



Act V Scene 3



“Hey! You! White coat! What are you doing in here!?”

Attila turned to address this new challenger.

“Actually, I’m not—”

“And I don’t care. You’re furloughed. Go home.”

Attila opened his mouth to speak once more, but his brain, digesting the new information, ordered it to plop close again. He paused, and an awkward silence ensued.

“Well? We’ve been open and closed intermittently for months. Practically everyone’s left for the greener pastures in the private sector. And yet here you are... You’d better have a good explanation!”

Attila squinted at the obstacle now in his way. She was in her thirties, with thick-rimmed glasses and chestnut hair, and she wore an immaculately laundered pantsuit. In fact, Attila noted, everything about her looked immaculate. Perfectly whitened teeth. Perfectly manicured nails. The only stray item that was slightly amiss was the cheap plastic name badge positioned a couple of centimetres below the top of her breast pocket. It read: “JAN — RISK OFFICER, CDC” in a rather alarming font.

On her wrist, she wore an analogue watch, oscillated by quartz and powered by the sun. Attila was not a betting man, but he had absolutely no doubt whatsoever that that watch had been synchronised to a universal clock. One that would set the tempo to her life, each beat a mere portion of another work day. She had the look of someone trapped halfway between ruthless careerism and consummate professionalism — someone who left absolutely nothing up to chance.

Attila glanced at her name badge and then at the sticky note in his hand. Timidly, he thrust it forward, and proceeded to explain himself.

“The phone rang. I picked it up. The man on the phone requested a quarantine. In Oceania. The situation seemed pretty dire.”

Jan had her hands on her hips, providing Attila with her best impression of a double-handled teapot. She was most certainly not amused.

“A critical situation in a far-off land... Is that all you have to say for yourself?”

Attila had thought that his efficient summary might have struck a chord and won him some favour. Clearly not. So he decided to change tack.

“Look, I know the past few months have been rough,” he began, fabricating facts as he went along.



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“But it’s important that we remain vigilant. That we remain wary. That we remain on guard. Because, after all, if we’re not here to save the world, who is?”

Jan stared, unmoved.

Not happy, Attila thought.

Thinking about his mission — his overarching mission, that is — he pressed on.

“Who is left?” he prompted once more. Still no response.

“Look, you and I chose to work here because we wanted to. Nobody forced us. It’s probably the reason why we came back.”

Attila paused, hoping that his assumption was valid. He stared at her, imploring her to cede ground, to give him something to work with.

Exhausted by the tension, he looked away, taking in the hollowness of the abandoned call centre, as if to prove a point. Then he glanced back at her again and continued his rousing speech.

“We are here because we do good things. In fact, everyone who once worked here probably did too. But now it’s just us. We are the only resistance left to an unknown infectious disease that could devastate this foreign country. And I believe it is our duty — our responsibility — to help. So what do you say, hey? How about we go save the world?”

Attila rued the final note of his plea. It was too inquisitive and too uncertain. Too open to the terse rejoinder of “No”.

To her credit, the stern-looking woman mulled his words over.

So it all comes down to this, Attila thought. The next few words could well determine the fate of a nation.

Jan looked at Attila some more. Then, gradually but deliberately, she reached for the sticky note in his hand — one that he himself had forgotten about in his fanciful gesticulations.

“I’ll dispatch a team,” she said. Her tone was softer, and more hopeful. “You get down to the lab. Your colleagues are waiting.”

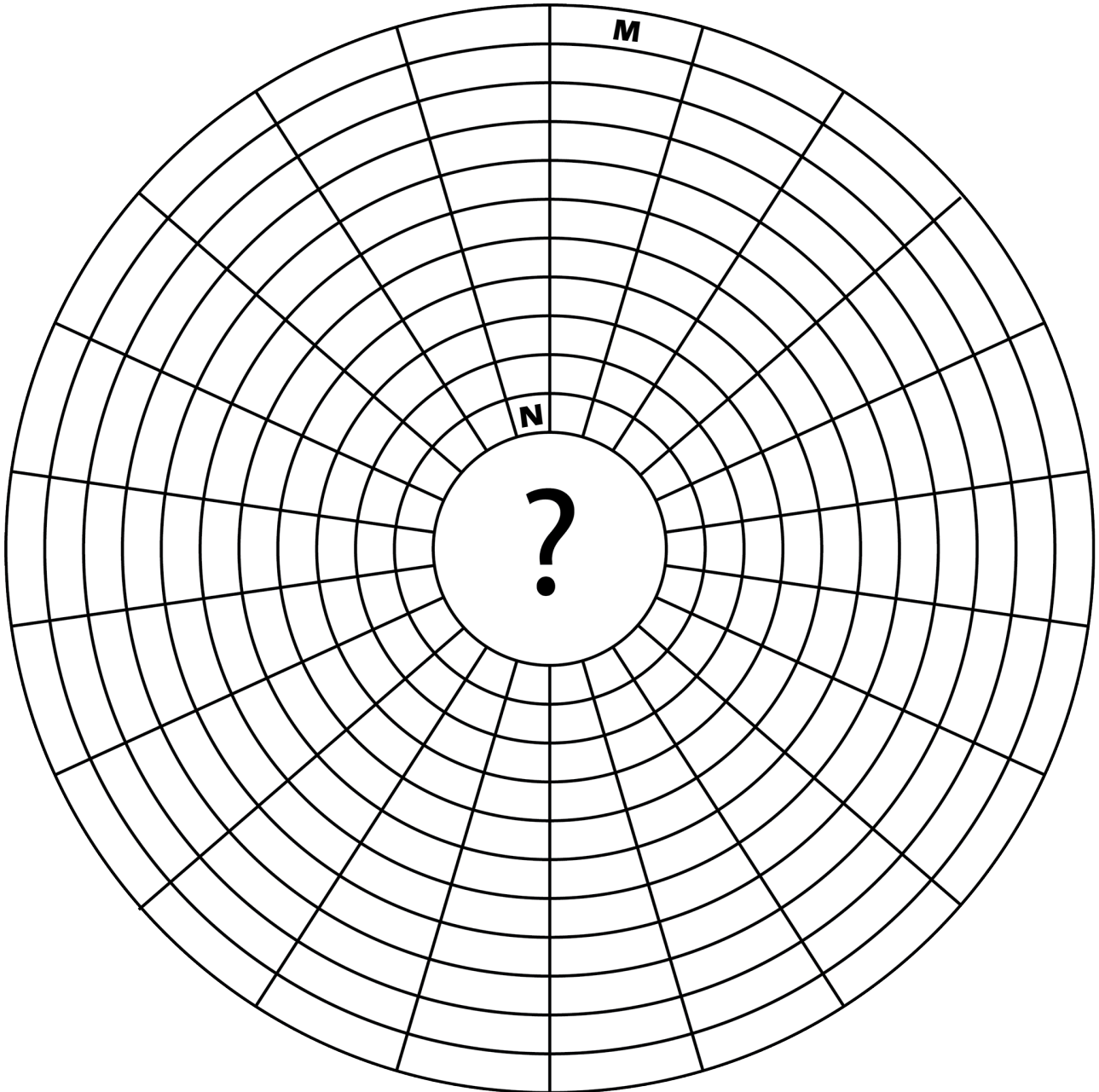
Attila looked back at her and matched her sombre outlook. But, on the inside, he was ecstatic. Never in a million years did he think he possessed the requisite oratory skills to get himself out of a situation like that.

But there you go, he thought. With grim determination, he clutched his cane and trudged his way towards the research facilities.



UNCLE TOBYS

ROLL UPS



- Cardiac stimulant / Cardiac stimulant
- Clergyman / Clergyman
- E _ E / E _ E
- Protecting / Protecting
- Racing / Racing
- Results in genetic selection / Result of genetic selection
- Seasonal event / Seasonal event
- Show-offy / Show-offy
- Smear / Smear
- Squash / Squash
- ∴ / ∴



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1. City where this Hunt is based
2. Motor, found in 71. perhaps
3. The same
4. Autoimmune disease
5. James Bond and John le Carré, for example.
6. What Australians allegedly throw on the barbie
7. Ink-filled writing implement
8. Undiluted or tidy
9. Pollical digit
10. Order of operations (init.)
11. Latin dance style
12. Opposite of pizzicato
13. Astronomical revolution
14. Michael Jackson song
15. Perch (Australian fish)
16. The most famous Scottish loch
17. Eastern neighbours of Norwegians
18. What some Western Australians and Texans want to do
19. What a Shakespearean murderer calls his youthful victim in Macbeth
20. Eucalyptus (Australian)
21. Native to a region
22. Social tier
23. Dutch cheese
24. Martinique country code
25. Drinking heartily
26. Sticky substance
27. Major international organisation founded in 1961 (init.)
28. Neapolitan painter, b. 1901
29. Element 39
30. Small rug
31. Annoying jerk
32. Hinted
33. Small amount, complement of drab
34. Sum of money paid to release a prisoner pending trial
35. Birds of the genus *Linaria*
36. In ____ (Latin for 'in the original place')
37. Tertiary education centre, for short
38. African corn lilies
39. Novel by de Avellaneda
40. Nickname of 1986 Coleman medallist
41. Also known as a mini-stroke (init.)
42. Embarrass, make ashamed
43. Thou ____ (you have, archaic.)
44. Intentionally sunburns
45. Look, understand
46. Stereotypical Canadian interjection
47. Cruel, perhaps due to a cavity in the thorax?
48. Term for the two membranous layers around lungs or intestines
49. ISO code for the Argentine peso
50. IATA code of airport in Weyers Cave, VA
51. Animal from iconic Sound of Music song
52. Long fish, possibly electric
53. Currency of Georgia
54. Object of devotion
55. Confucius' home state
56. IATA code for Sri Lanka's flag carrier
57. Singaporean PM's initials
58. Where experiments occur or a dog breed, for short
59. Cloth a baby wears during meal times
60. Colloquial way to address a significant other, derided for being Danish slang for excrement
61. Period of time
62. Centre of revolution or a wartime faction
63. Opposite of difference
64. Saw or got to know
65. Stopwatch
66. Perch (what a bird might do)
67. Abnormal growth, when diagnosed at the Royal Melbourne Hospital
68. Person employing a lasso
69. Modern music style based on rhythmic speech
70. Meringue-based dessert commonly associated with New Zealand, for short
71. Type of road vehicle, can come in a mini-variety