

Apollo 13

—Muhammad Adib Surani

Eight o'clock on a Monday morning: a time reserved for very slow cleaners, lumberjacks, mythical fauns and first year biology students too foolish to turn up at repeat lectures later in the day. And also, on this particular Monday: a time reserved for two highly conspicuous figures cloaked in cadmium yellow, sneaking from one building to another, leaving nothing but a faintly fruity scent.

“Hey brother, is that everything on the list?”

“I think it is brother. Look, we still have a bit of time, and I would like to check on the progress of brother D's auction bids. Are you thinking what I'm thinking?”

“Yea, alright. I guess the ERC is the closest computer lab. But you go on ahead, I saw a bunch in one of the cafes back there, and I'm fairly sure that you know what I'm thinking.”

Much of the following time on the Melbourne University campus was spent in typical eight o'clock tranquility, and it wasn't until a good half an hour later that the two brothers met up again.

“Hey brother, we've got to go! *They've* come!”

“Just wait brother, I've got to turn this off.”

“Look brother, we don't have the time! Leave it! Don't worry, the pages are password protected anyway. Just go!”

“Alright, alright. Wait, why are you leaving those behind?”

“It's to distract them. HURRY! RUN!”

“Okay, okay. I guess I'll have to send this radio message to brother D as we're running.”

Elsewhere in Melbourne, *your* alarm goes off. You stretch about lazily in bed, as your radio alarm volume creeps up steadily towards the maximum. You flail your right arm about, hoping to hit the snooze button, but instead inadvertently switch the channel. A powerful flood of white noise assaults your ears from the bedside table. In between feeble attempts to shut down the epicenter of this aural shock whilst salvaging the remnants of your ear drums, you make out the following conversation:

- You look dazed. Something wrong with the oxygen tank?
- Nope, not so much as an audible echo. Even an x-ray couldn't disturb this little tango.
- Not another wordage rendition – it's like the time you called your car a Romeo Alpha.
- You're acting discordant like Charlie. We've always used "tango" to refer to the tank.
- = Delta India Six to Apollo, Delta India Six to Apollo, do you copy my delta?
- Alpha One Three to Houston, I read you in excellent condition.
- = Delta India Six to Apollo, please dampen the oxygen tango and give it a uniform stir.
- Roger that, Sierra. I shan't disdain this oddity; this job which Daedalus would ditch.
- Hey, we've got a problem here.
- Whoa! Hey! The tank is emitting an echo. What did you do, pour whiskey into it?
- Nothin'. I stirred the tank, but there seemed to be a dangerous alpha particle leak.
- Bravo! Your so-called uniform stir will get you fired before the first day of November.
- = Uh, this is Houston. Uh, wasn't sure if that was a mayday call. Please ditto.
- Houston, we have a problem.