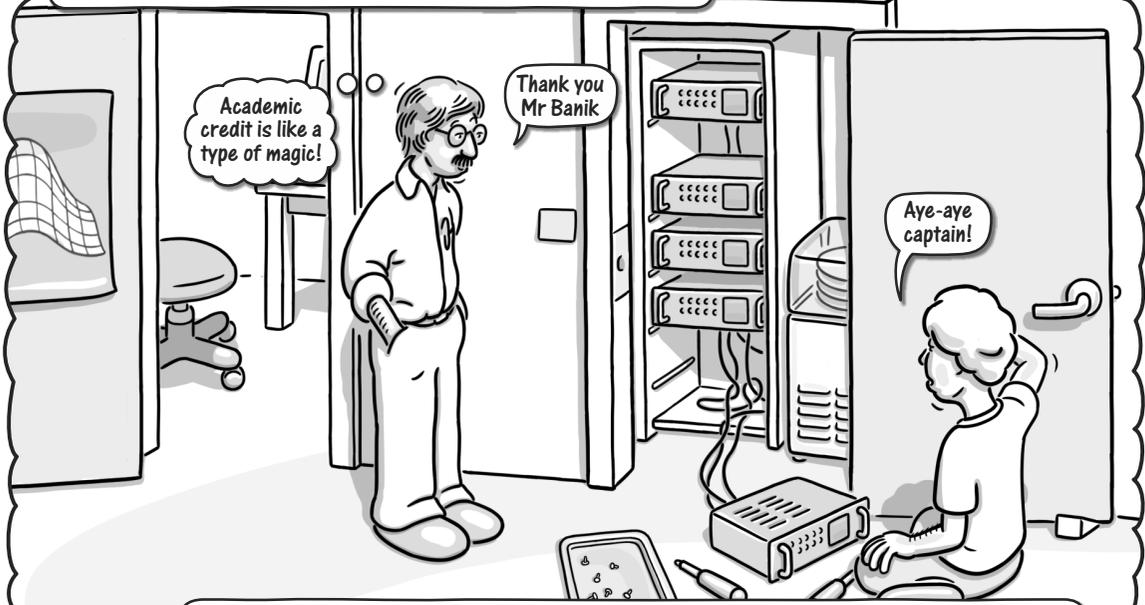


Or perhaps a computer algorithm

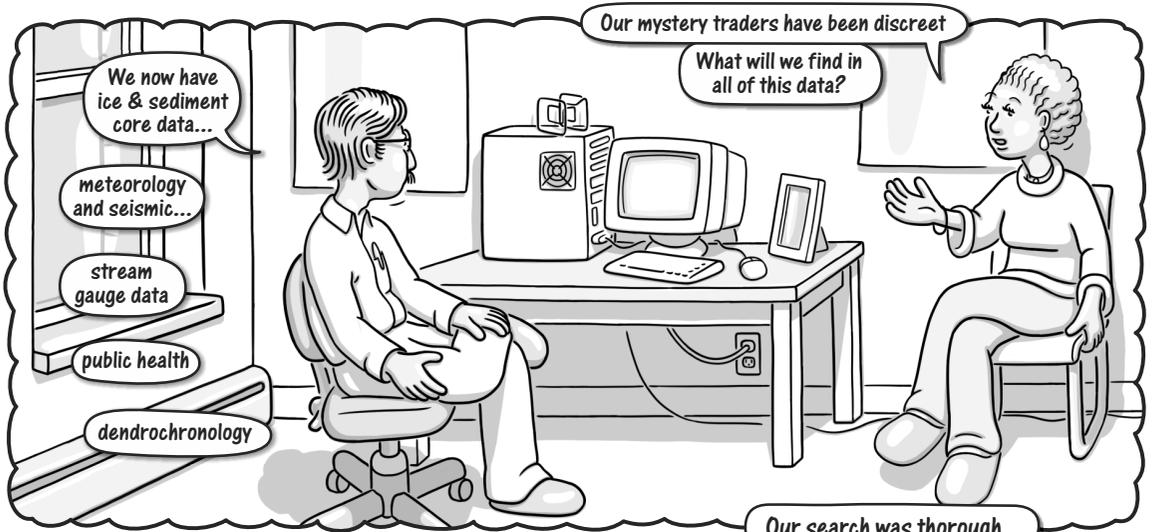


Which used the data without understanding its meaning

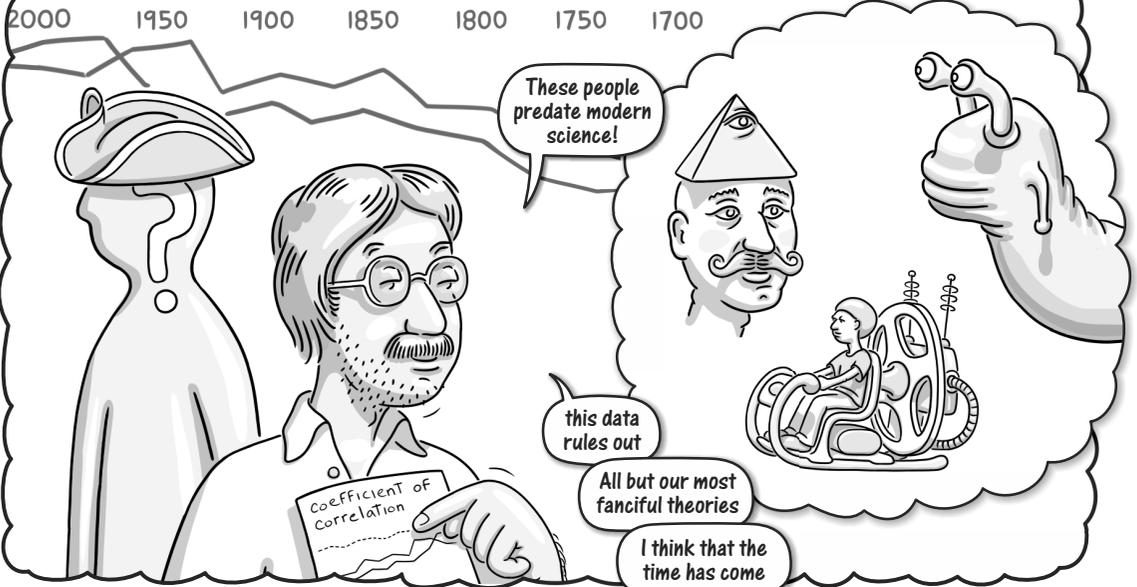
To get closer to the truth, we would need a more sophisticated setup



So the closet outside of Rajan's office became the most advanced computing center on campus



and what we found was thoroughly unexpected!

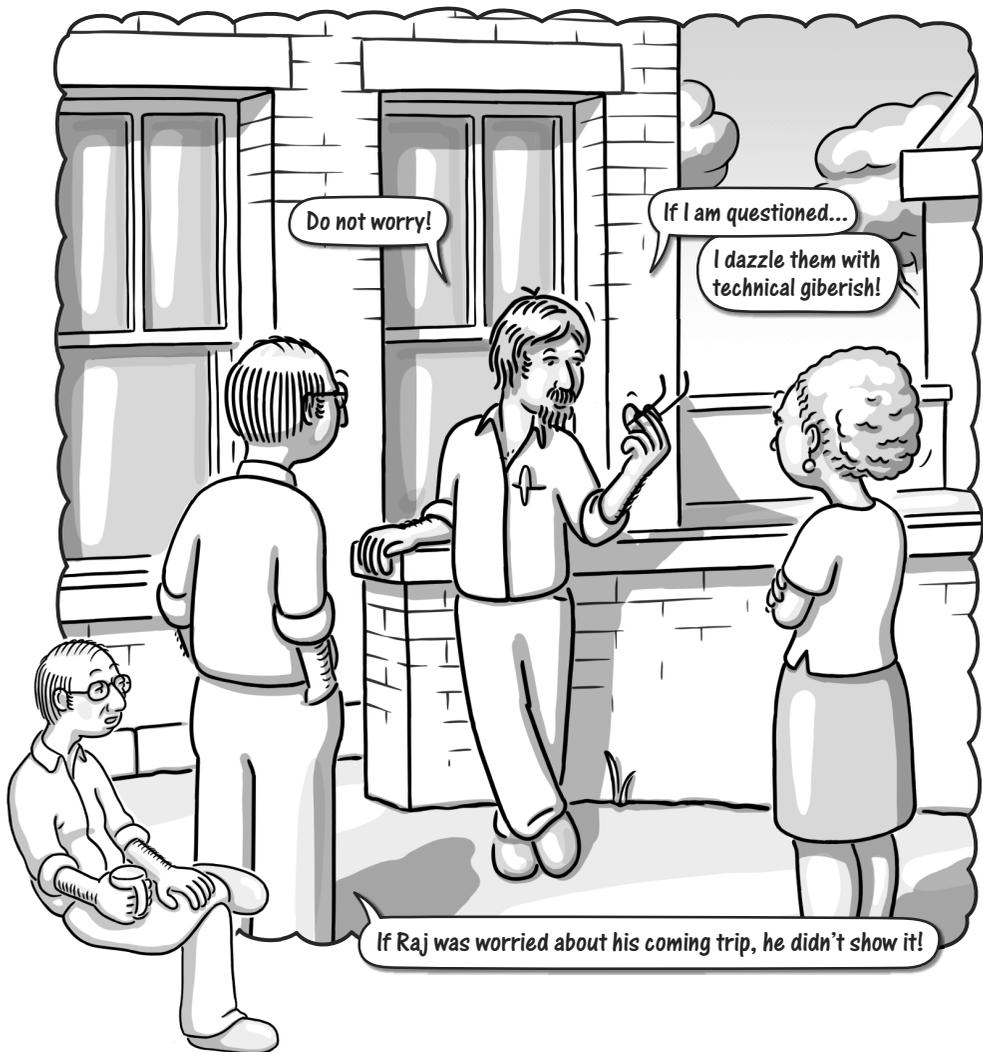


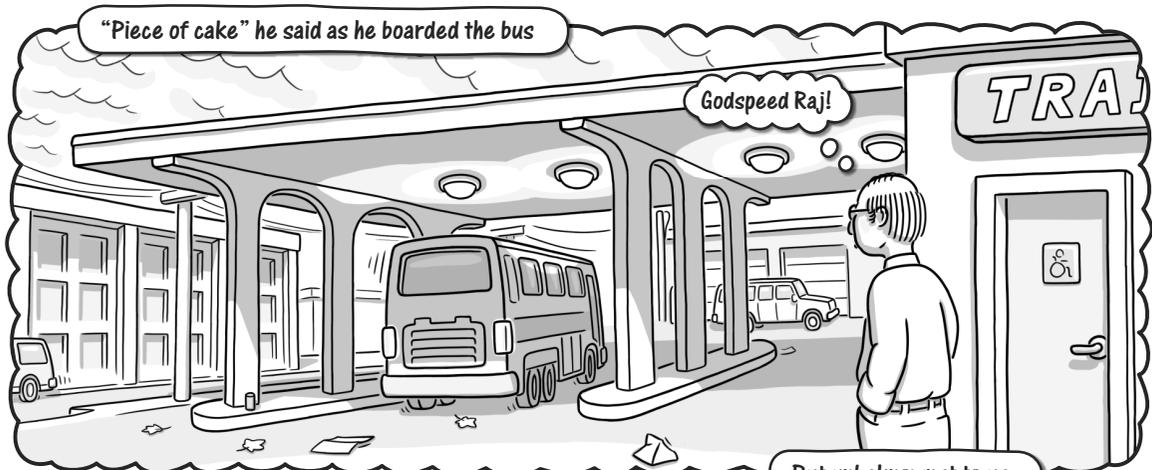
to sally forth from the ivory tower



Chapter 4

Rajan goes to investigate the mysterious securities traders,
and leaves his companions with a mystery

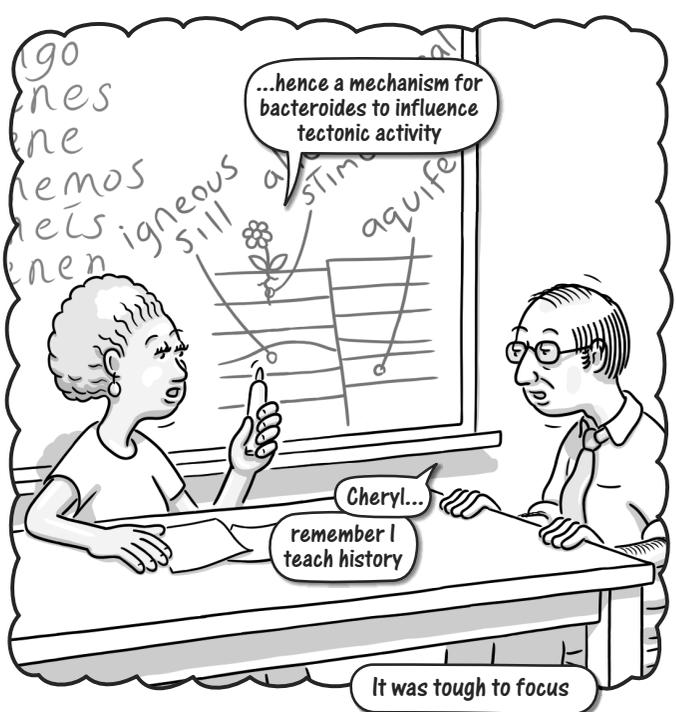


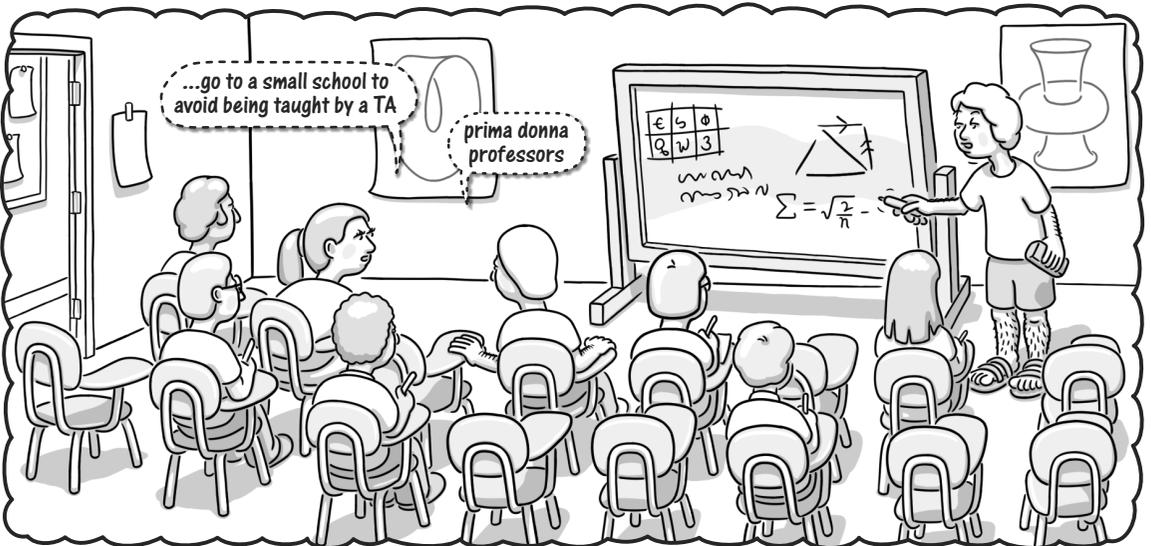
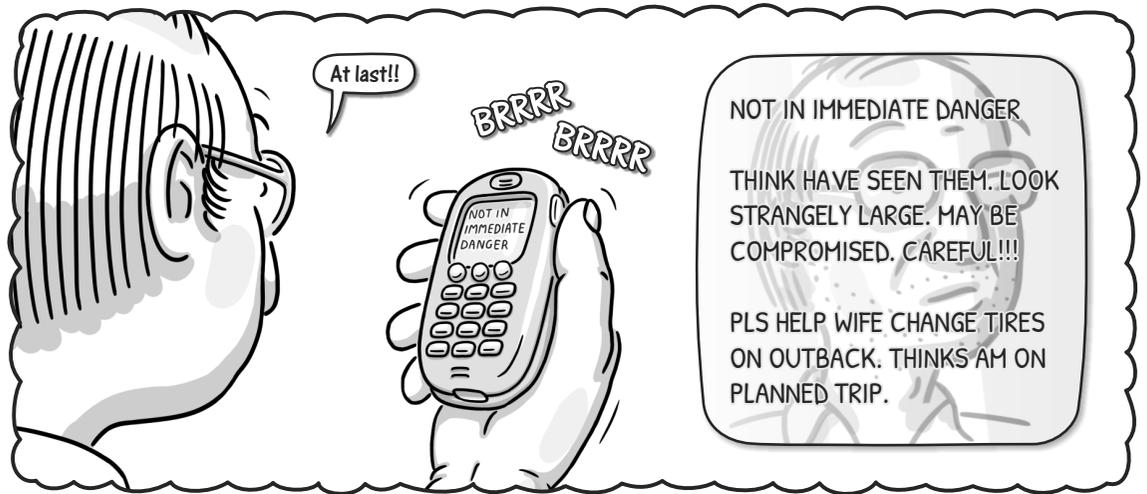


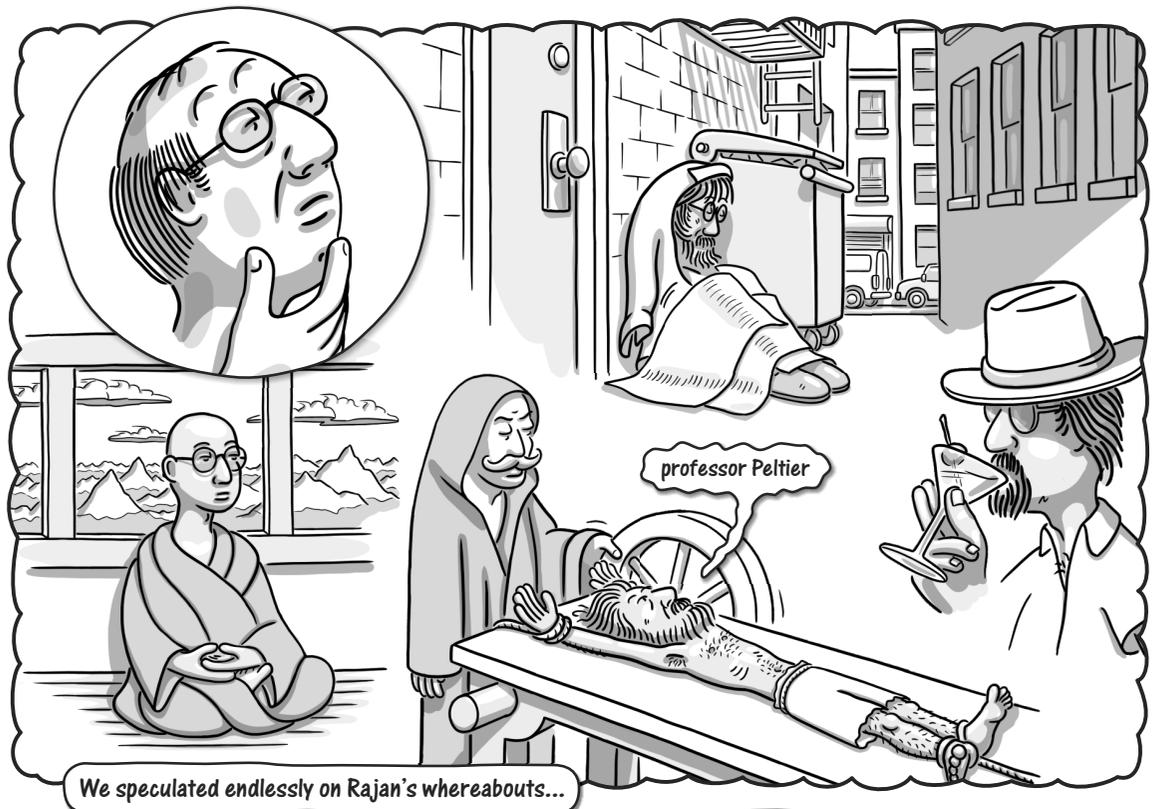
But unbeknownst to us...



...the hours passed





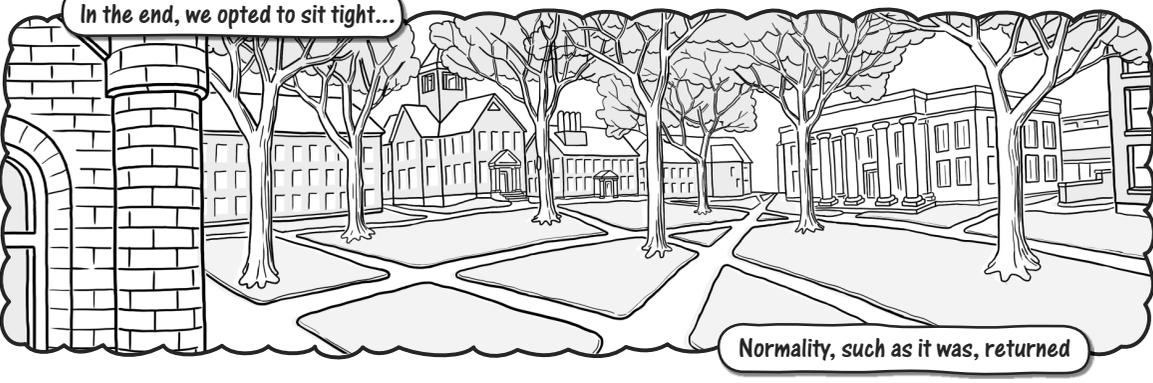


We speculated endlessly on Rajan's whereabouts...



...and on his last, cryptic text message

In the end, we opted to sit tight...



Normality, such as it was, returned

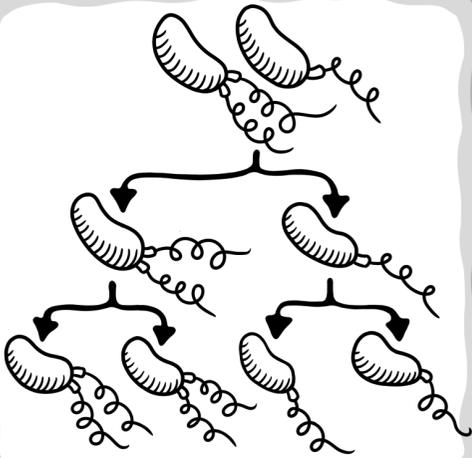
Chapter 5

Professor May presents the results of her research
to the only audience available.



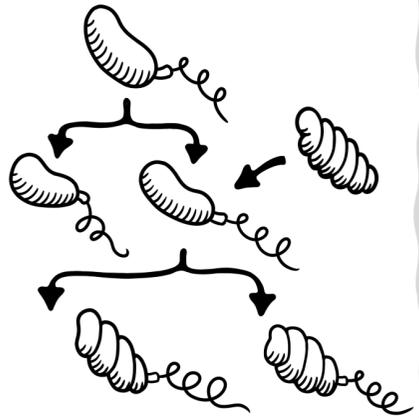


It was long assumed that all genetic inheritance...



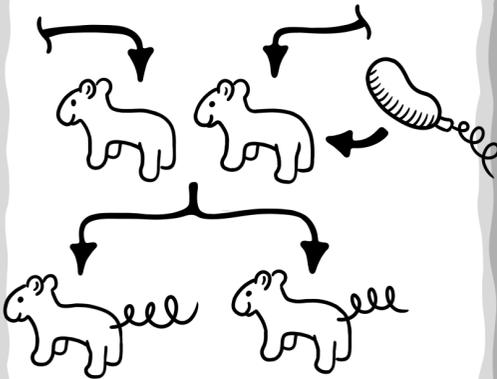
...occurred between parents and their offspring

Then it was found that among microbes...



"lateral" or "horizontal" gene transfers occur. Events which happen quite often in fact!

And recently, cases of "lateral gene transfer"...

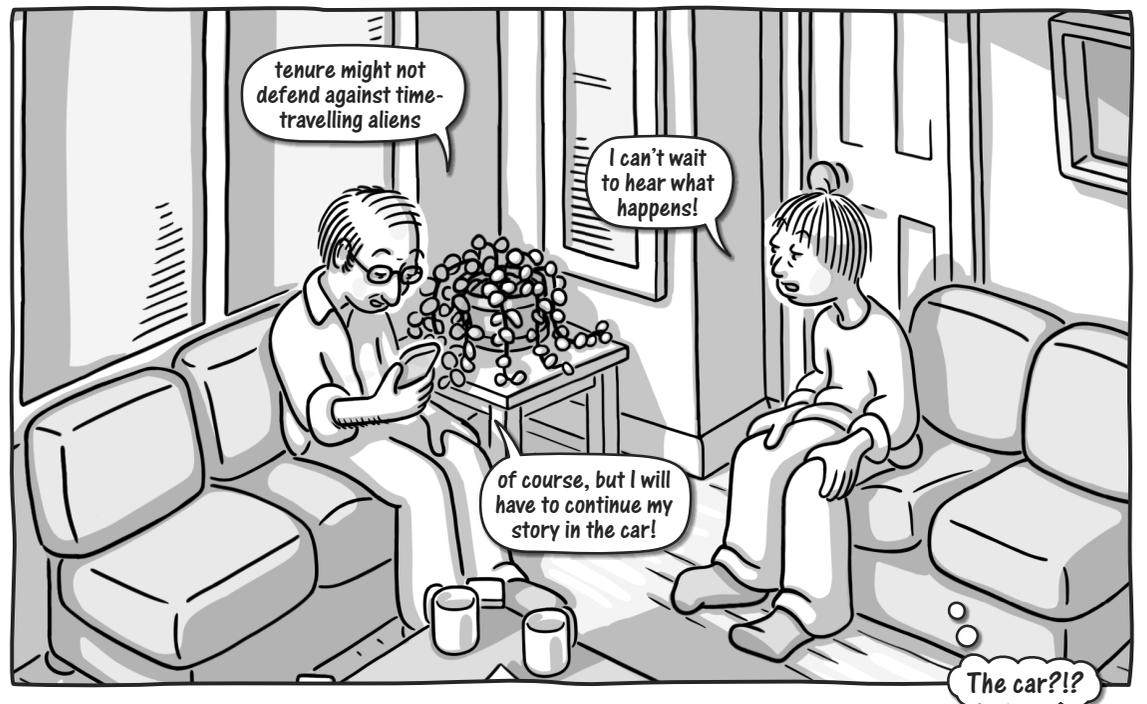
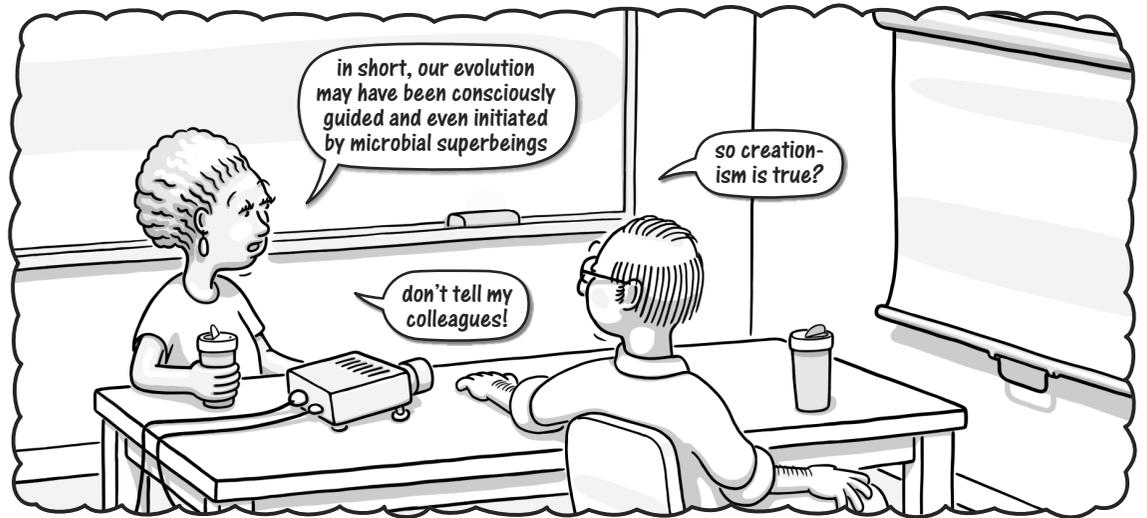


...have been seen to occur between microbes and multicellular organisms (like us)!

remarkable findings on their own, however...



...they take on added significance when you know the microbes to be sentient!

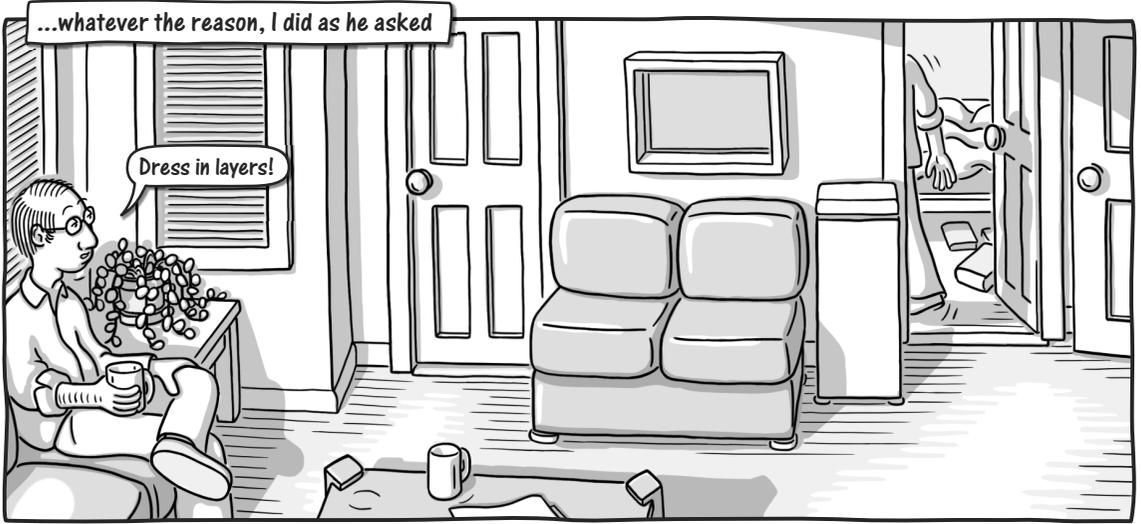


Chapter 6

*It turns out that we are in a rush to get somewhere.
Frenzied preparations and the beginning of a journey.*



Perhaps it was the professor's age and position, his manner, or perhaps it was the business with the coin...





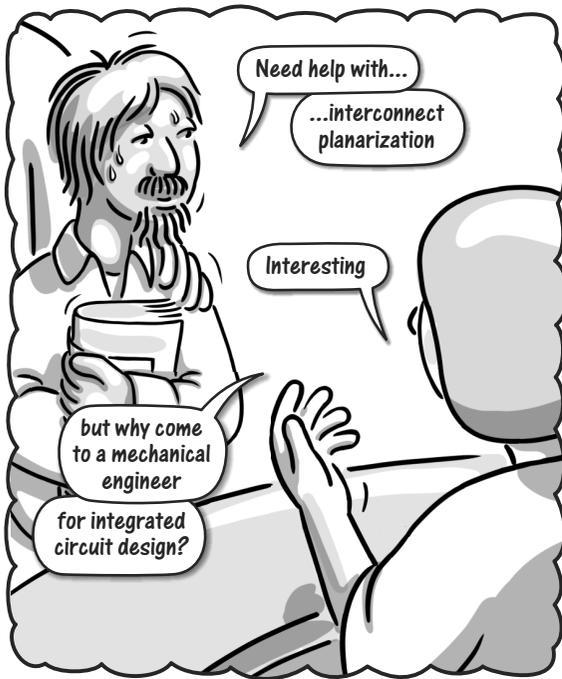
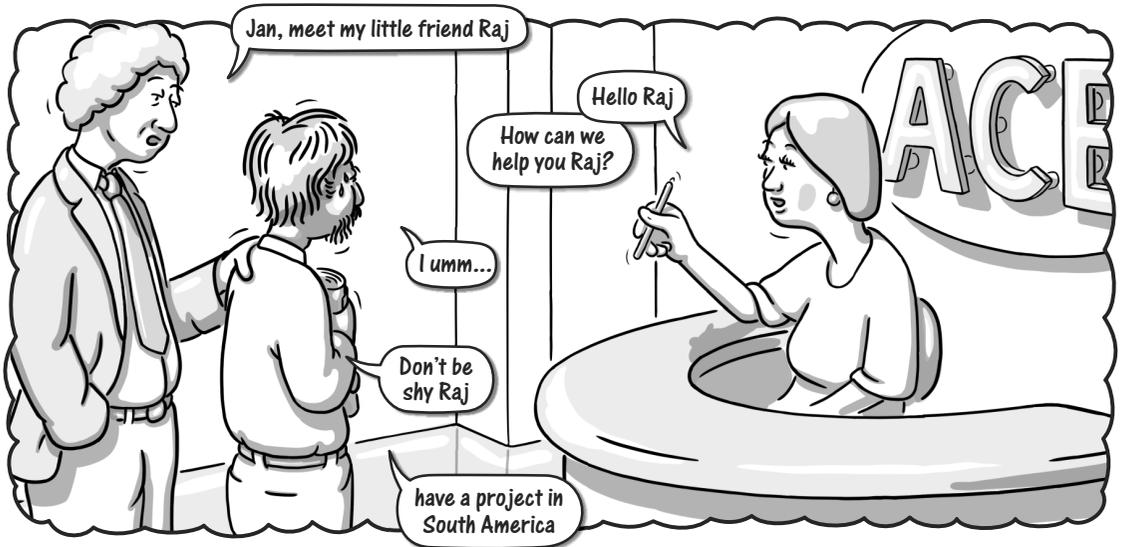
Chapter 7

Rajan tells the story of his trip to Manhattan







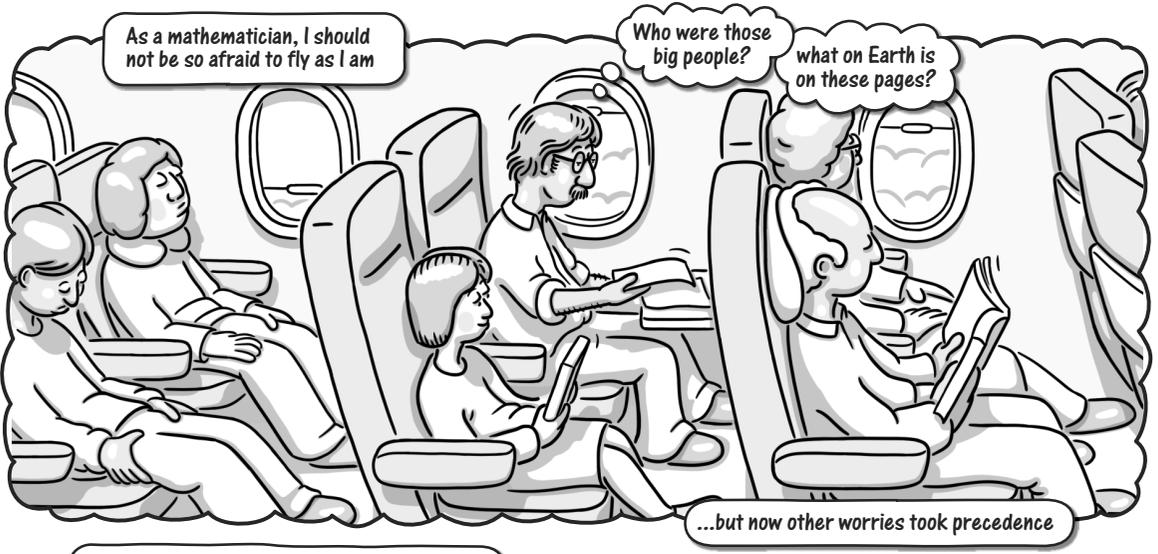
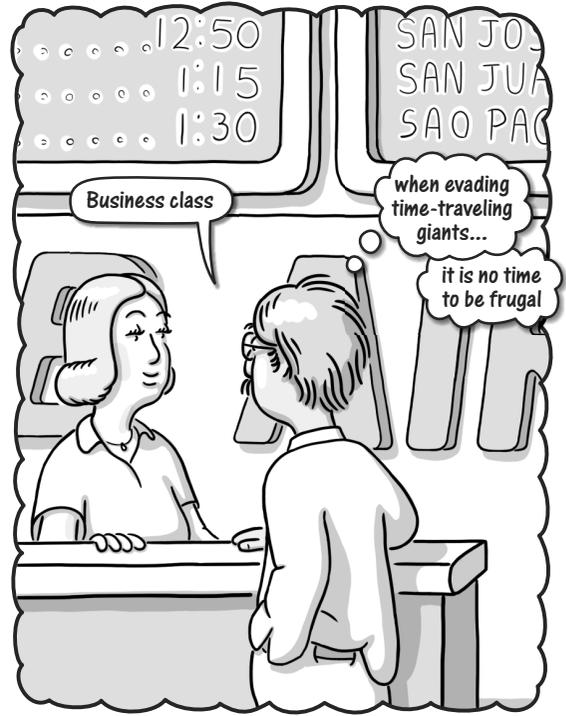


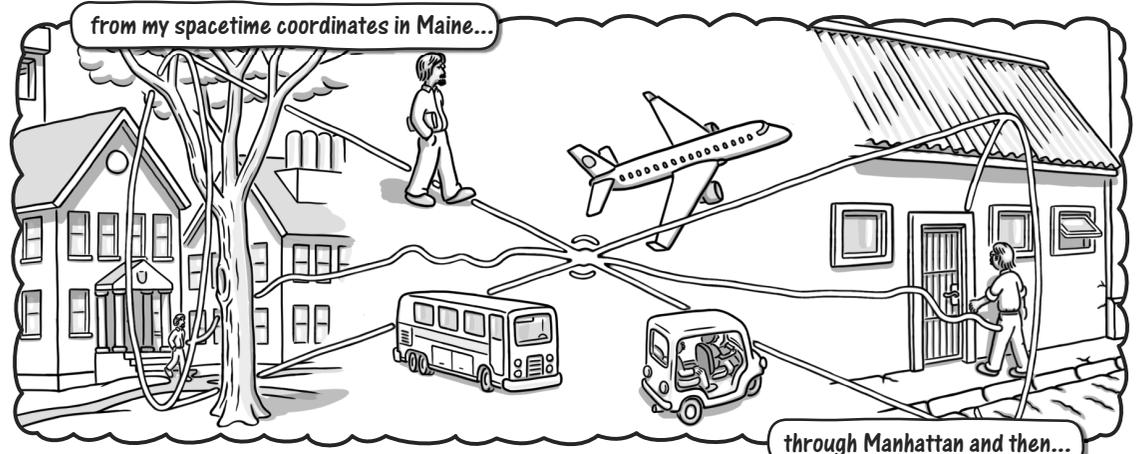
Chapter 8

Rajan seeks help abroad.









from my spacetime coordinates in Maine...

through Manhattan and then...



Rajan!

Sanji!

...to the home of a childhood friend



Were you surprised to hear from me?

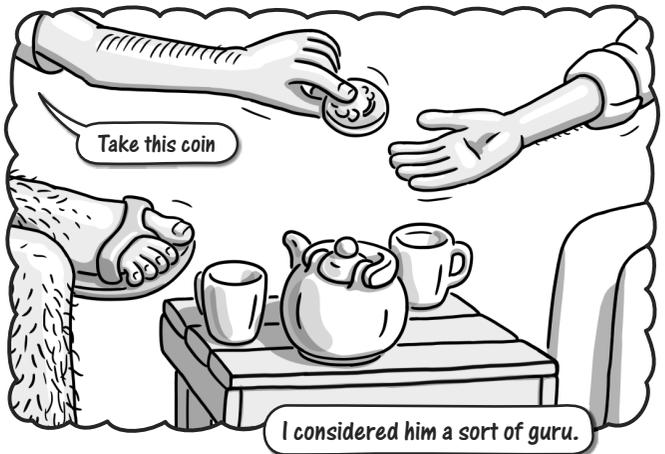
Actually, I wasn't

He had left a job with a shipbreaking company for a more quiet life



Not surprised? Why?

As quiet a life as is possible in Delhi.



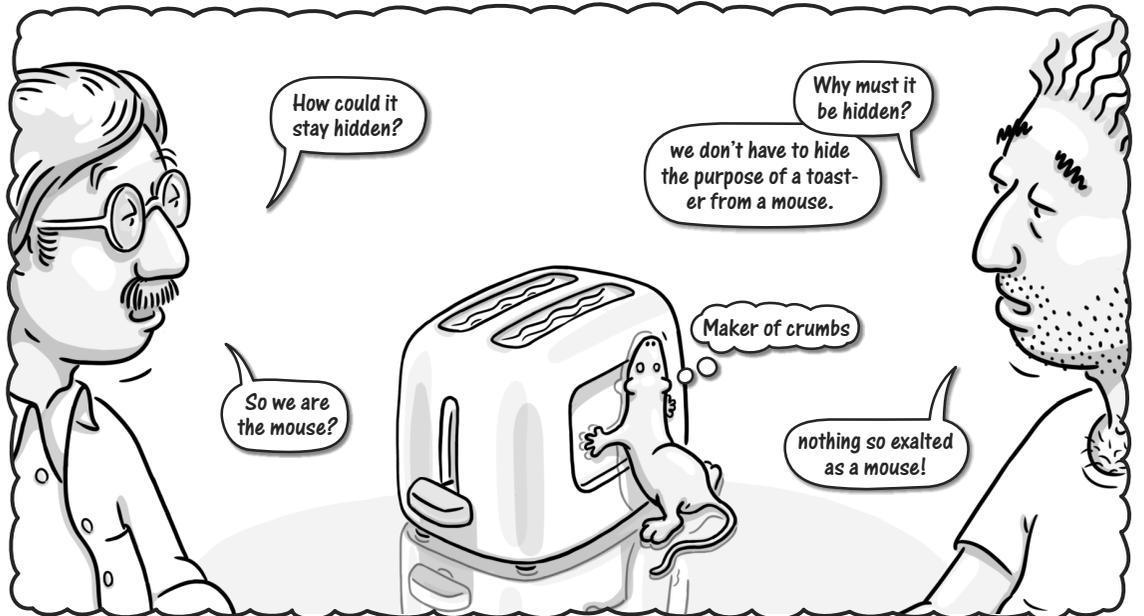
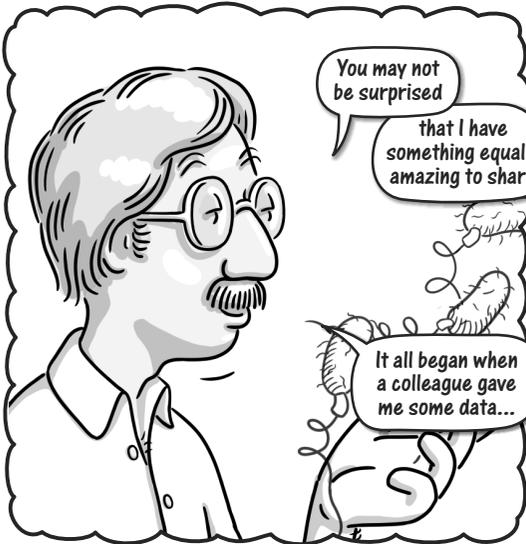
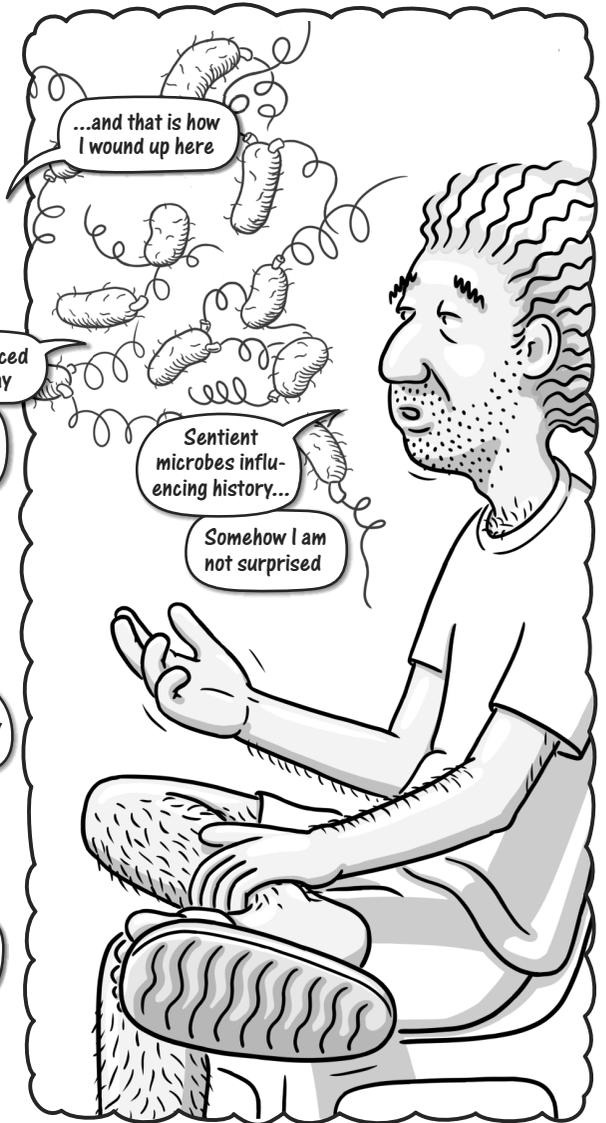
Take this coin

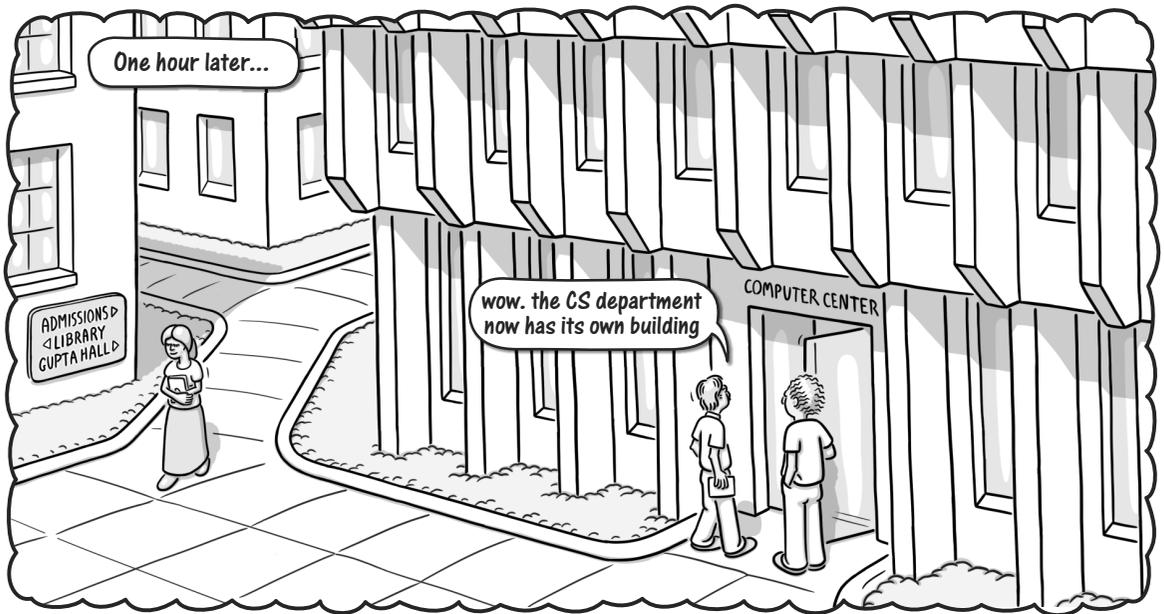
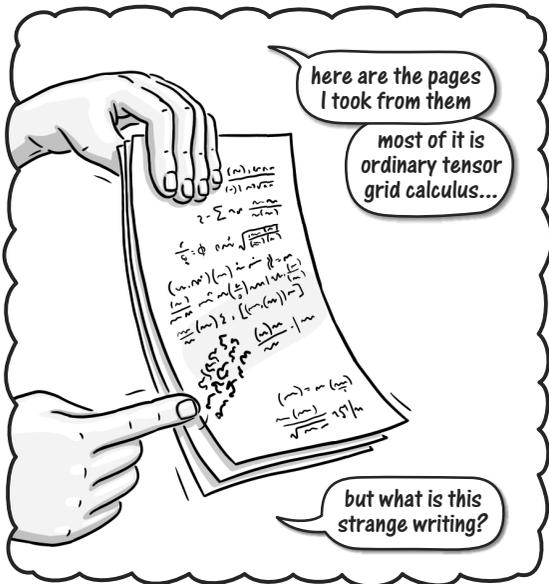
I considered him a sort of guru.

Chapter 9

Rajan's journey yields knowledge, and then adversity.









Dr Suzuki is a linguist, visiting from Tokyo



We will assume a Dravidian language

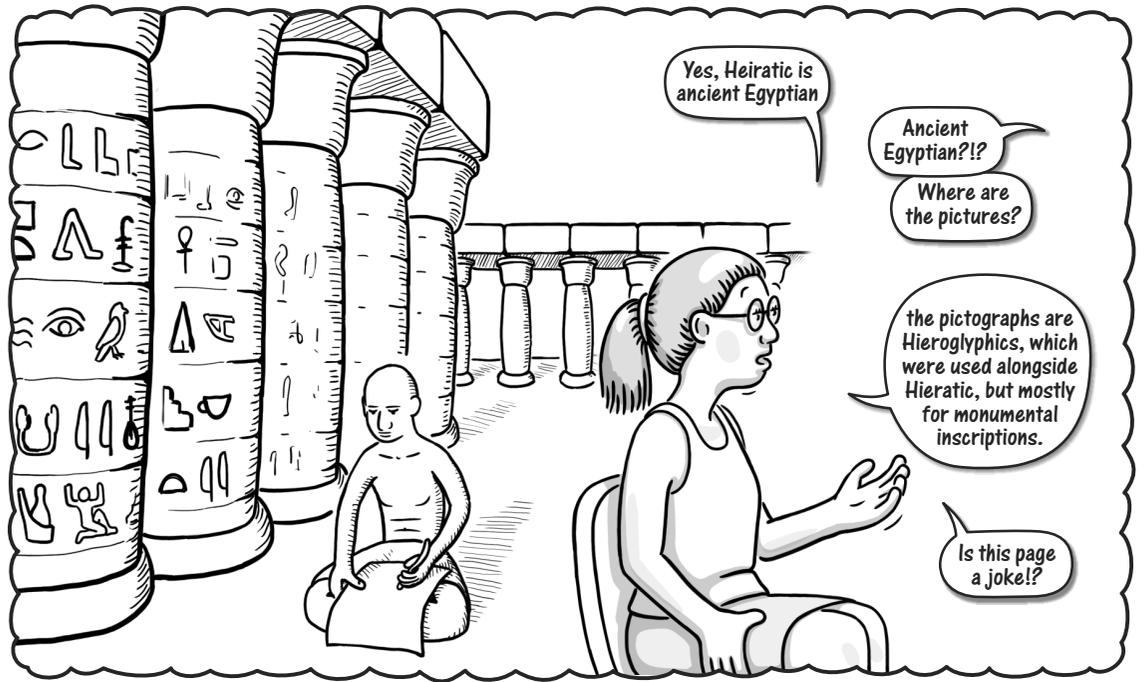


This is hieratic



Hieratic??

that was fast!



Yes, Heiratic is ancient Egyptian

Ancient Egyptian?!?

Where are the pictures?

the pictographs are Hieroglyphics, which were used alongside Hieratic, but mostly for monumental inscriptions.

Is this page a joke!?

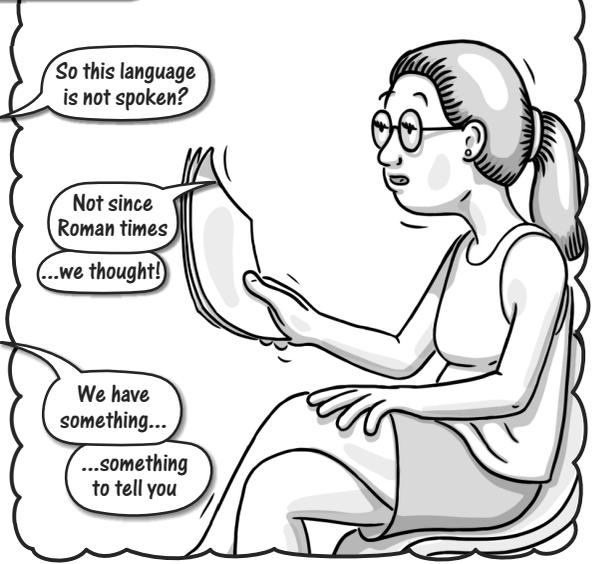
They learned something about the age of the big people



Why would it be a joke?

Few people know Hieratic well, and I know of most...

And none is that good at math!



So this language is not spoken?

Not since Roman times...we thought!

We have something...

...something to tell you

And Dr. Suzuki became the next person to learn what we knew...



wow!!

Eventually they got her to stop flipping the coin...



Did the big people look Egyptian?

They seemed to be from all backgrounds

Their size was all they had in common

In a few thousand years they've gotten around!



Can you read their writing?

I know someone who can...

But he's very tall...

...and they decided to learn Hieratic

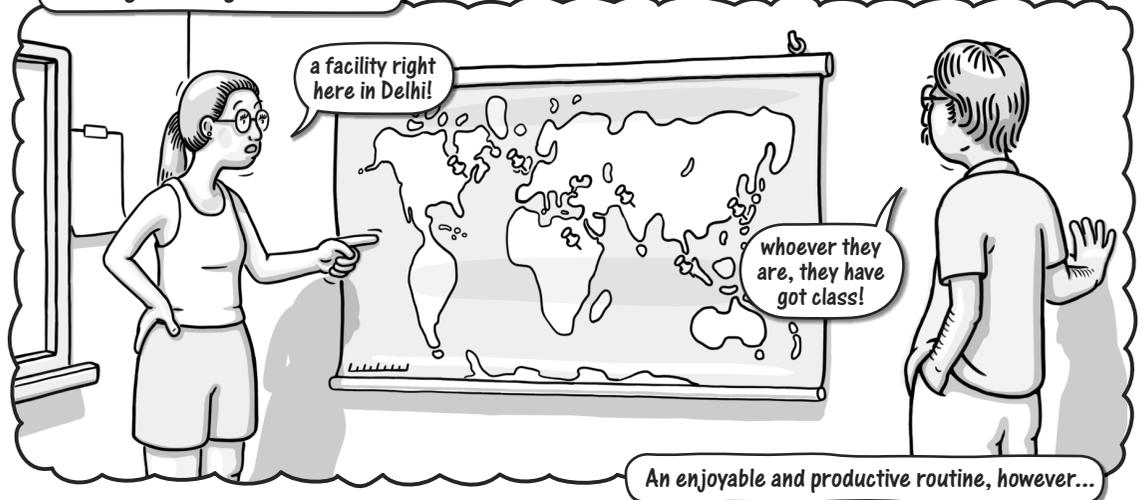
They studied the language. Dr Suzuki became fluent



Rajan's family joined him



...and nights were given to research



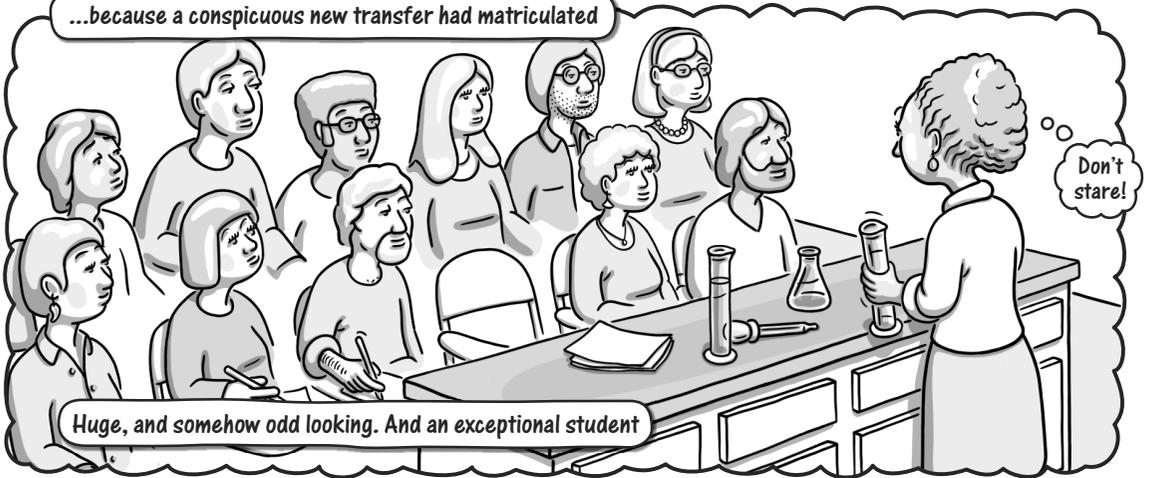


Chapter 10

A visitor appears on campus, and an exploration of the unexplained coin-flipping abilities.



...because a conspicuous new transfer had matriculated



Huge, and somehow odd looking. And an exceptional student

And there was the issue of the coin



When did that start?

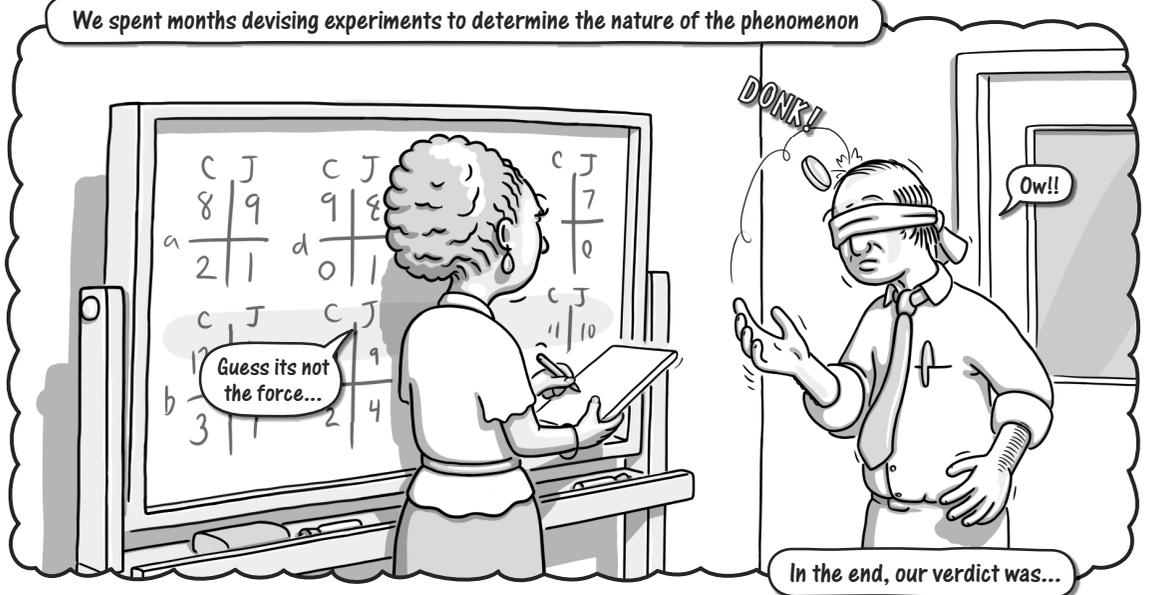
a phenomenon we had learned of because Rajan's friend was the sort of man who...

...spent time trying to move objects with his mind



Imagine how he felt when he succeeded!

We spent months devising experiments to determine the nature of the phenomenon

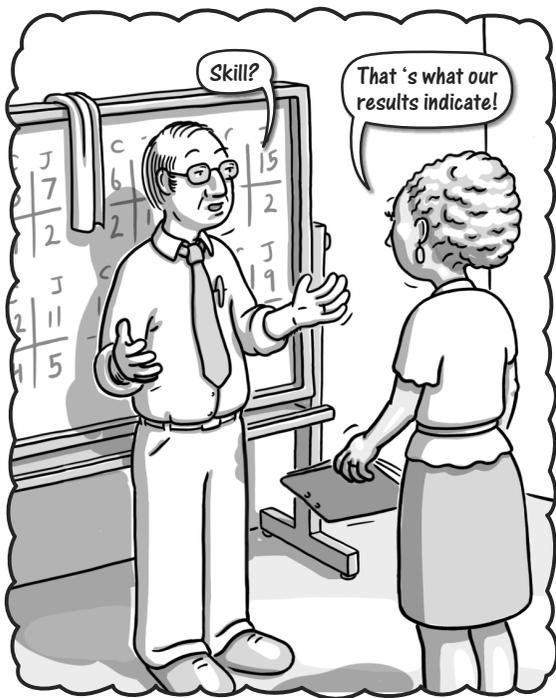


Guess its not the force...

Ow!!

DONKI!

In the end, our verdict was...



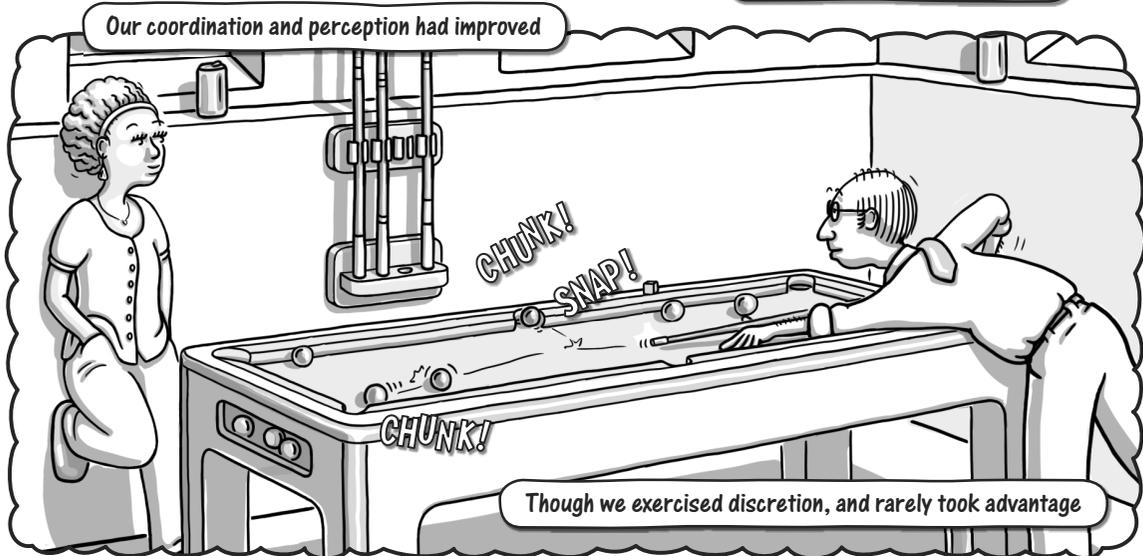
Skill?

That's what our results indicate!



We did better with larger, slower-flipping coins, and when we could see the coin well...

...and were otherwise unimpaired



Our coordination and perception had improved

Though we exercised discretion, and rarely took advantage



And the larger mystery of how and why remained

Skill? That's a let-down

I know you're let down that it wasn't magic!

But there is a silver lining...

Chapter 11

Surprising revelations about the “big Ancients”



Sanj was able to intercept pages which were bound for the shredder

1-8 ▶

◀ 9-14

Chandragupta...

Sanj Chandragupta

He sent these pages to Dr. Suzuki, now back in Tokyo

I became a linguist to study Pacific islanders

...and ended up here...

alawaleia!

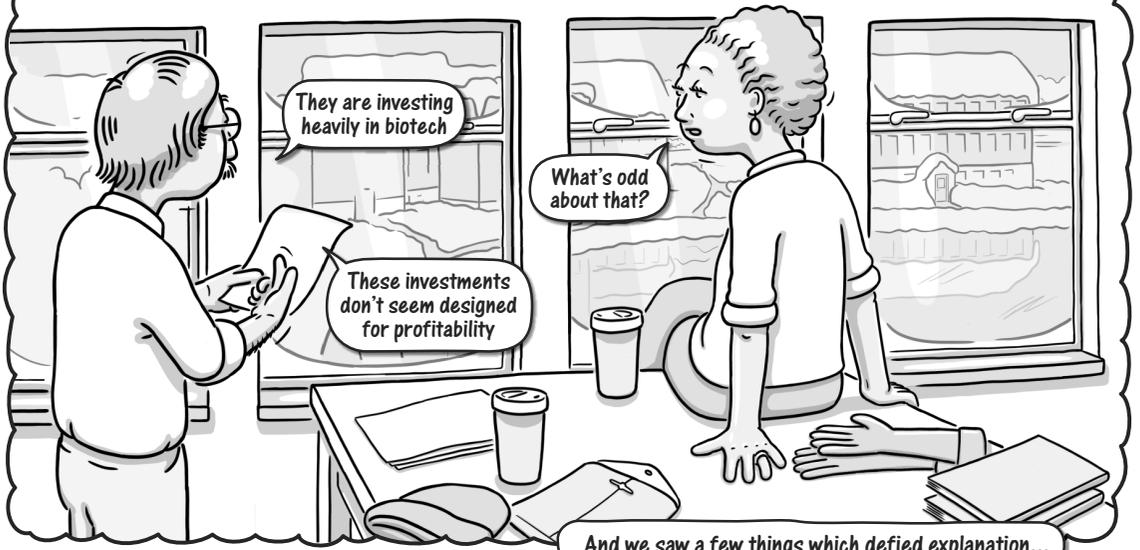
She translated the pages, and sent them to us

"coffee filters for third floor."

The world's most boring conspiracy!

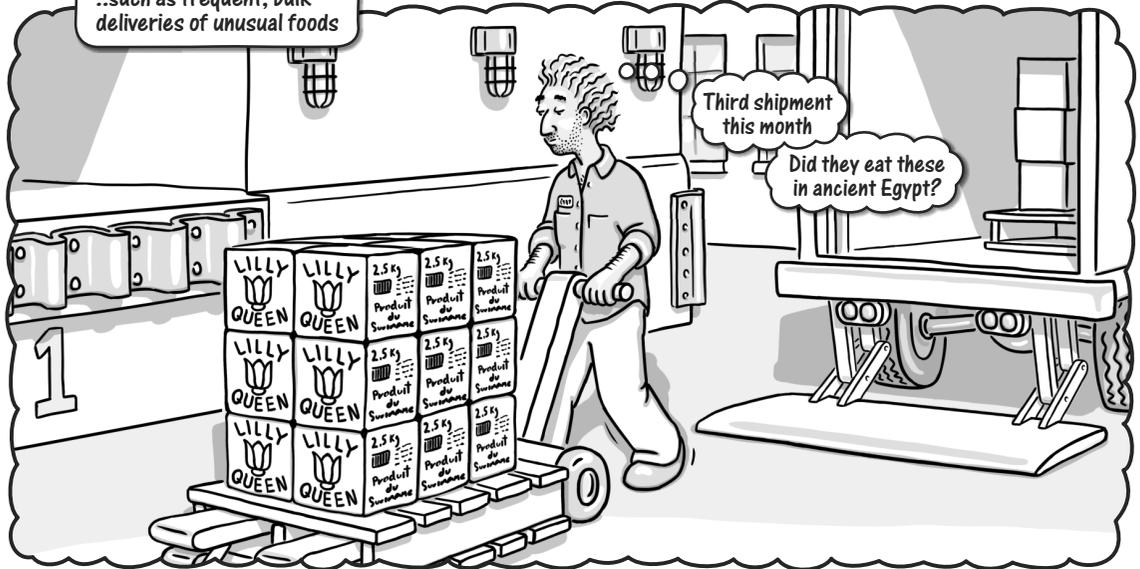
Most of what we read was mundane, however...

On rare occasions we caught glimpses of a greater purpose



And we saw a few things which defied explanation...

...such as frequent, bulk deliveries of unusual foods



Abacus!?

And for unknown reasons...



The "ancients" eschewed certain technologies

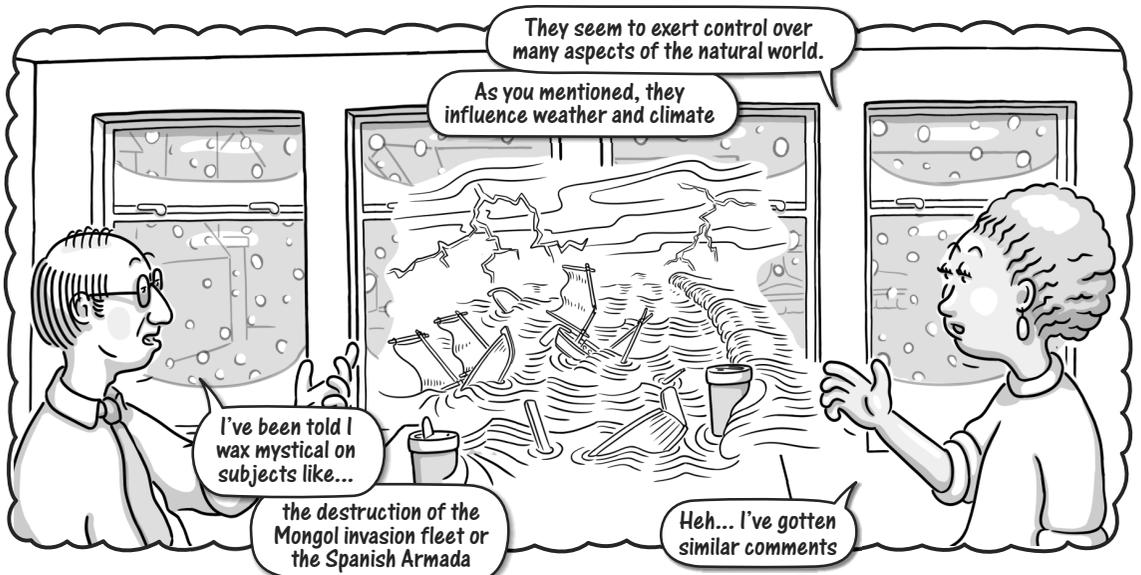
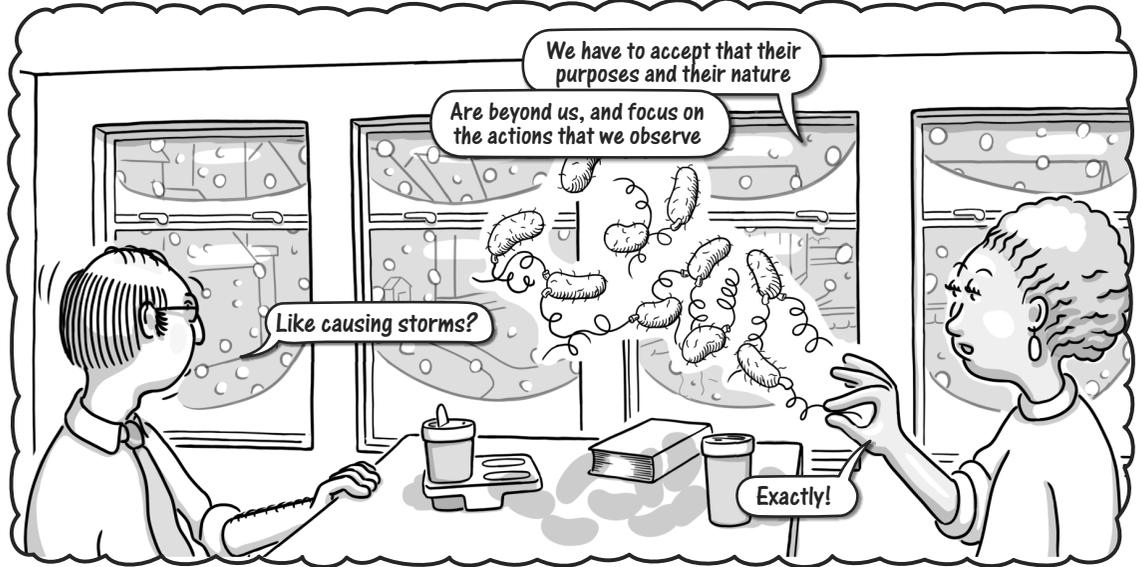
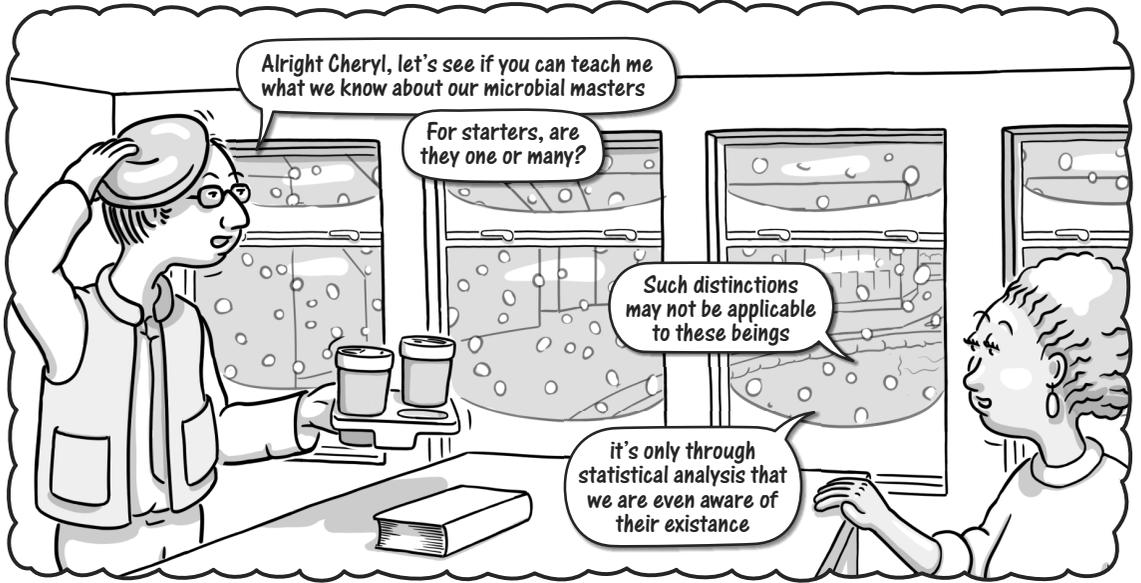
And so it went for years, but then one day...

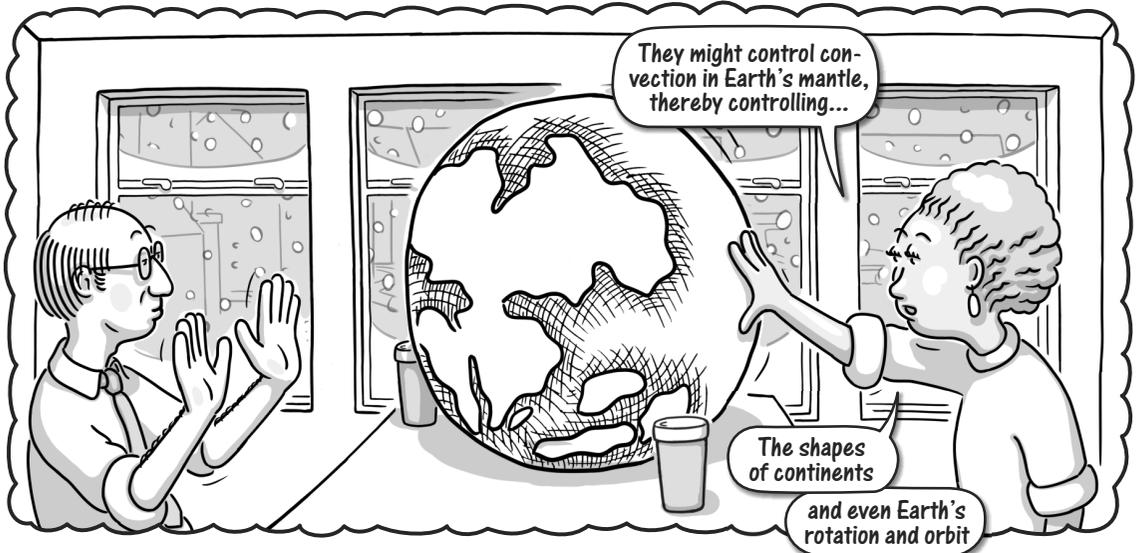
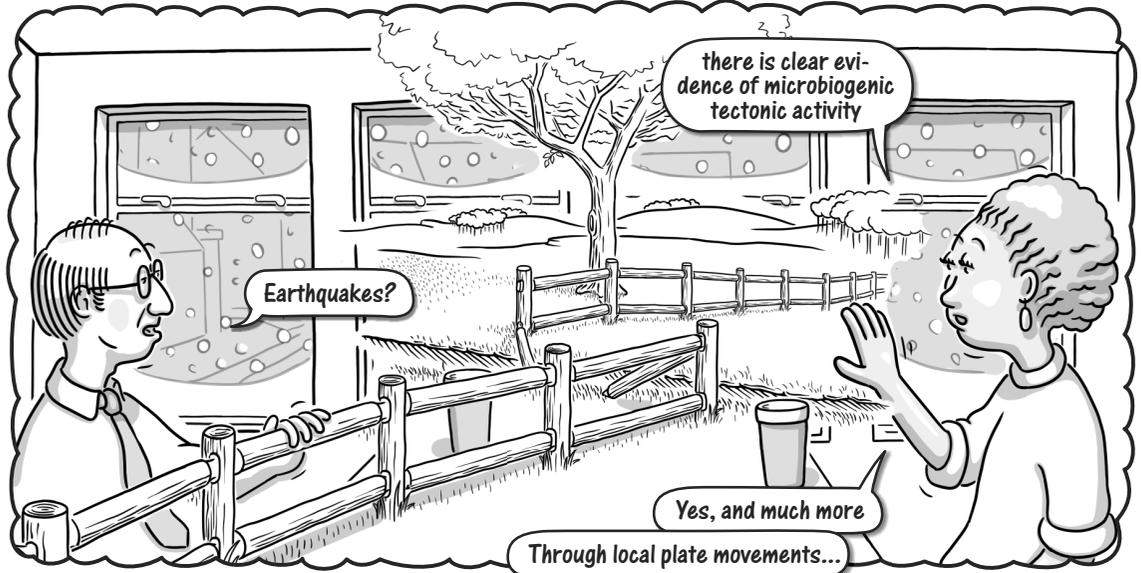


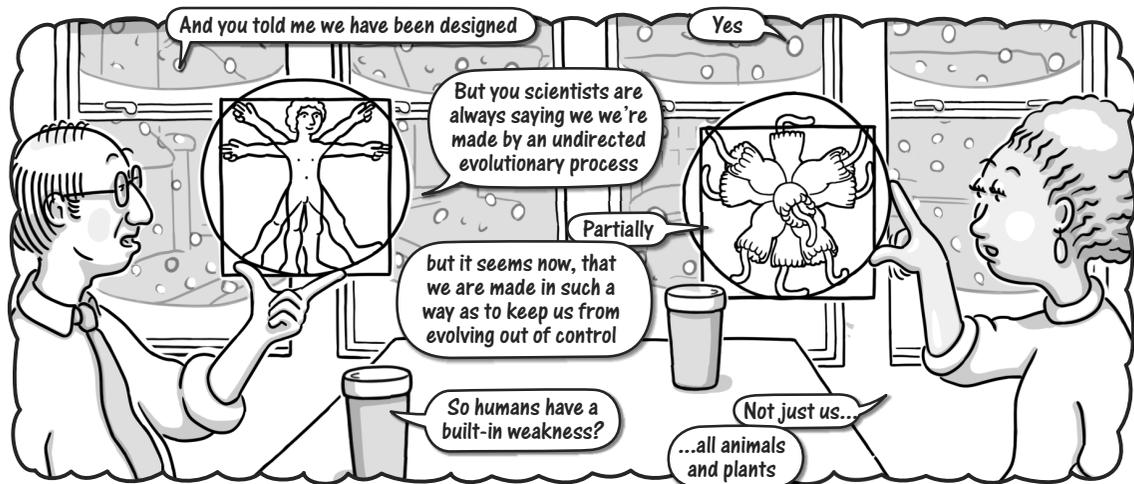
Chapter 12

Ongoing research into the microbial superbeings









And you told me we have been designed

Yes

But you scientists are always saying we we're made by an undirected evolutionary process

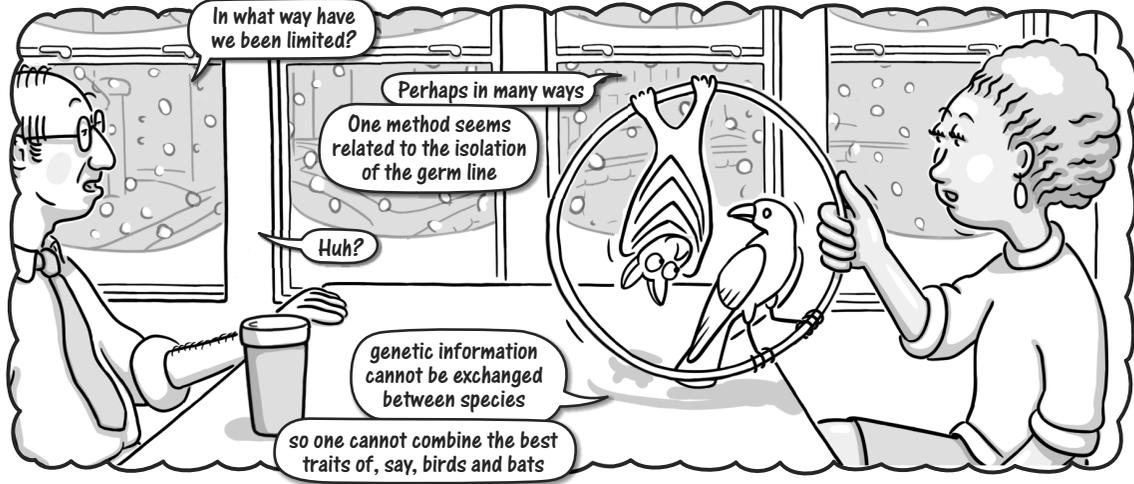
Partially

but it seems now, that we are made in such a way as to keep us from evolving out of control

So humans have a built-in weakness?

Not just us...

...all animals and plants



In what way have we been limited?

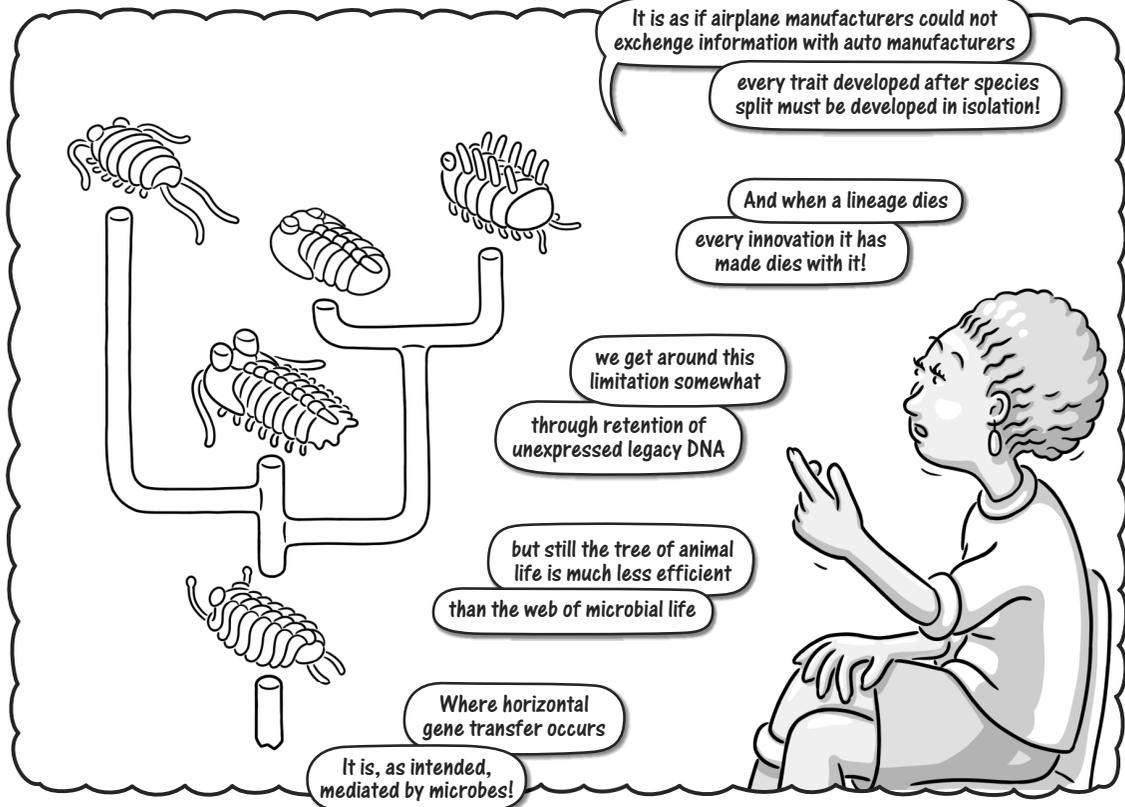
Perhaps in many ways

One method seems related to the isolation of the germ line

Huh?

genetic information cannot be exchanged between species

so one cannot combine the best traits of, say, birds and bats



It is as if airplane manufacturers could not exchange information with auto manufacturers

every trait developed after species split must be developed in isolation!

And when a lineage dies

every innovation it has made dies with it!

we get around this limitation somewhat

through retention of unexpressed legacy DNA

but still the tree of animal life is much less efficient than the web of microbial life

Where horizontal gene transfer occurs

It is, as intended, mediated by microbes!



And they've meddled in human history?

As best we can tell, their relationship to us

is analogous to our relationship with lower animals

Some of us are used for work

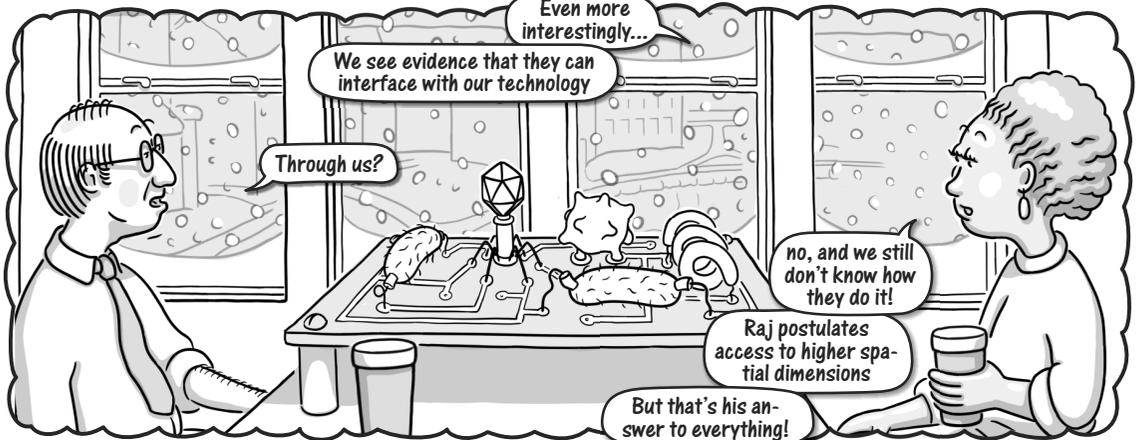


Some of us are, likely, experimental subjects

Perhaps even entertainment

Edutainment

And most may be left to their own devices!



Even more interesting...

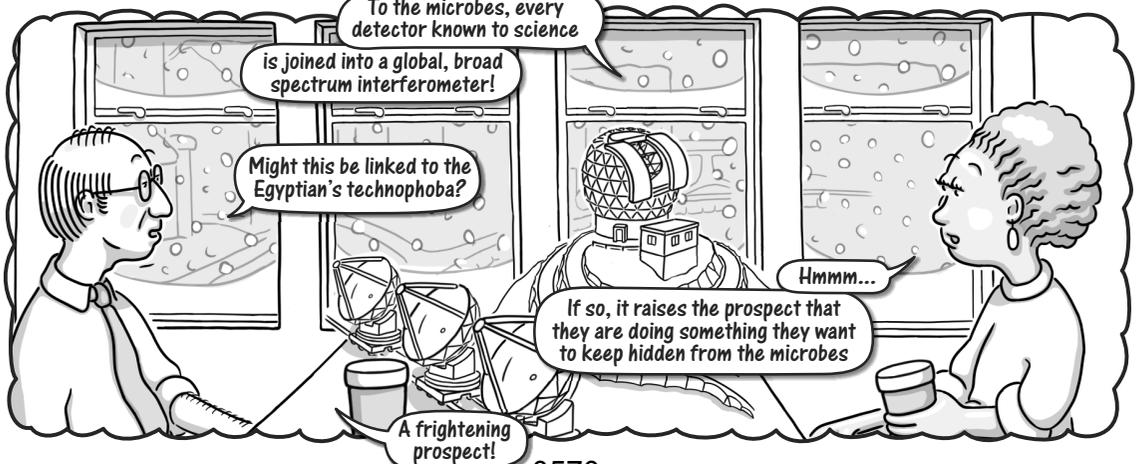
We see evidence that they can interface with our technology

Through us?

no, and we still don't know how they do it!

Raj postulates access to higher spatial dimensions

But that's his answer to everything!



To the microbes, every detector known to science

is joined into a global, broad spectrum interferometer!

Might this be linked to the Egyptian's technophobia?

Hmmm...

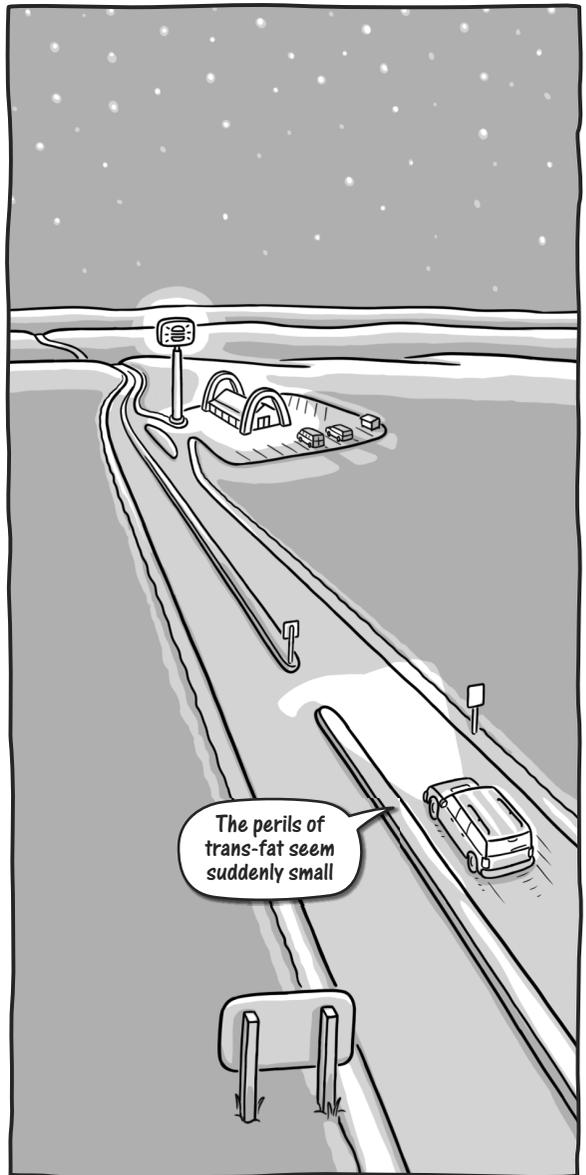
If so, it raises the prospect that they are doing something they want to keep hidden from the microbes

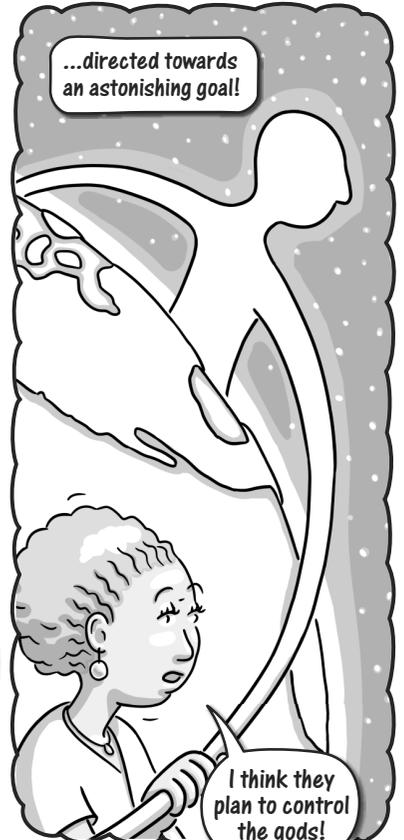
A frightening prospect!

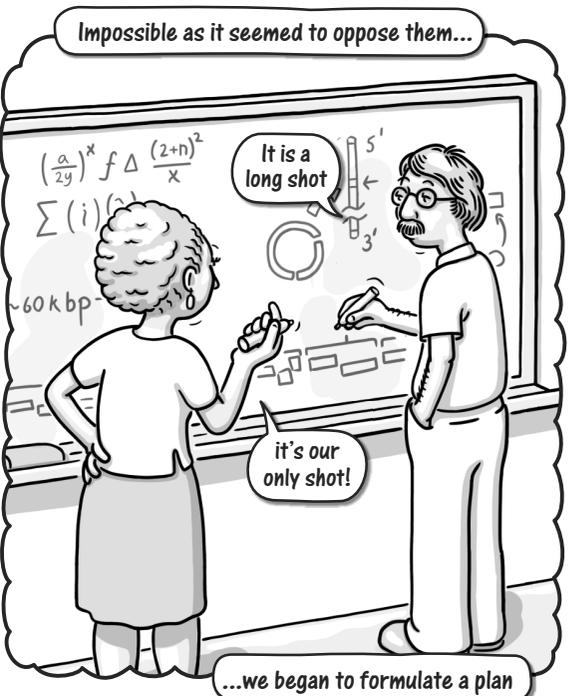
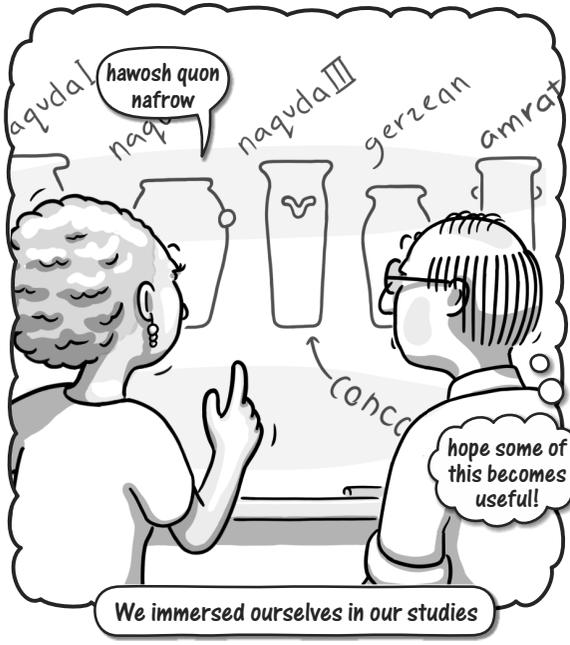
Chapter 13

I learn about the destination and purpose of our journey.

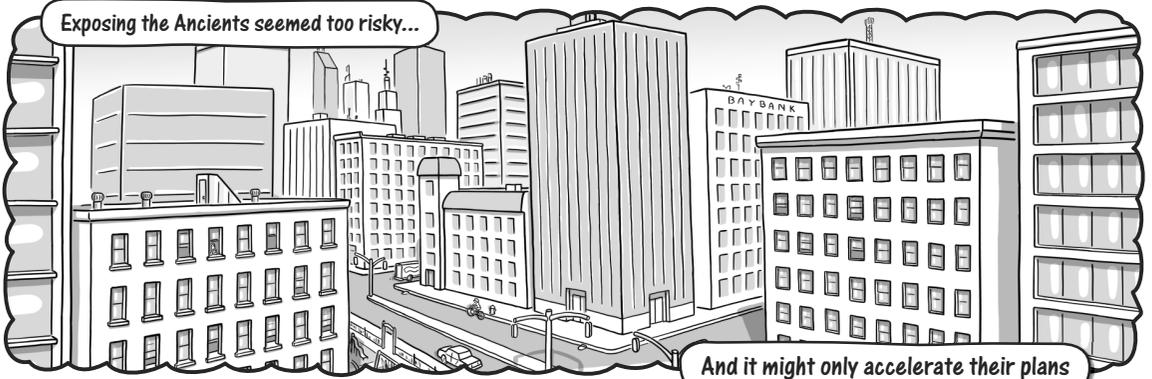








Exposing the Ancients seemed too risky...



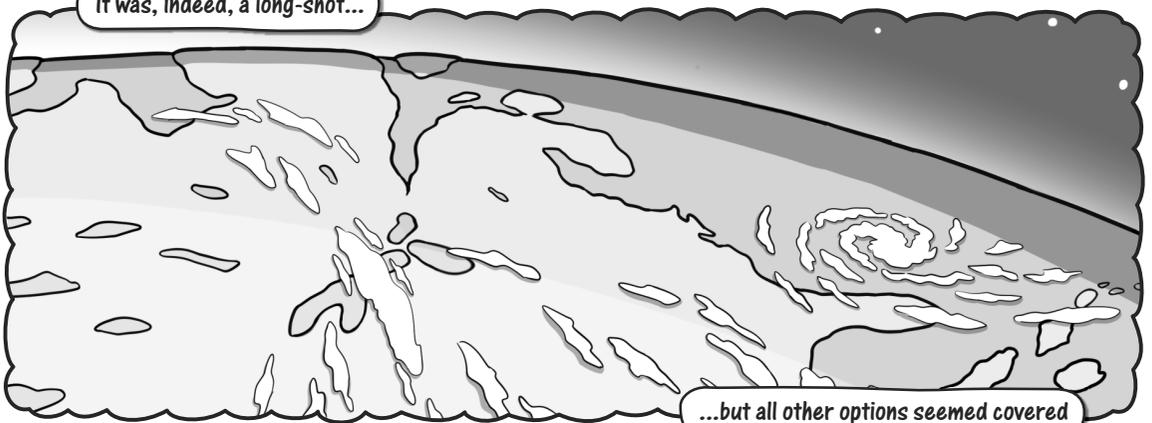
And it might only accelerate their plans

We aimed, instead, to communicate...



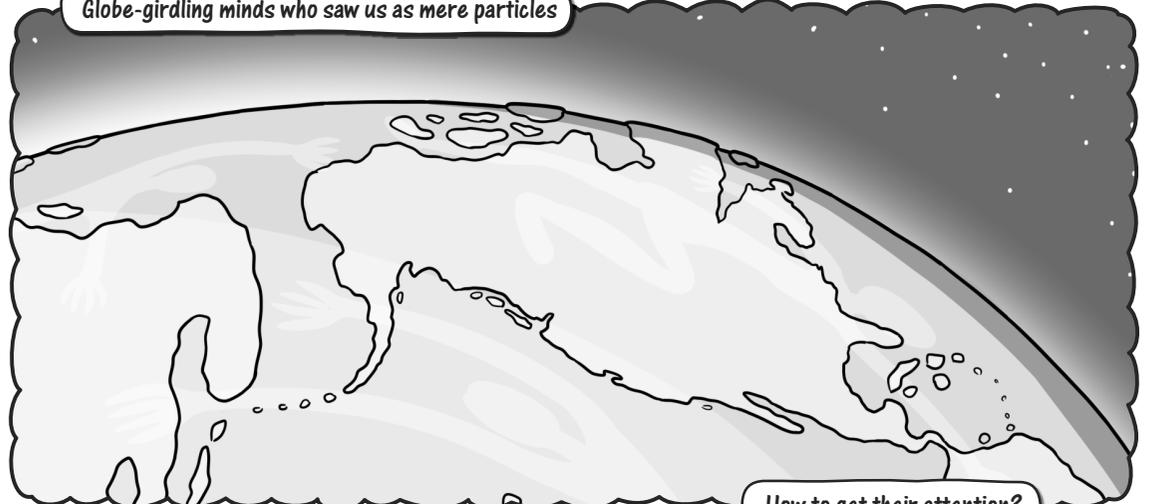
...with the gods themselves

It was, indeed, a long-shot...



...but all other options seemed covered

Globe-girdling minds who saw us as mere particles

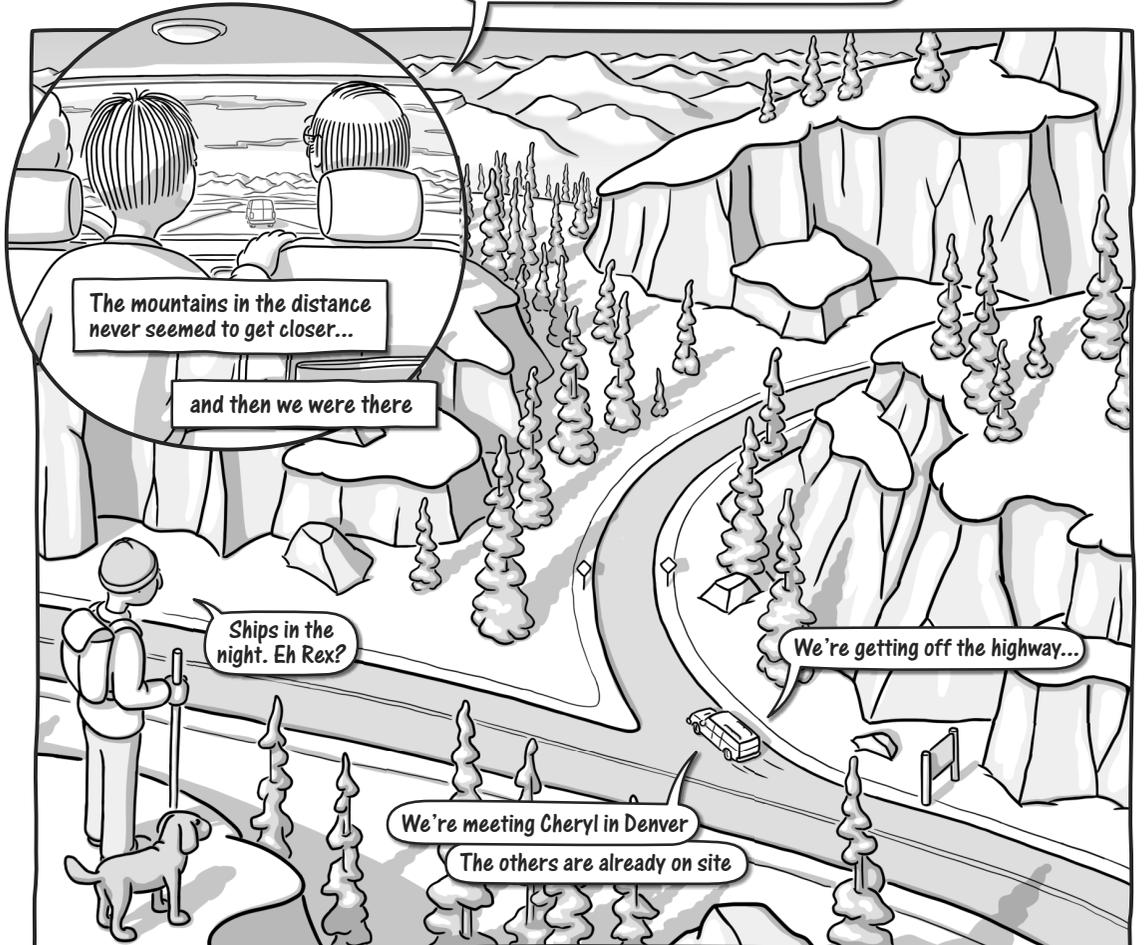


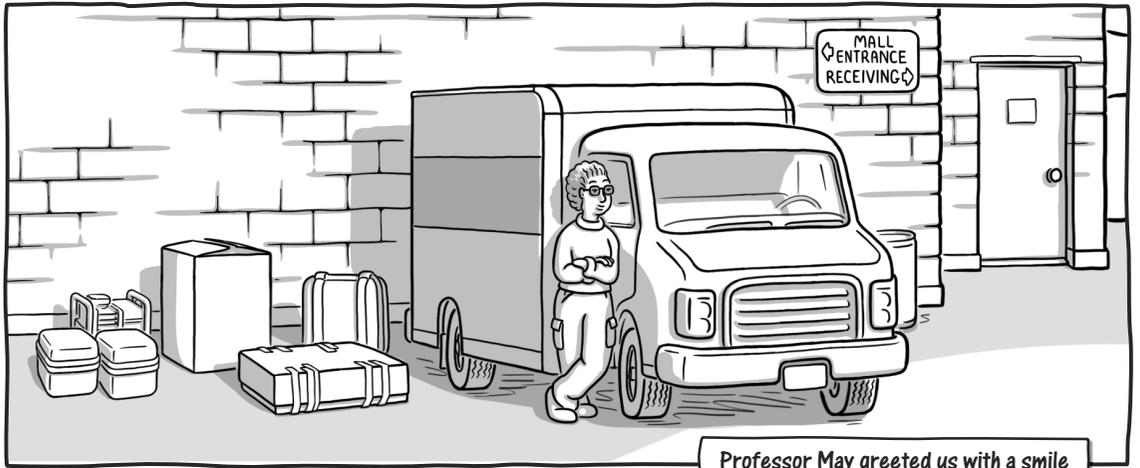
How to get their attention?

Chapter 14

The beginning and end of the journey



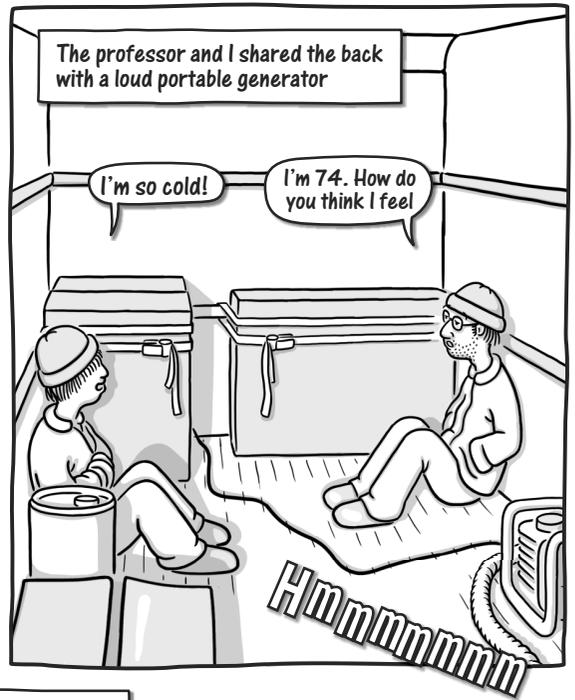




Professor May greeted us with a smile



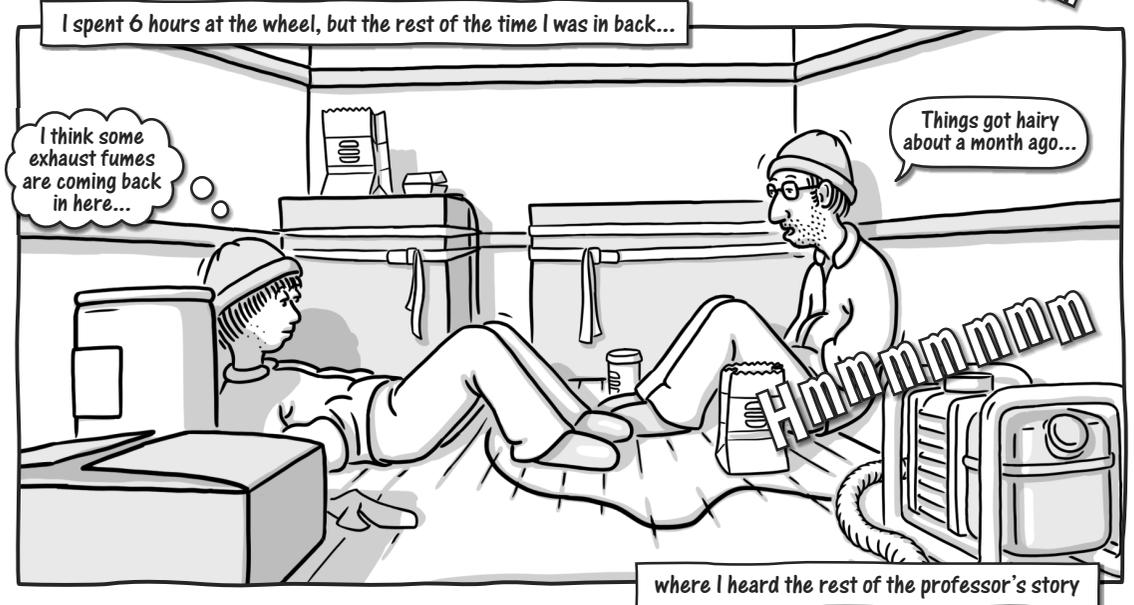
She left it to us to load up



The professor and I shared the back with a loud portable generator

I'm so cold!

I'm 74. How do you think I feel!



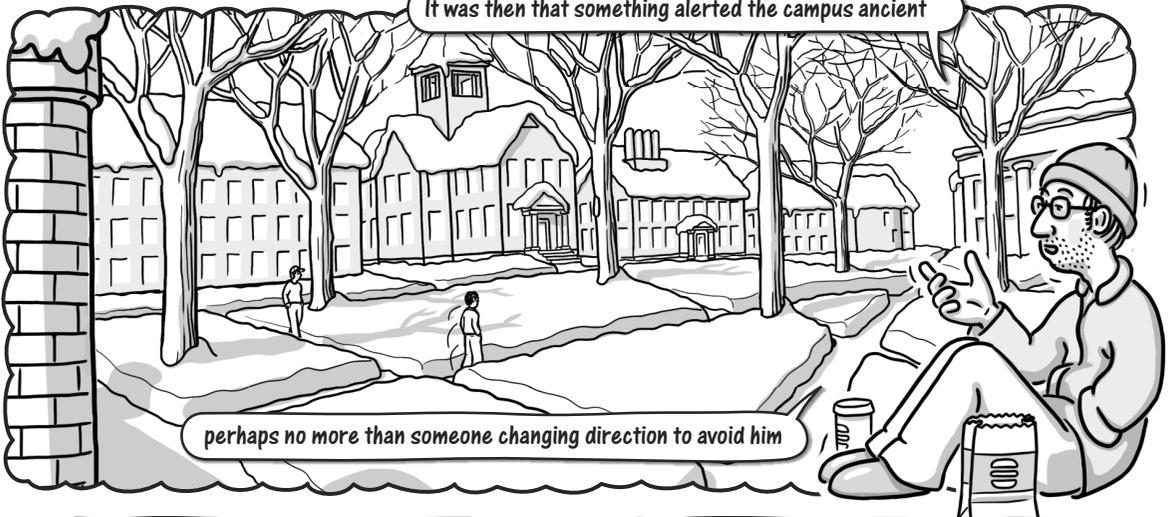
I spent 6 hours at the wheel, but the rest of the time I was in back...

I think some exhaust fumes are coming back in here...

Things got hairy about a month ago...

where I heard the rest of the professor's story

It was then that something alerted the campus ancient



perhaps no more than someone changing direction to avoid him

Thereafter, he was seen poking about outside of Rajan's office, and then Cheryl's



It was left to me to make last minute preparations



Thankfully, my daughter was there to help



That's everything on the list
How'd I do?

Dad, these are snow shovels...
And those are yoga mats!

Or we'd be even worse prepared than we are!



Last week, Delhi went silent

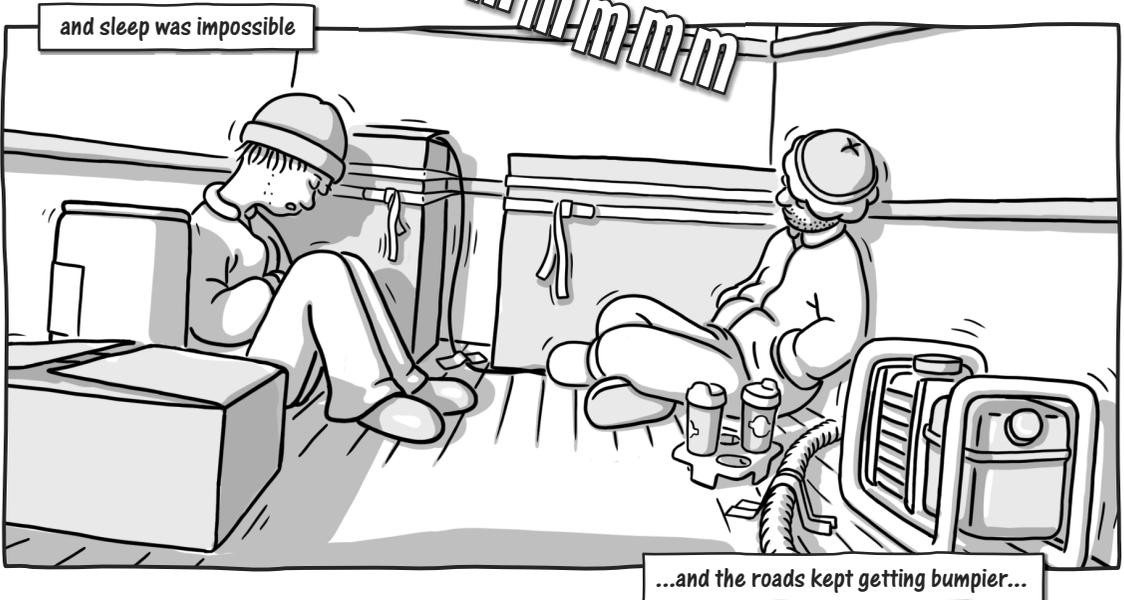
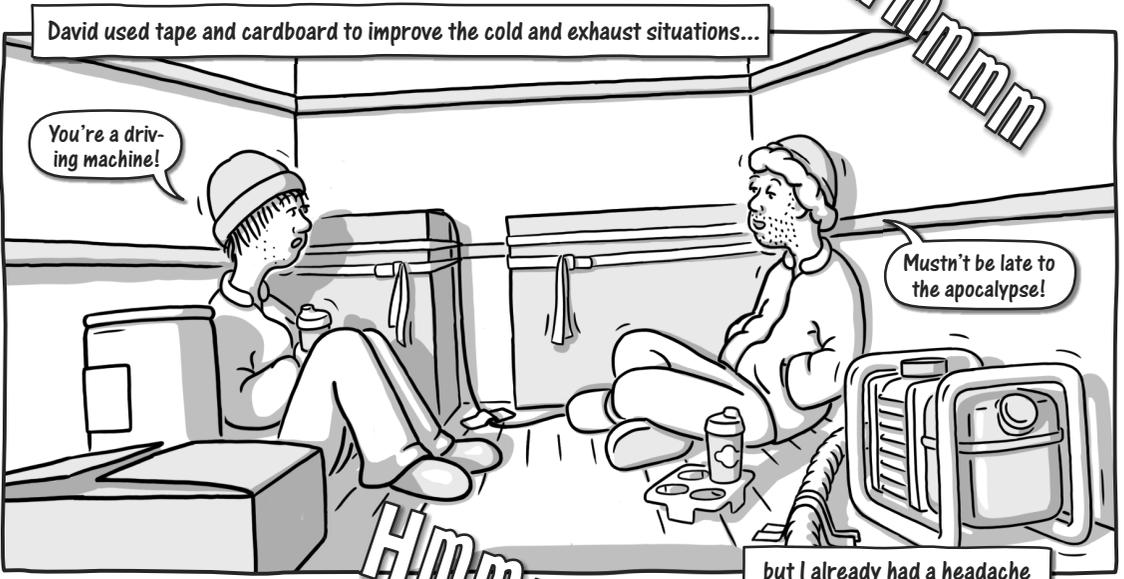
Two days ago, I found giants riffling my office



After that, the only pause in motion...

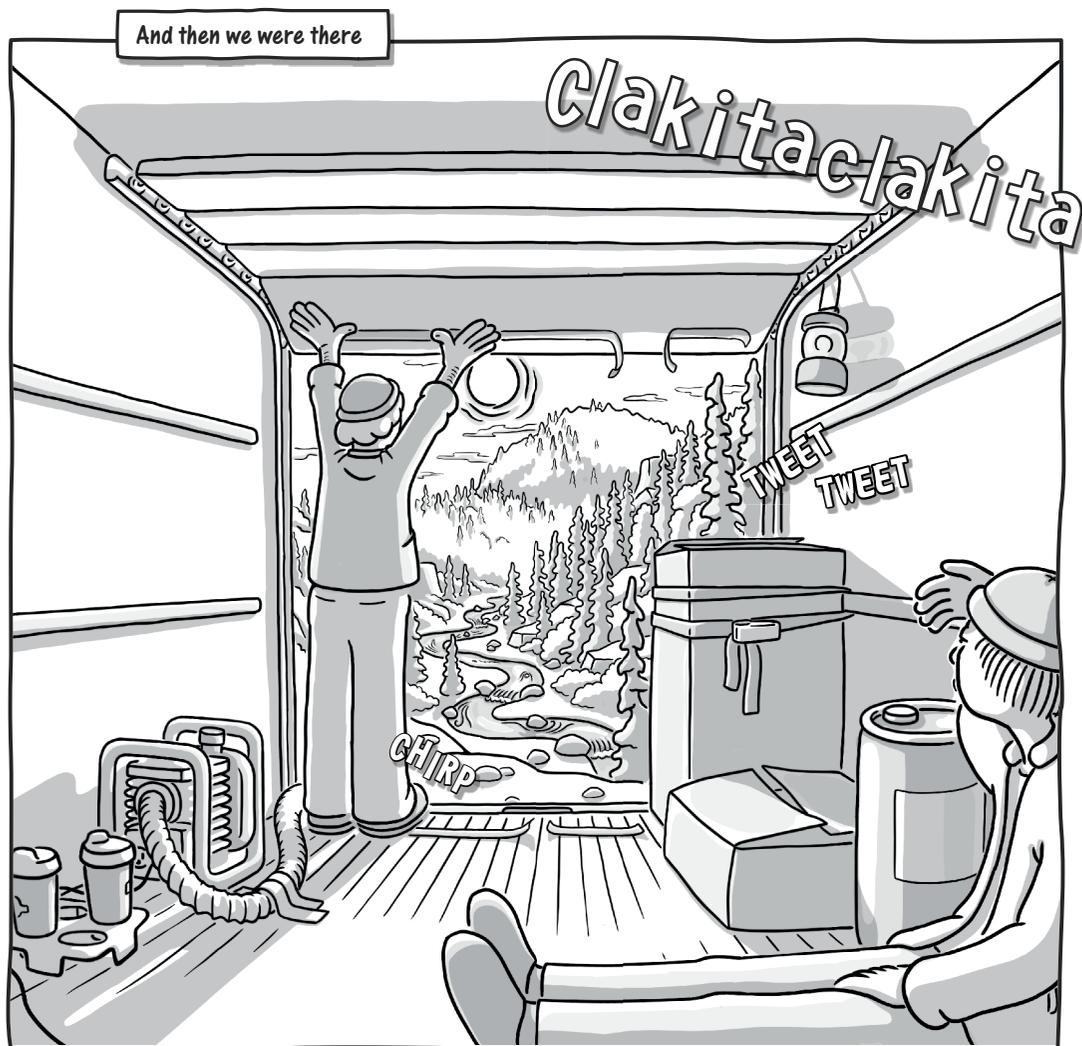
...was in your living room as we waited for David

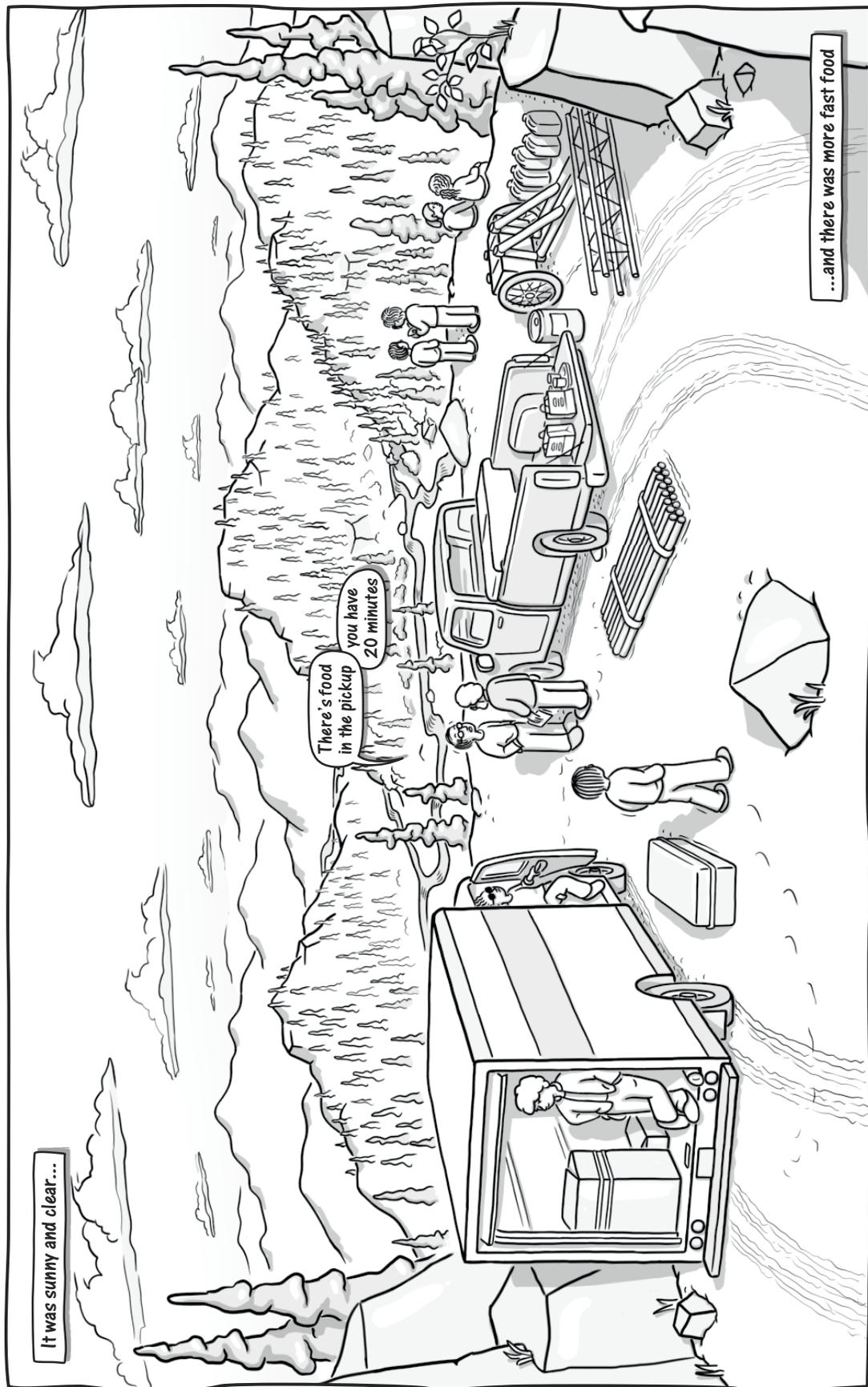




Chapter 15

The staging area

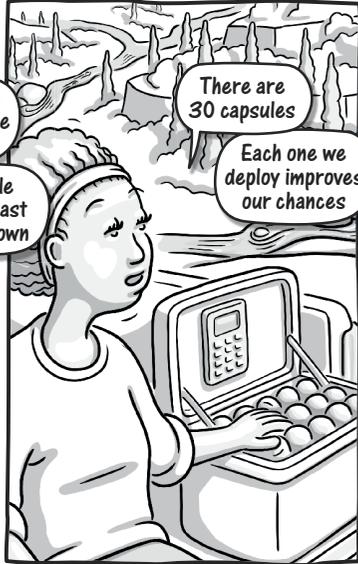




It was sunny and clear...

There's food in the pickup you have 20 minutes

...and there was more fast food





None of us expected to be here with so little preparation.

Some of us did not expect to be here at all

But our expectations will not stay the Ancients!



Each is a genius

with several lifetimes of knowledge and experience



Though they will not use firearms

...they can probably throw like Nolan Ryan



and as dangerous as they are at a distance

They are doubly so at close quarters



My companions in danger...

when there is no choice, reflection is useless

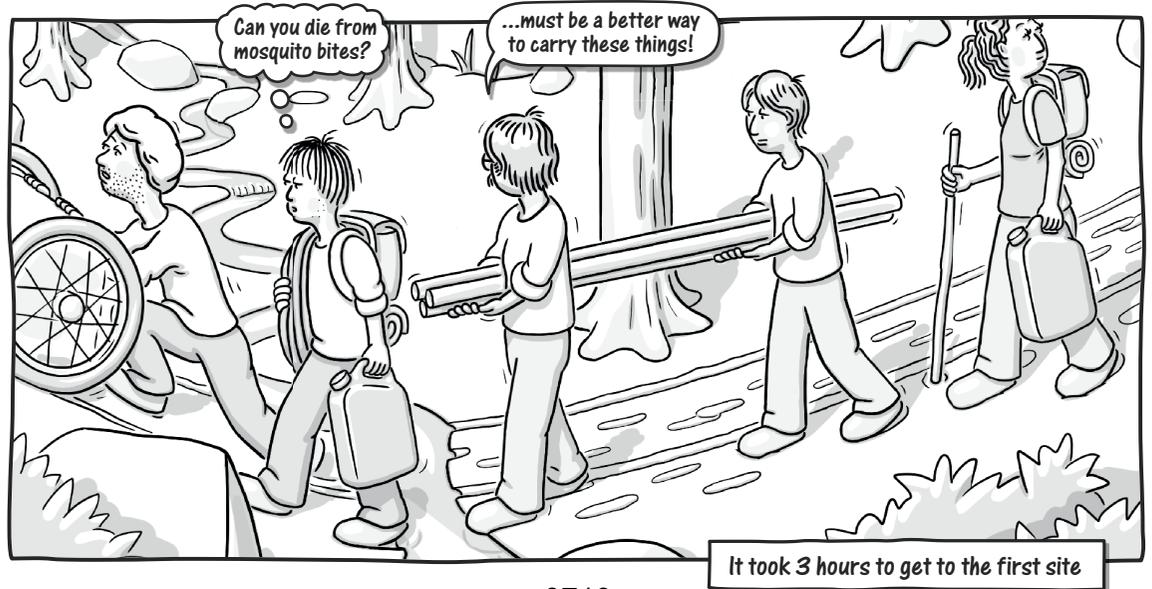
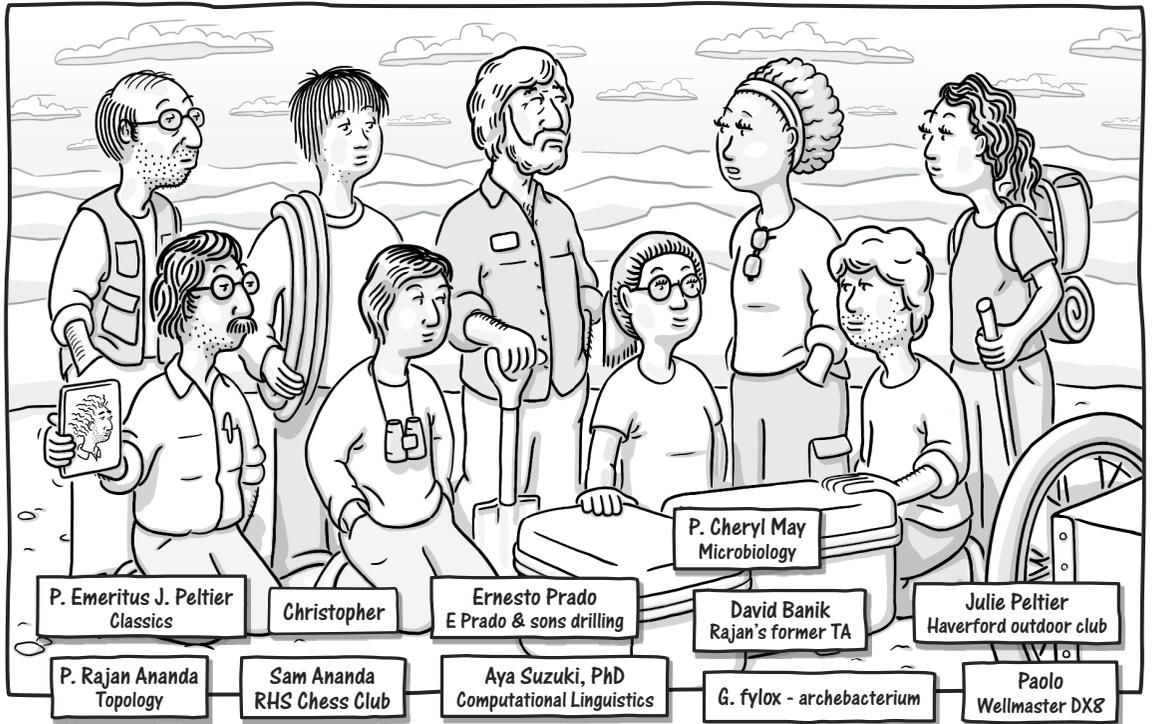
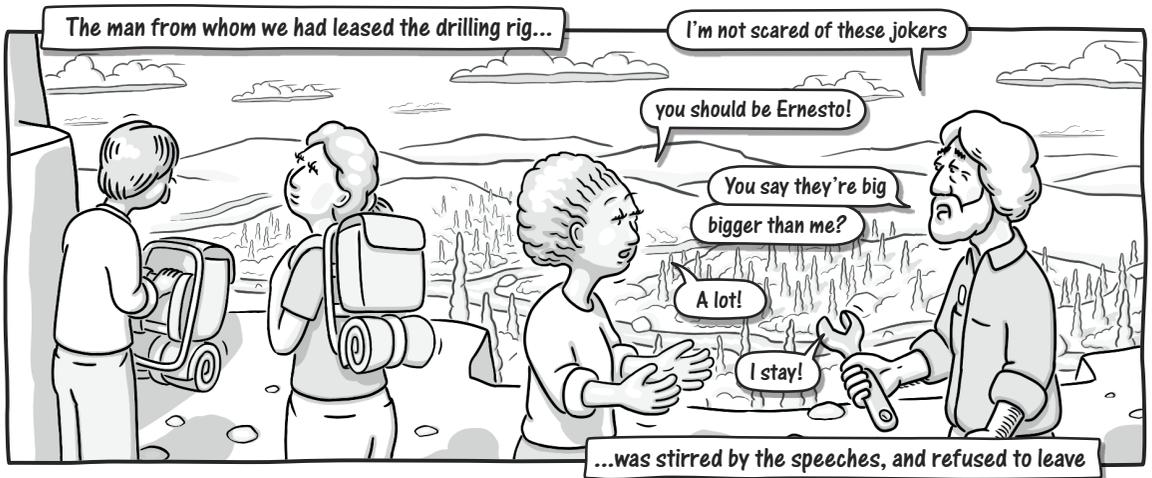
So stand fast to your work!

Yeah!

Banzai!

Geronimo!

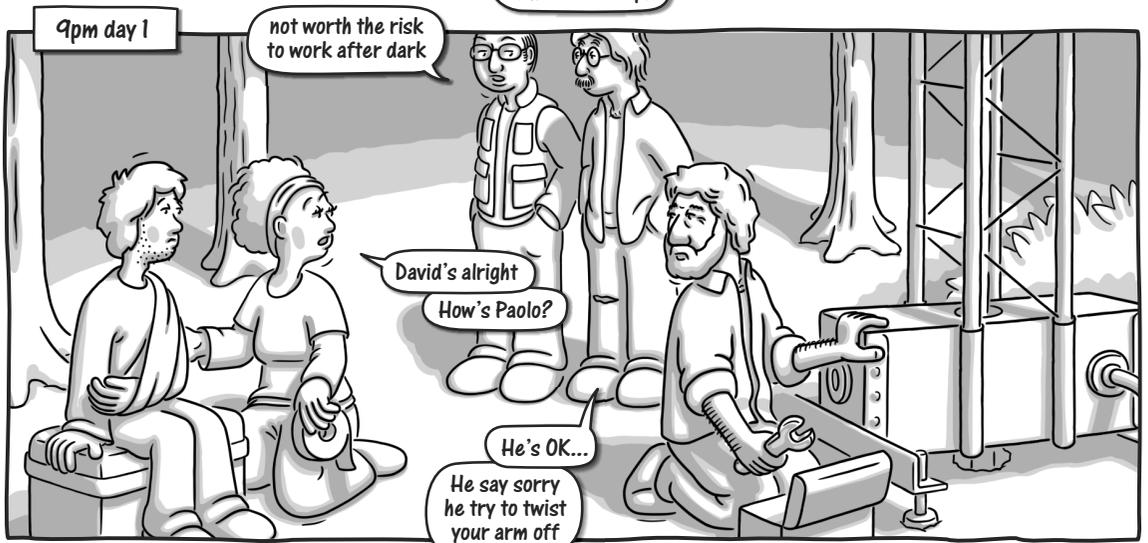
Oh dad...

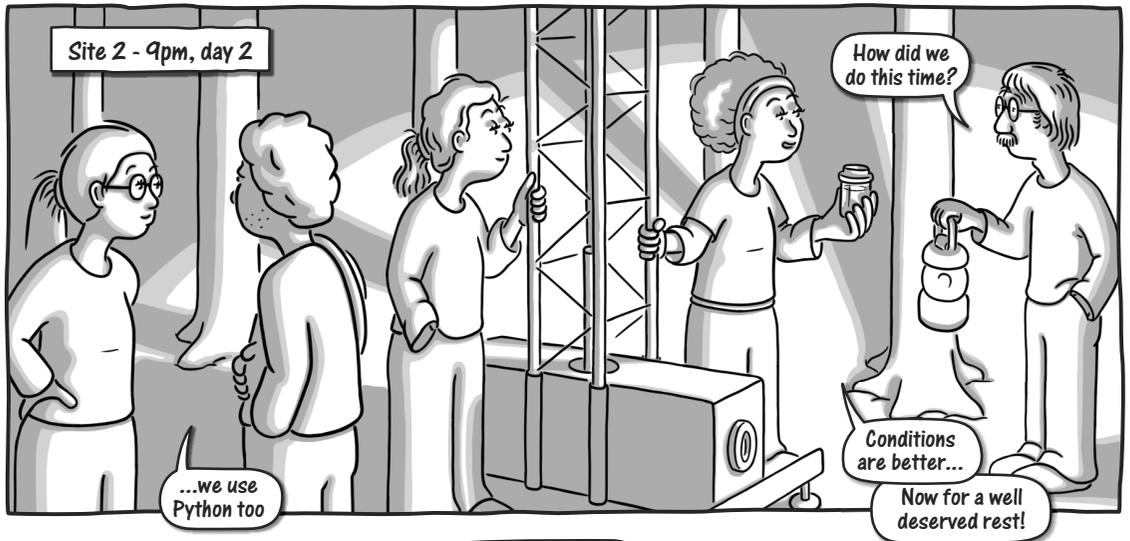


Chapter 16

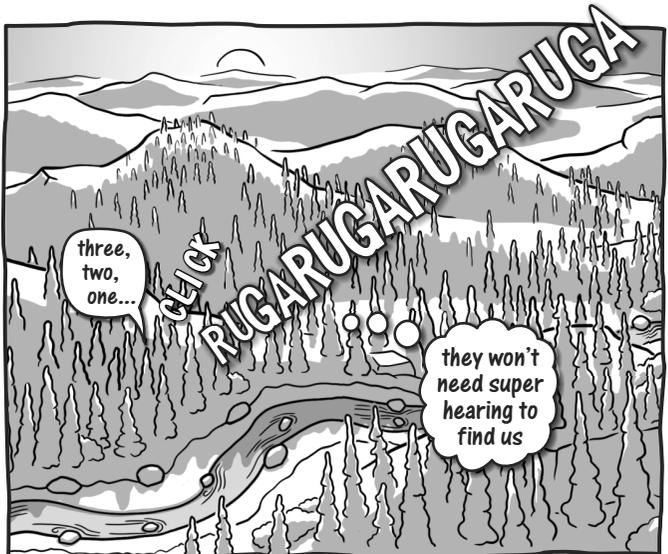
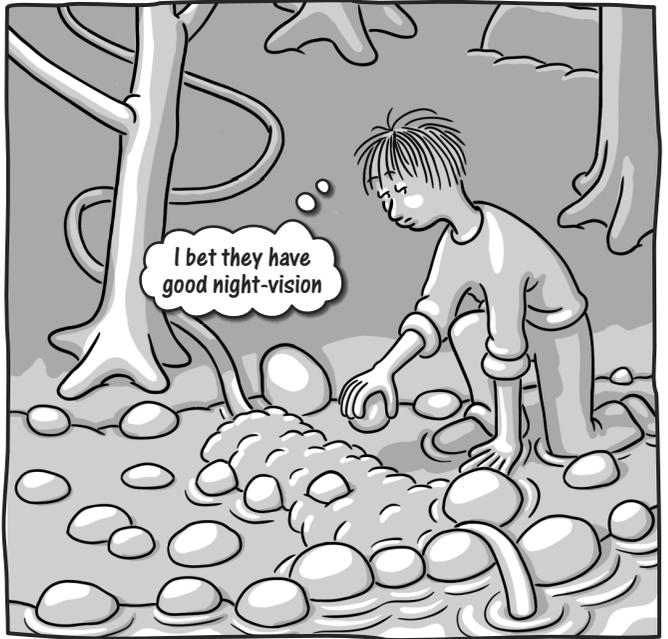
Operations commence

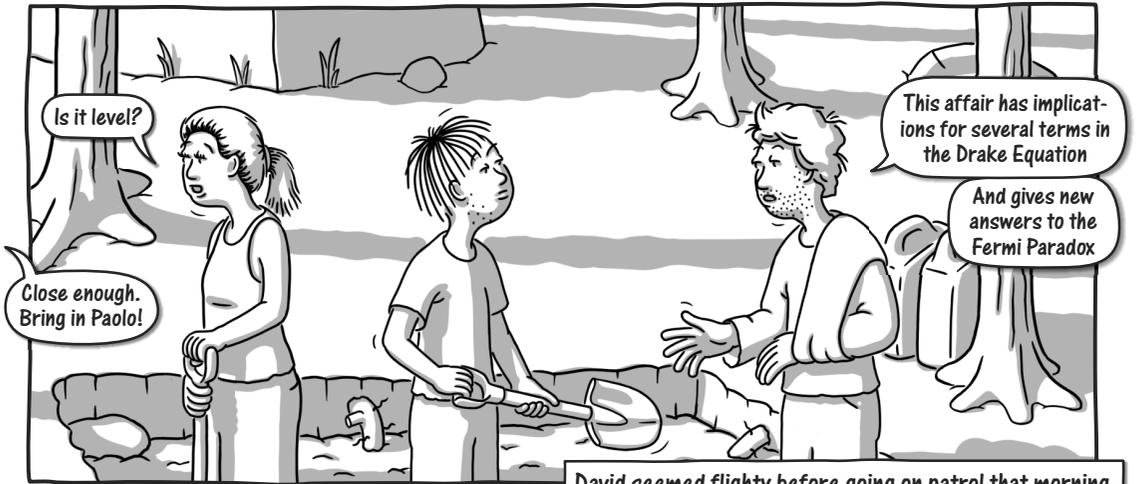




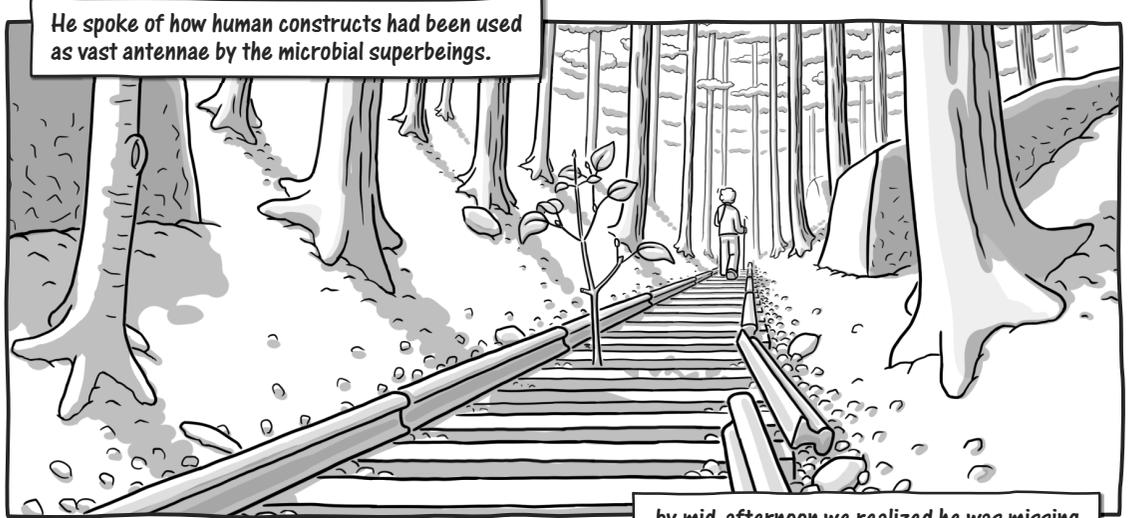


Late that night...





David seemed flighty before going on patrol that morning



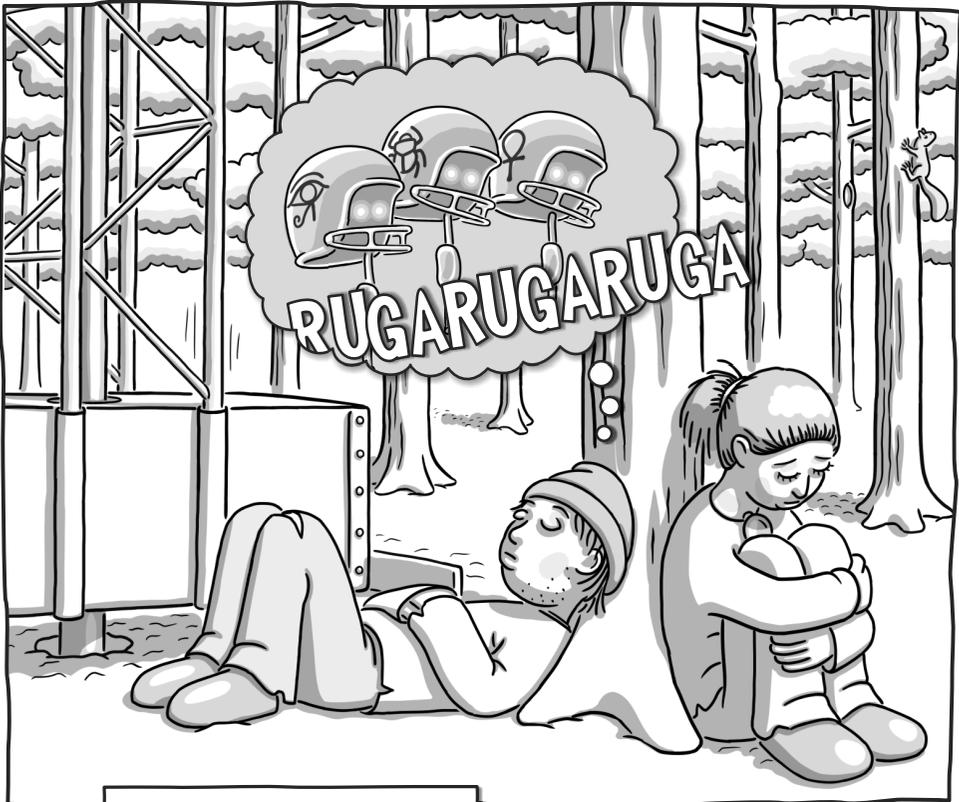
by mid-afternoon we realized he was missing



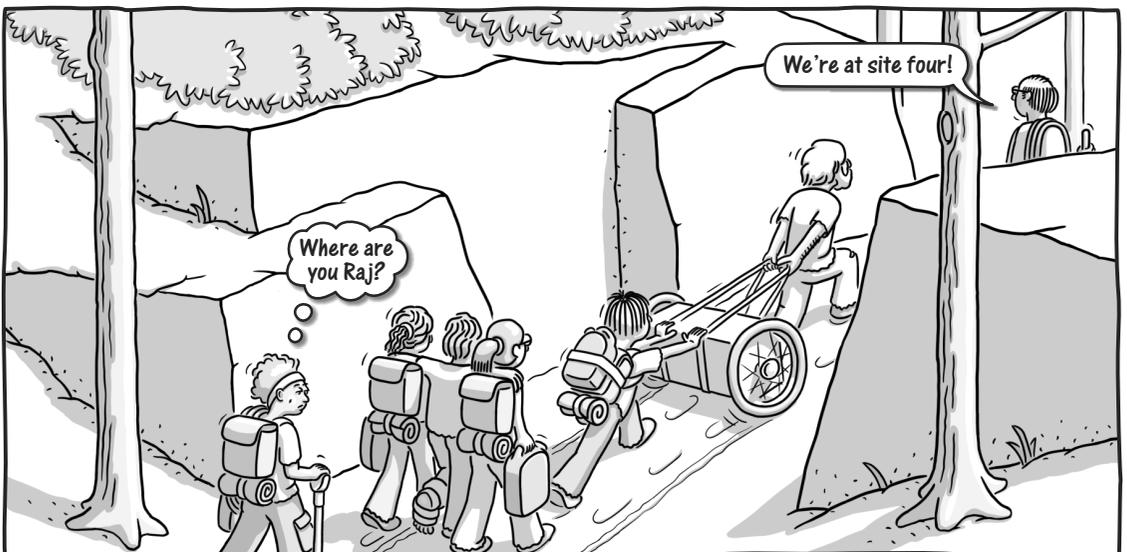
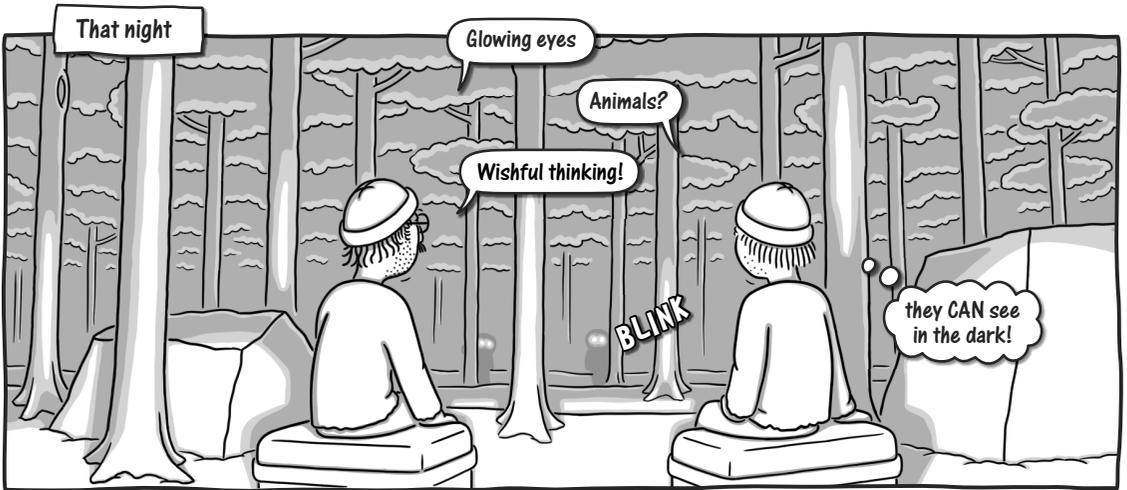
with predictable, but unavoidable results

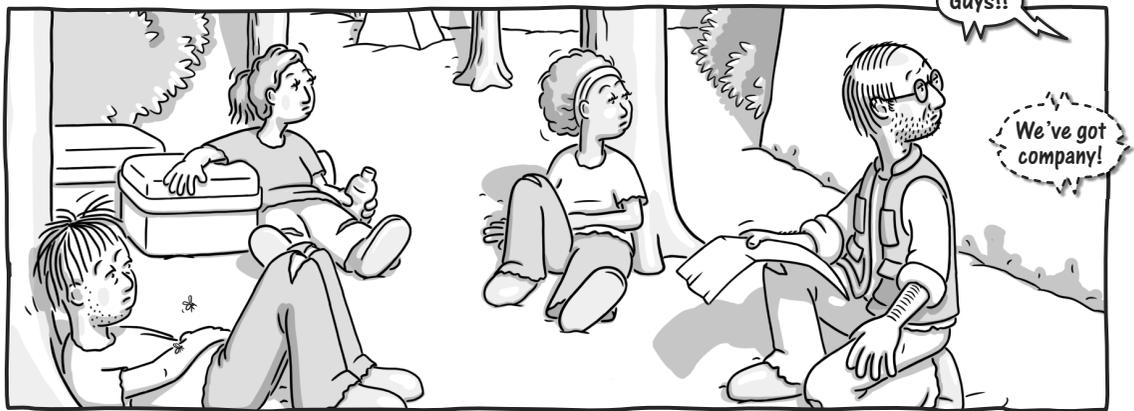
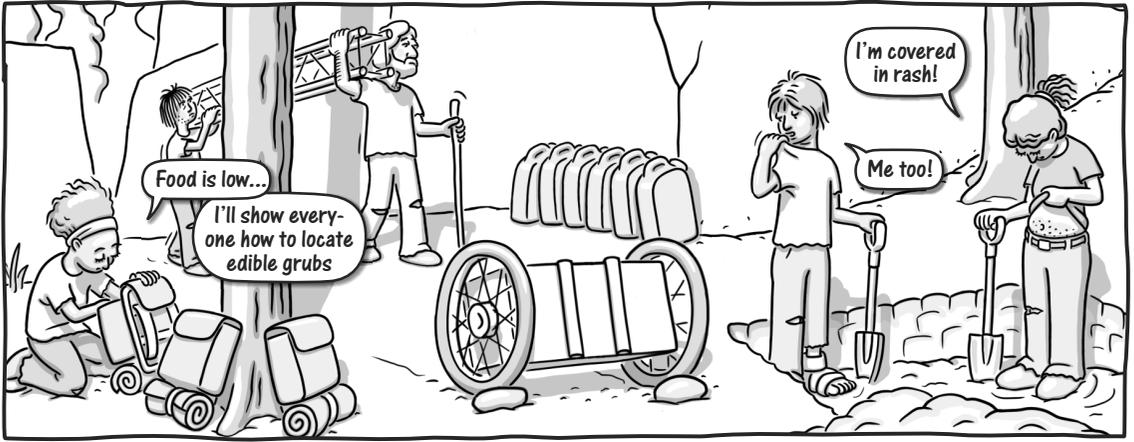
Chapter 17

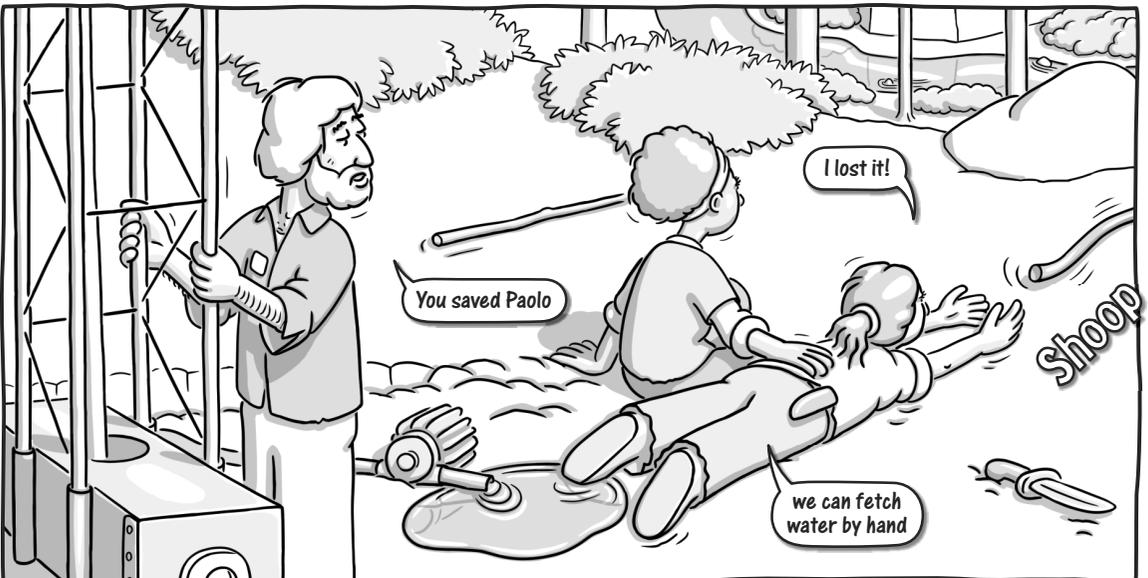
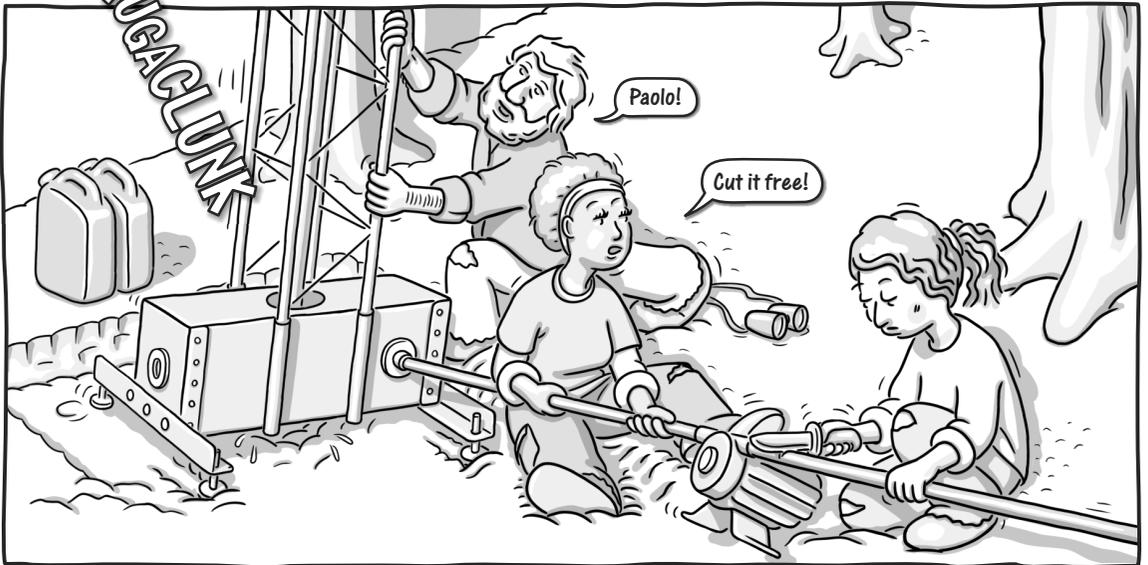
First contact

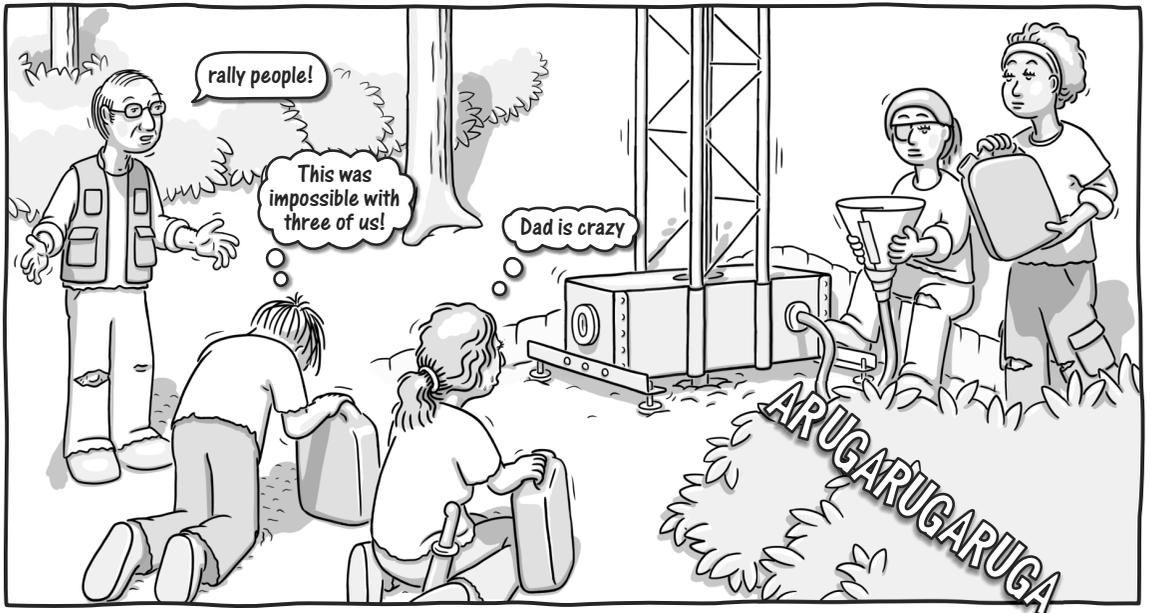


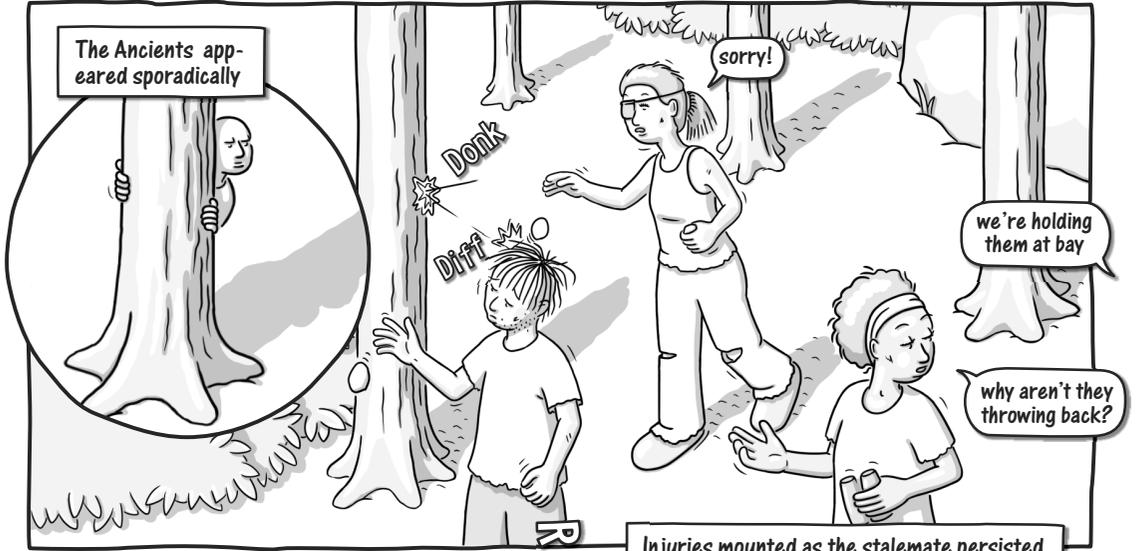
Sleep, when it came, was troubled







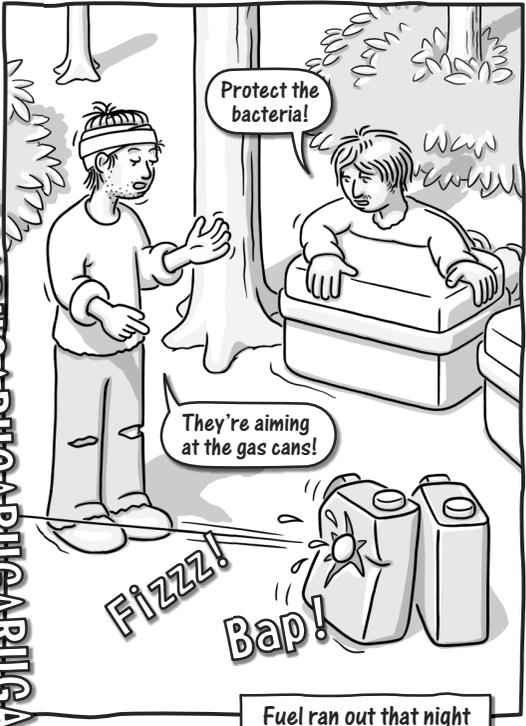




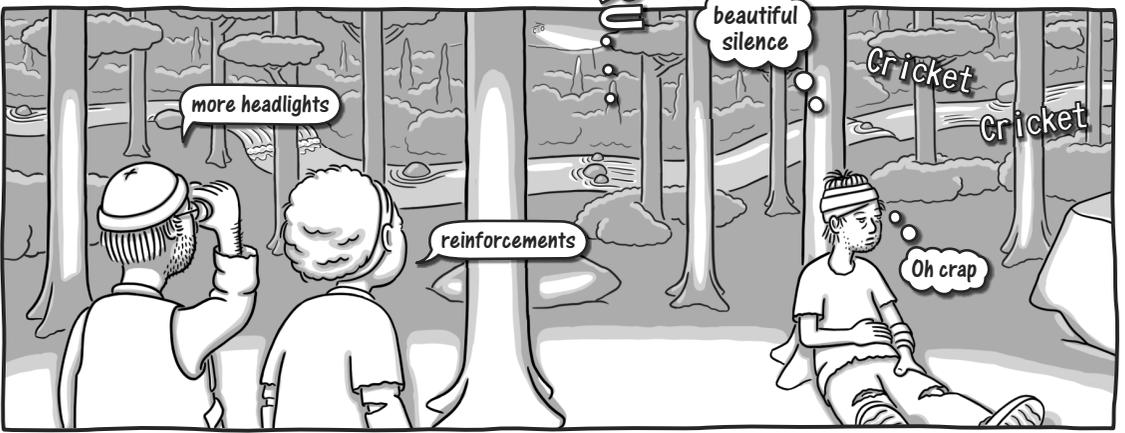
Injuries mounted as the stalemate persisted



They seemed, at first, to have bad aim

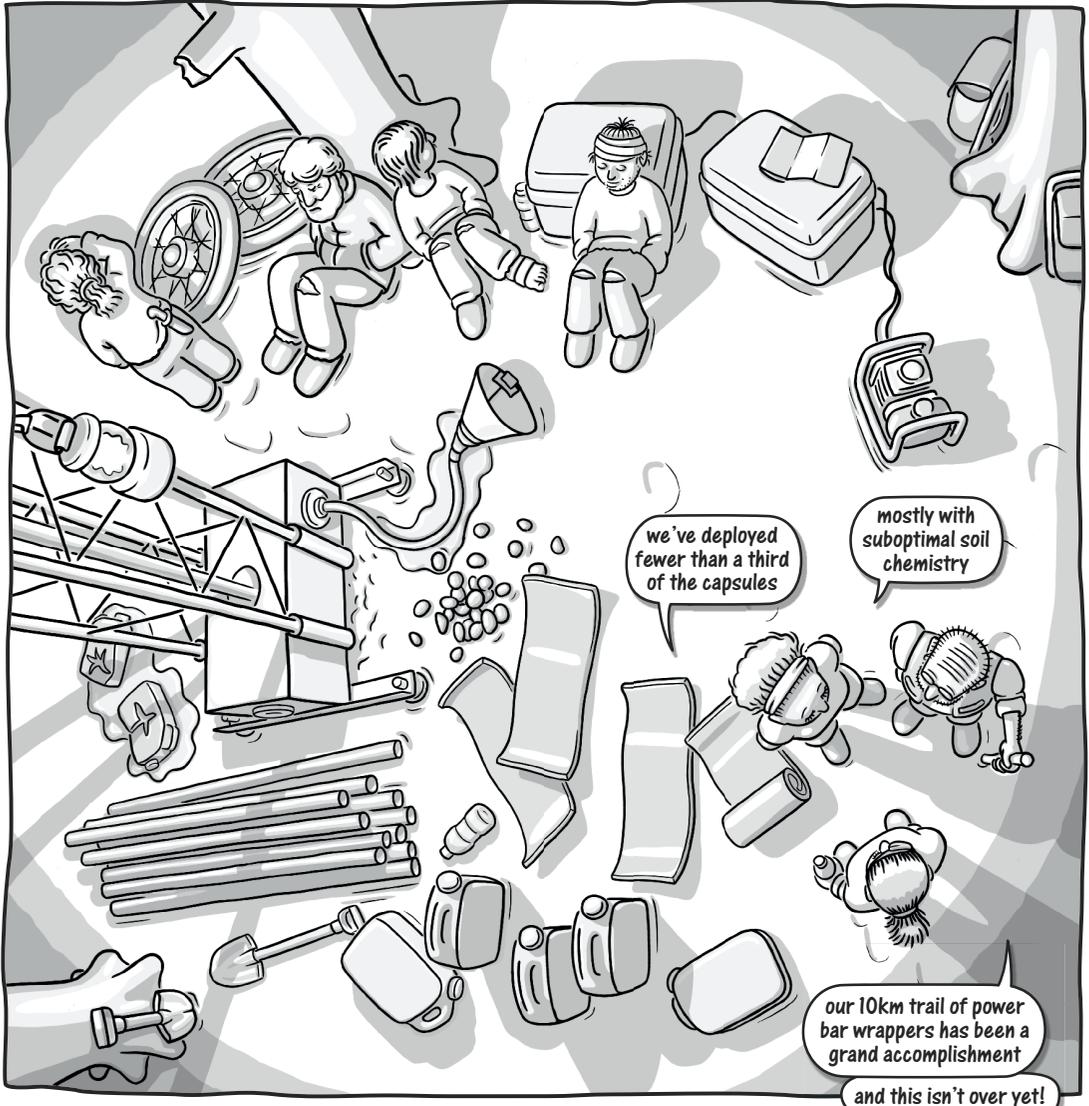


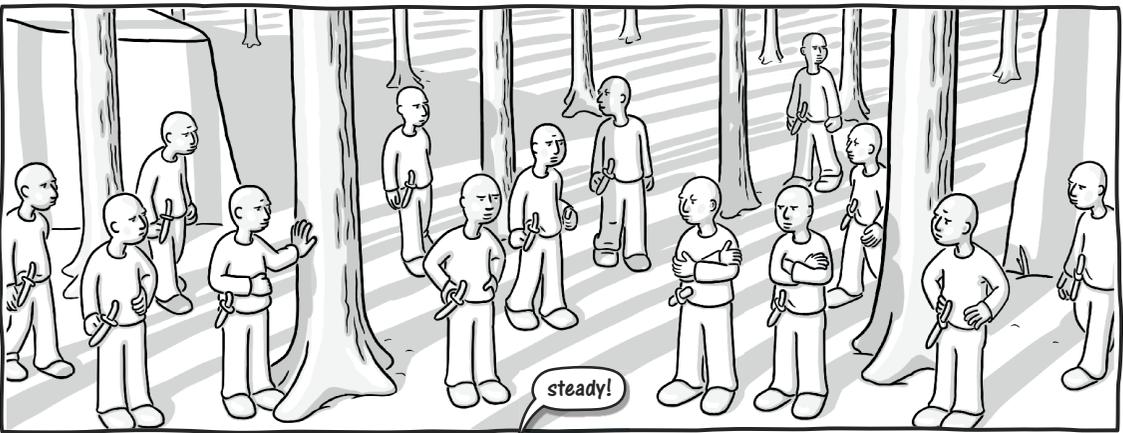
Fuel ran out that night

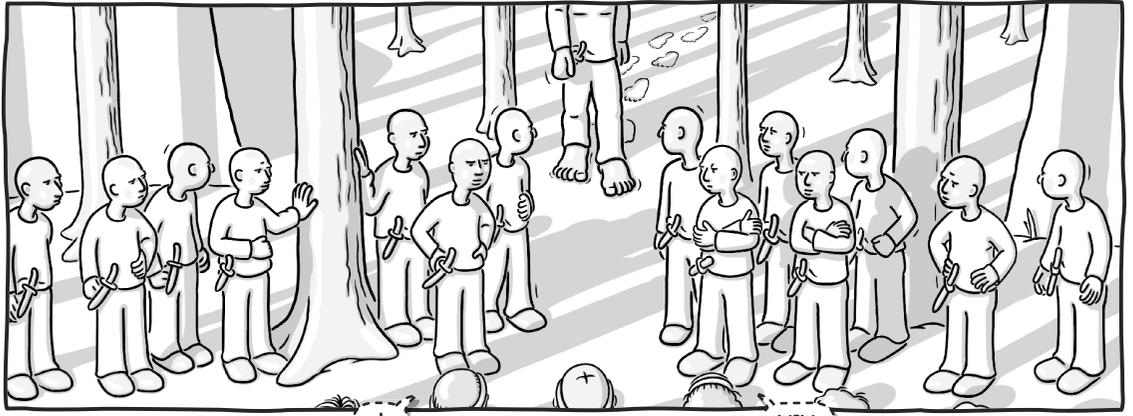


Chapter 18

The last battle begins

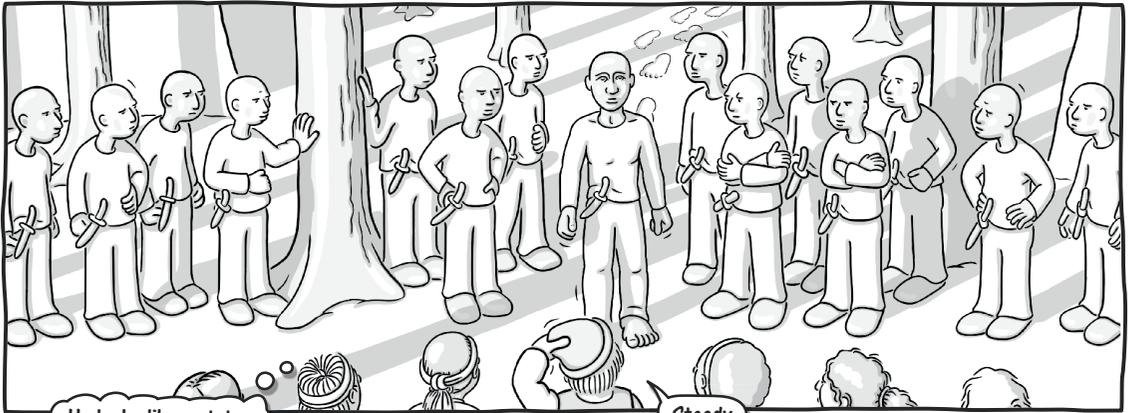






oh

wow



He looks like a statue

Steady

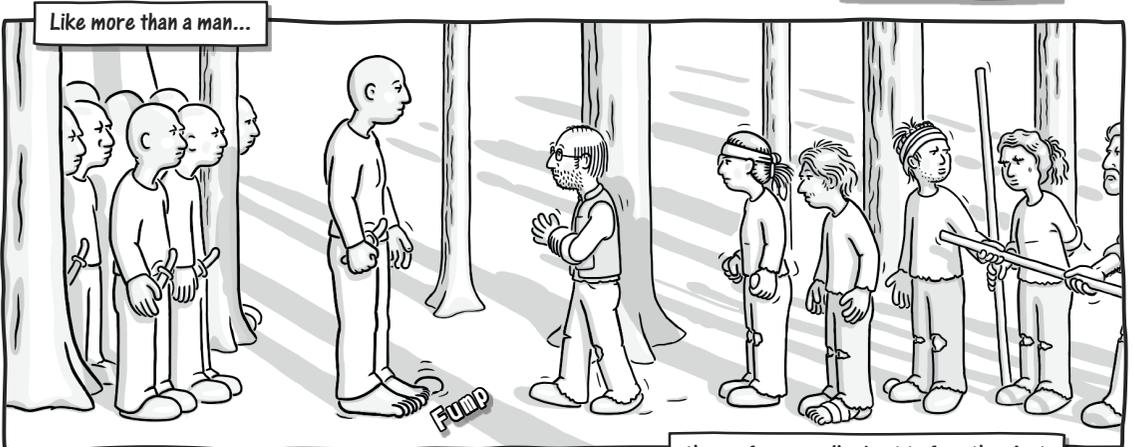


Fip

He didn't even blink!

Ung!

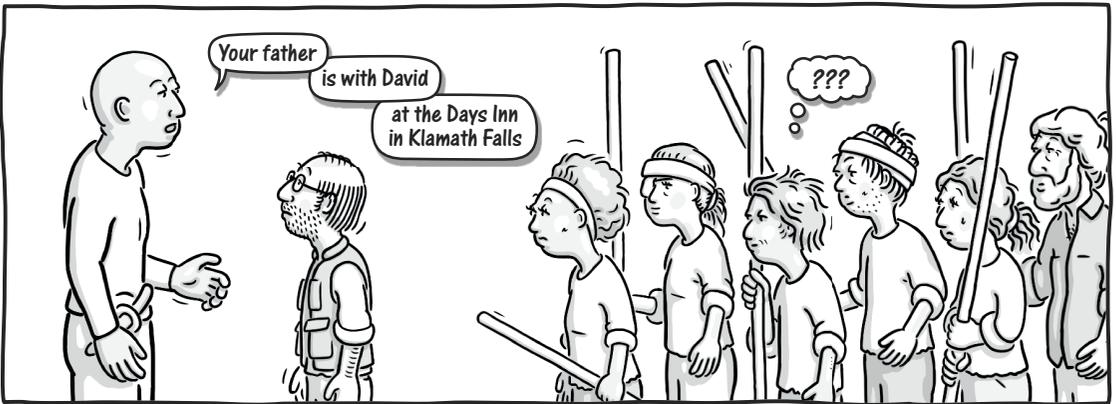
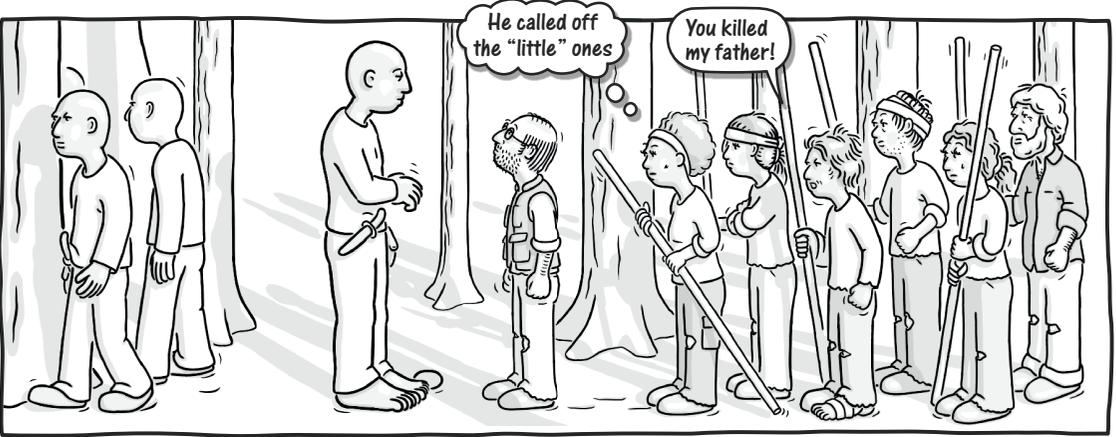
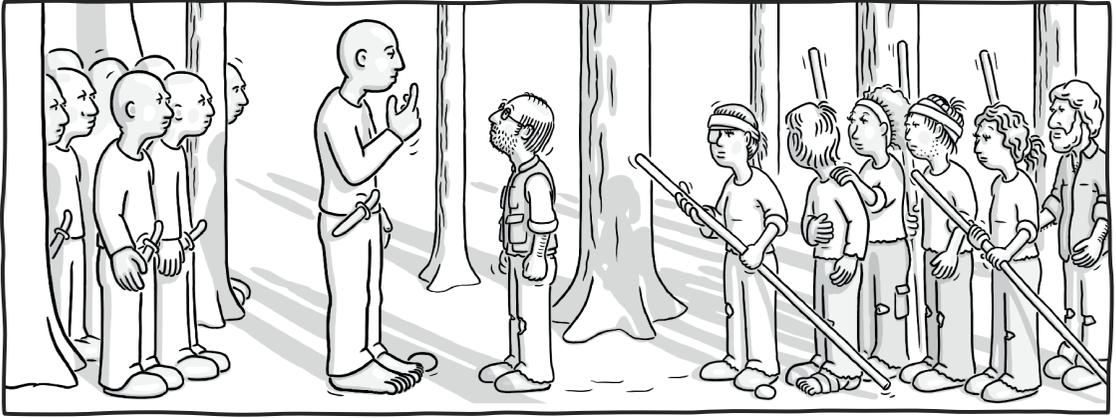
Sami threw a stone

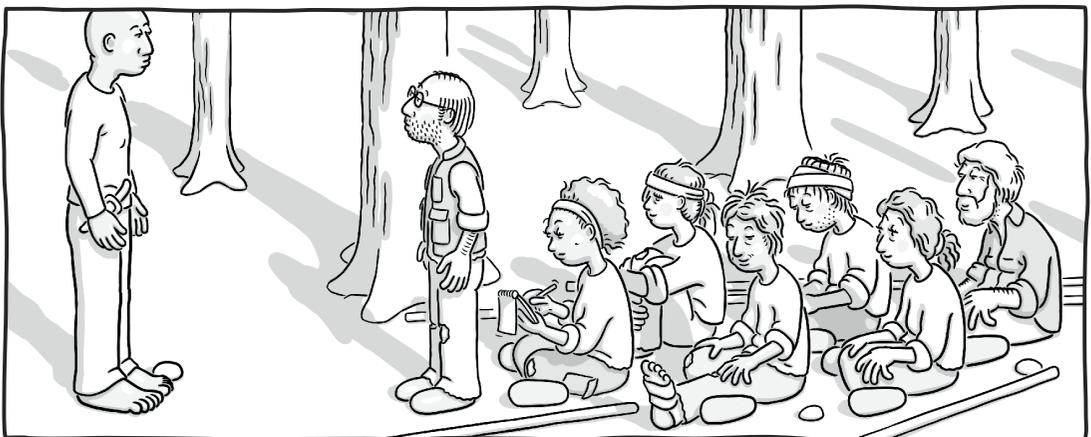
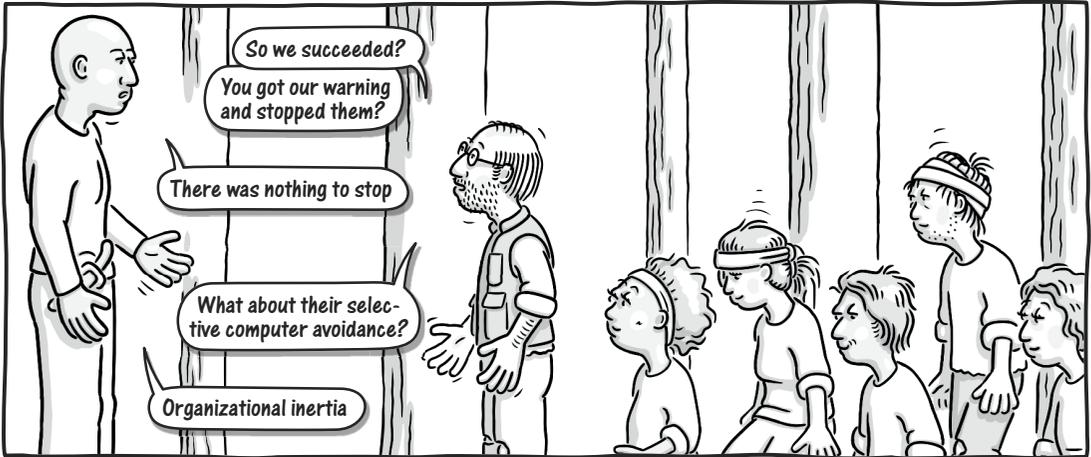
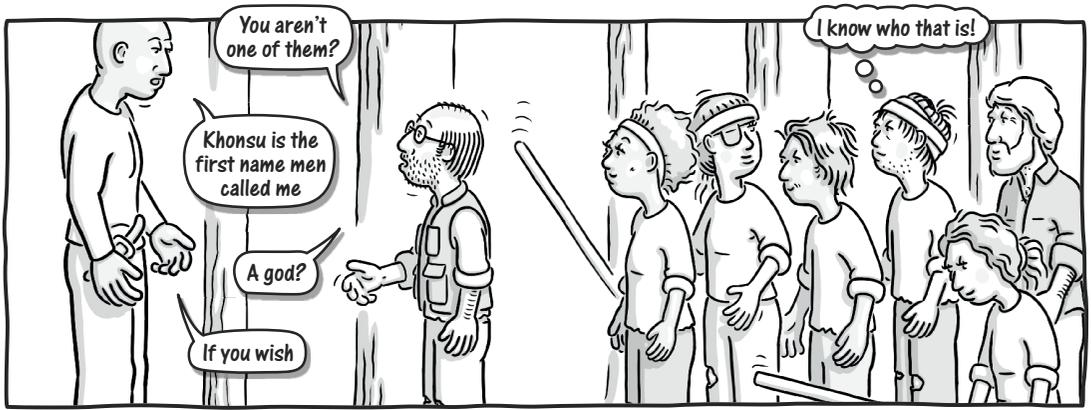


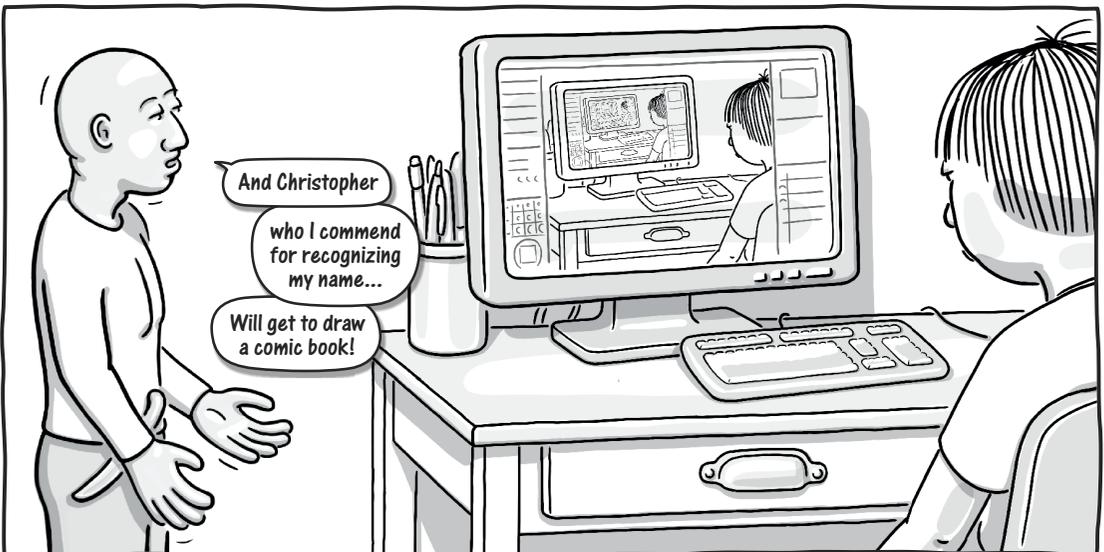
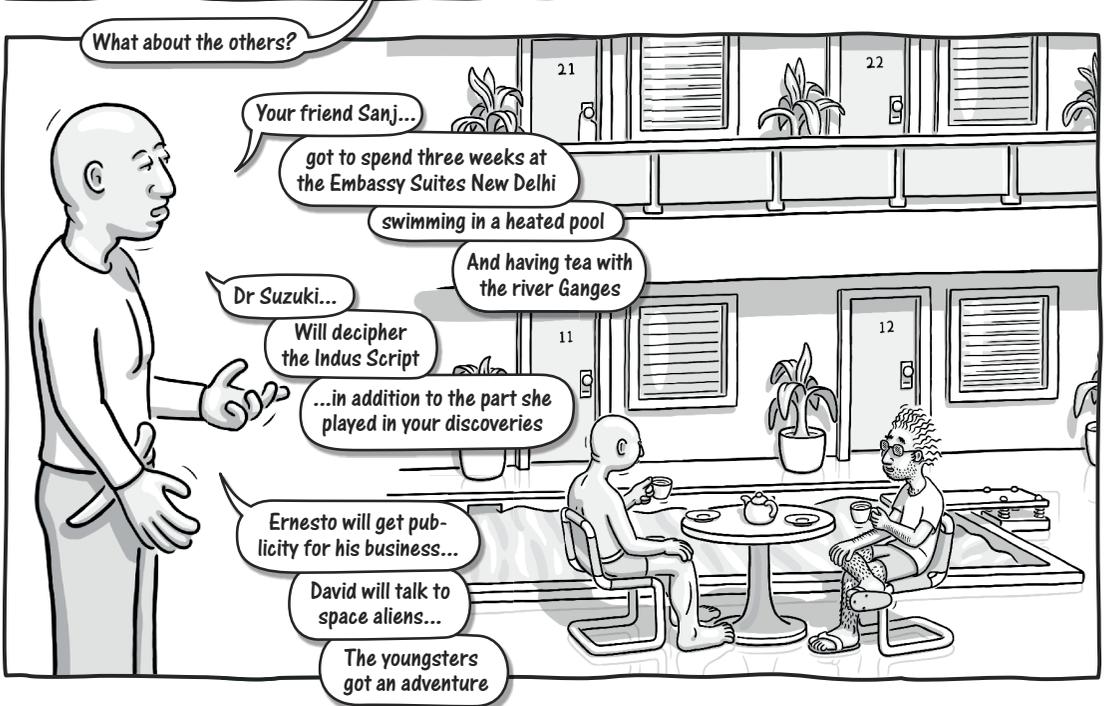
Like more than a man...

FUM!

the professor walked out to face the giant

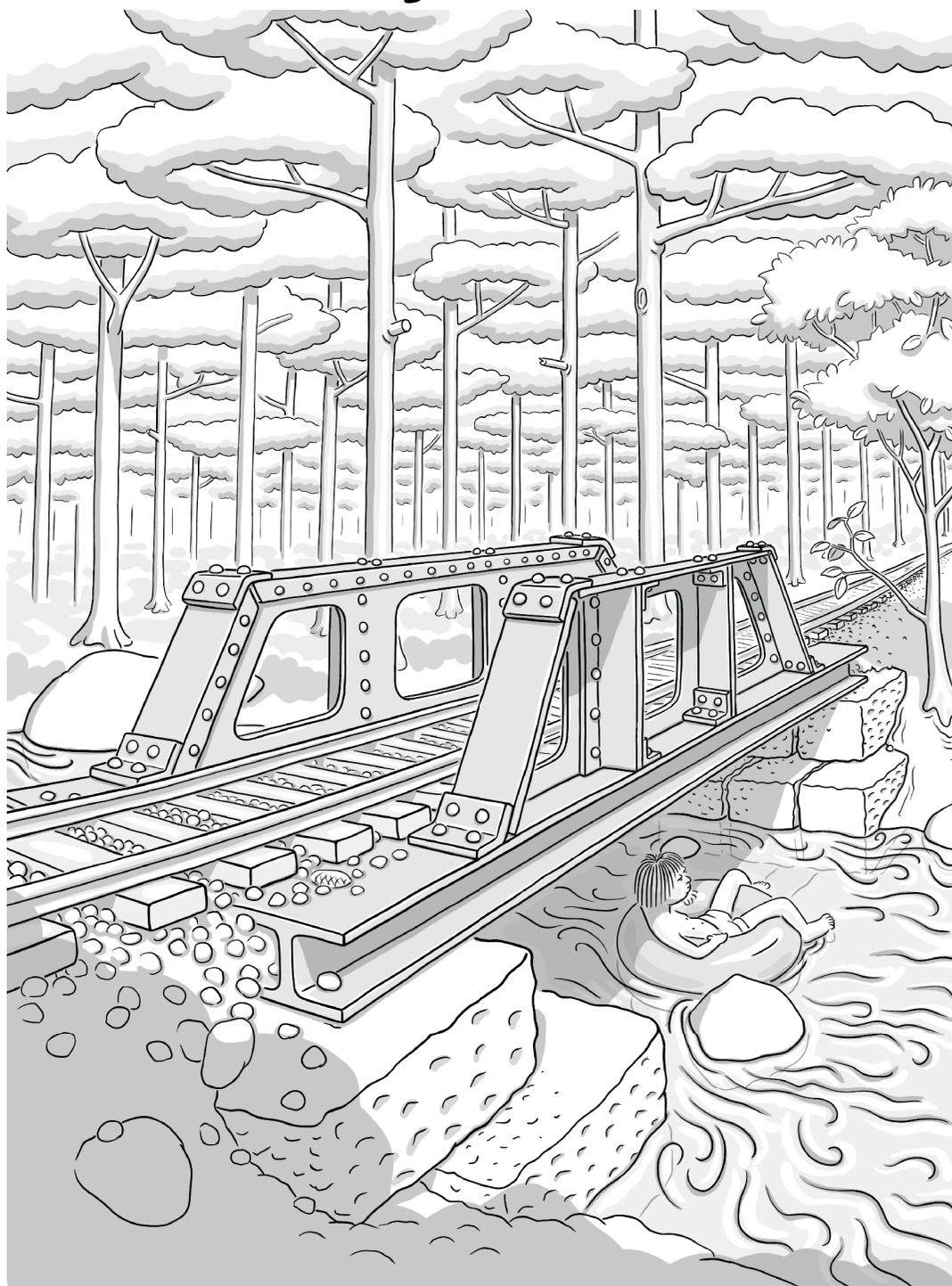






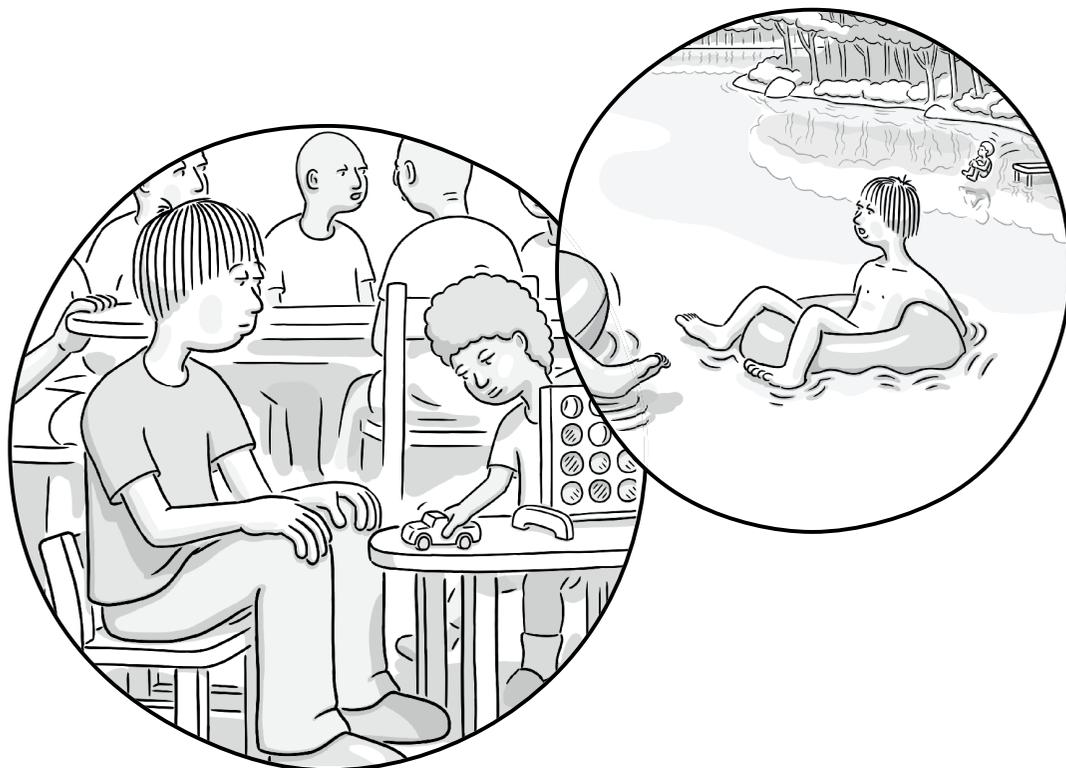
Story continued in:

The Outastanding B Plus



Coming Soon!

About the Author:



Chris Taylor is a would-be scientist turned sculptor, and now comic artist.

He began college as a biology major, but spent most of his time making wire sculptures rather than studying. Fortunately, though his science career never materialized, he has been able to keep this interest alive through his artistic creations, some of which can be seen here:

Art Website:

www.ctaylorart.net

Business Website:

www.taylorcustom.com

