

THE DIADEM OF HAPPINESS

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

ANGEL	Rough and ready owner and pilot of an interstellar spaceship.
OLIVER	A not-terribly-bright fellow far better at sarcasm than spelling .
PAULINE	A hot-to-temper woman, book smart but pretty wrapped up in herself.
ANDRESS	A monk of the Temple of Montac.

SETTING

The surface of Planet Arnox 6.

(It is outdoors on a distant planet. Beyond that, nothing really matters.)

ANGEL

Alright. We're here. Now what?

OLIVER

Where are we again?

PAULINE

Arnox Six. For God's sake, Ollie, we've only been talking about it for the last four months.

OLIVER

I was distracted.

PAULINE

You're an idiot.

ANGEL

Enough! What the hell has gotten into you two anyway?

PAULINE

Nothing!

OLIVER

She's upset because we broke up.

PAULINE

I'm upset because we *didn't* break up.

ANGEL

What the hell does that mean?

PAULINE

Mr. Maturity here couldn't even be bothered to tell me—

OLIVER

I wrote you a letter that explained the whole—

PAULINE

A letter!

OLIVER

That explained the whole thing!

I'm sorry I asked.

ANGEL

Do you know what she did?

OLIVER

I don't care—

ANGEL

She returned it! She went through and highlighted all the grammar mistakes—

OLIVER

Grammatical mistakes—

PAULINE

And then handed it back to me to rewrite.

OLIVER

It was total crap. Split infinitives, “sentences” that had no verbs. The spelling was embarrassing!

PAULINE

It wasn't that bad.

OLIVER

You were using numbers, for God sakes! What kind of adult spells using numbers!?

PAULINE

I didn't use numb—

OLIVER

Shut up! Shut up! Shut. Up. I don't care. (*Beat.*) You broke up with her in a note?

ANGEL

I *tried* to break up with her in a n—

OLIVER

And you. You refused to end the relationship because he *can't* spell?

ANGEL

It's a matter of self-respect. His grammar's for crap. His handwriting's no—

PAULINE

ANGEL

Anyway... The star map...

PAULINE

Right. This is definitely the planet.

OLIVER

(Muttering...)

Like she can follow a map.

PAULINE

Listen, you jackass! I've had enough of your—

ANGEL

Shut it! Both of you. Now... *(turning to Pauline)*, what's the next step?

PAULINE

Uhhmmm...

ANGEL

Paulinnnee... You said that once we landed, the rest would be obvious.

PAULINE

I don't know that I said it wou—

ANGEL

Those were your *exact* words. I said, "But what will we do when we land?" and you said "Oh, don't worry about that. It'll be obvious." "Obvious?" I asked. "Absolutely," you said.

PAULINE

That's some pretty impressive recall, Angel. How can—

ANGEL

You're not changing the subject on me, Pauline. We're here, and I'm waiting for something to become obvious.

PAULINE

Well, I'm sure it will. We just need to, you know, look around.

OLIVER

In other words, she has no idea what to do.

PAULINE

Eat rocks, jackass.

(During the last exchange, a monk has come onstage. He appears behind Pauline, but Oliver sees him and mutters...)

OLIVER

Oh, shit. There'll be no living wi—

ANDRESS

Welcome, travelers.

(Pauline is taken completely by surprise, and jumps into Oliver's arms.)

What brings you to the Temple of Montac?

OLIVER

(Walking to the monk)

I'd like to make a deposit.

(Pauline jumps down and gives Oliver a dirty look.)

PAULINE

I *told* you it would be obvious. May I? *(Angel nods.)* Oh, wise... Uh... What's your name?

ANDRESS

Ted.

PAULINE

Seriously? Ted?

ANDRESS

Heh. No. I was just kidding. I am Brother Address.

PAULINE

Oh wise and... just really... wise Address! We have come from across the galaxy—

OLIVER

We're only a few stars over, actually.

PAULINE

Do. You. Mind. There's a process, a ritual, and—

OLIVER

Sorry. Go on.

PAULINE

We have traveled across the galaxy that we might benefit from your wise... you know, wisdom.

OLIVER

That brought a tear to my eye. No, really. Angel, aren't—

PAULINE

Shut it, Oliver.

ANDRESS

You have come for the wisdom of the ancients.

PAULINE

We have.

ANDRESS

You quest for the secret of eternal happiness.

PAULINE

We do.

ANDRESS

And you are certain that you wish this?

PAULINE

We are.

(Andress turns to Angel.)

ANGEL

We are.

(Andress then turns to Oliver.)

OLIVER

Whatever.

ANDRESS

Decisive. Nice. I like that.

PAULINE

Oh, Brother Address, we beseech thee. *(She falls to her knees, her head on her hands facing the ground.)* Will you share your secrets with us?

(There is a pause. Address is looking bemused, and the others confused. Pauline looks up, then motions with her head that Angel and Oliver should prostrate themselves. Eventually they do, Angel somewhat awkwardly, and Oliver very awkwardly. Best if Oliver is not terribly flexible. Address stares at them, and then gets down on his knees in a similar position and says...)

ANDRESS

Uhhh, okay.

PAULINE

(Still prostrated...)

Oh, thank you wise and... ummm...

OLIVER

(Being helpful)

Really wise?

(Pauline sits up.)

PAULINE

Why do you always have to be like that?

OLIVER

Each time has a different reason.

PAULINE

You're such an ass.

ANGEL

Can we get back to the whole happiness thing? My knees are starting to hurt.

PAULINE

Thank you, wise Address! We are ready to receive your wisdom!

ANDRESS

W- would it be okay if we executed the old wisdom transfer standing up. I'm kind of with her about the knees.

PAULINE

Oh. Uh... sure.

(They all stand.)

ANDRESS

So. Happiness. Well, it pretty much just boils down to accepting yourself for what you are.

(There is a long, drawn-out pause. Pauline is clearly displeased.)

PAULINE

What?

ANDRESS

I said that it pretty much—

PAULINE

I heard what you said. Are you trying to tell us... (she has to pause for a moment to calm herself...) Tell us that we traveled forty seven light years... (another deep breath...) And all you have to offer is that sophomoric crap?!

ANDRESS

Well, ummm... *(Not wanting to disappoint...)* I mean, there are some helpful guidelines.

OLIVER

Oh, I like guidelines.

ANDRESS

Okay. For example, the true value in everything is not to be found in the thing itself, but rather the effort, you know, the degree of self, that you invest in obtaining it.

(Pauline is not pleased.)

OLIVER

Oh. That's nice.

ANDRESS

Uhh, other guidelines. Other guidelines... Ooo. I got one. Let go of your expectations, and just let the universe unfold as it will. Look for the lesson in each moment rather than trying to force that moment to be what you were expecting.

PAULINE

(Fury continuing to build)

Unfold...

ANDRESS

Right. Oh, wait wait wait. Also, sometimes you'll get angry, you know? And when that happens, just roll with it. And then when it's over, go back to accepting yourself and try to see the humor in things.

PAULINE

Now you listen to me, you Montacian piece of shit! I did *not* come all this way for a handful of bullshit platitudes! Nobody builds a fucking temple to dispense fucking platitudes in the middle of fucking nowhere! Now I don't know what kind of fucking bullshit you pull on other visitors, but *(she pulls out a ray gun)* if you don't start talking, I'm gonna blow your fucking head off!!

ANGEL

Whoa.

OLIVER

No more coffee for you.

PAULINE

You've got until the count of three to start talking. One...

ANDRESS

Okay! Okay! Don't kill me! I'll tell you what you want to know.

PAULINE

The secret to happiness. Start talking, Jack!

ANDRESS

In the far mountains *(he points)*, there is a complex of caves. They can only be found by wetting down the stones with water, and that will reveal a discoloration that leads to the entrance. You must then wait until the three moons are in alignment, and in that moment the cave will open – but only briefly – at midnight.

(Pauline's been taking notes.)

PAULINE

Caves. Find path with water. Alignment. Midnight. Go on.

ANDRESS

Deep in the caves, so deep that they say the air becomes hard to breath and the darkness pulls the sanity from your mind, you will find a chamber carved in the shape of an inverted dragon. In the center of that chamber there is a secret doorway in the floor that can only be opened by playing a specific set of ten different frequencies at the same time.

PAULINE

Inverted dragon. Ten frequencies.

ANDRESS

And when that door opens, you will see a staircase that leads to the vault where the Diadem of Happiness lies, waiting for its future owner.

PAULINE

Diadem of Happiness. Diadem?

ANDRESS

It's like a crown.

PAULINE

It's a piece of jewelry!?! If you're giving me some bullshit story—

ANDRESS

No, no! Not jewelry! It is a special technological artifact, perfected by the ancients. It works by creating exactly the right combination of subtle physical vibrations and low-level electromagnetic pulses to bring its wearer to a state of happiness. But without any side effects like one would get from drugs. And totally non-addictive.

(Pauline stares at Andress for a long moment, suspicious. Then suddenly, her face lights up.)

PAULINE

Hot damn! I knew we'd find it! Come on!

(She motions for the others to follow.)

Well, are you coming or not? Ollie!

OLIVER

Right. Um... Right. Cool!

*(She strides off, and Oliver follows a few steps behind.
Just as he is almost off, he turns back.)*

You coming?

ANGEL

Oh yeah. Right behind you.

(Oliver goes off, and Angel turns to Andress.)

A Diadem of Happiness?

ANDRESS

Uh huh.

ANGEL

At the bottom of cave that can only be entered during a lunar conjunction?

ANDRESS

Uh huh.

ANGEL

And can only be found by the watering an entire mountain.

ANDRESS

It could happen.

ANGEL

Uh huh.

ANDRESS

What can I say?

ANGEL

I can't believe they bought that.

ANDRESS

Not the first time, won't be the last. *(Angel looks incredulous.)* People will go to a lot of effort to avoid a little responsibility.

ANGEL

So... does that happen often?

ANDRESS

More than you'd like to think.

ANGEL

Does anyone ever actually listen? You know, to the bit about accepting yourself?

ANDRESS

(They share a knowing look.)

Yeah. Once in a blue moon. *(Pause.)* You want to meet some more of them?

ANGEL

Why not.

ANDRESS

Come on. It's pizza night.

(They exit in the opposite direction as the lights go out.)