

THOUGHTAUDIO



THE ENLIGHTENMENT  
OF EDWARD THE BILLY GOAT

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Once upon a time, there was a delightful little Billy goat named Edward, who lived high on the side of Kensington Mountain overlooking the beautiful Noir Valley. Edward spent his day foraging for food, jumping from rock to rock, frolicking through the foggy mist, and generally enjoying his Billy goat life. Edward lived a simple and tranquil existence and appreciated the fact that living high on Kensington Mountain provided him safety from hungry predators and distance from the craggy world below.

One day, Edward spotted a two-legged creature sitting in a beautiful meadow. It had its legs crossed, eyes closed, and its palms resting calmly on its knees facing upward toward the sky. He had never seen a creature like this before on his mountain. From what Edward could tell, it appeared sublime and peaceful, even though its body inexplicably twitched, as if haunted by an electrical current. As Edward continued to gaze at the being facing him, it seemed to present no outward sign of danger. It wore a Black Sabbath T-Shirt, old blue jeans, uniquely laced \$250 Puma tennis shoes, and black thick-rimmed glasses. By his side was a crooked wooden staff yanked from one of the trees in Noir Valley, and a huge jug of dark IPA ale. Edward's curiosity was piqued, and he decided to investigate the peculiar creature who had ventured so high up Kensington Mountain.

As Edward moved closer to the creature, it appeared to have its eyes half-shut as it breathed in and out with short wheezing snuffles. Its body swayed from side to side as if attempting to find its balance as the bothersome twitching continued incessantly. Suddenly, the creature straightened up, snorting and gasping, and then lulled itself back into a swaying motion as if it were fast asleep once again.

“What an odd way to nap,” Edward said to himself as he got within a hair's breadth of the creature's nose, sniffing up and down the lanky body of the enigmatic stranger.

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Without notice, the creature's eyes popped wide open. Edward jumped backward high into the air, ready to flee at any sign of danger. However, the creature merely smiled when he saw the young Billy goat in front of him.

“Hello Billy goat,” said the creature in a calm voice. “How are you today?”

Edward flew into the air once more when he heard the creature talk. However, the creature remained sitting placidly with a big smile drawn across his face. This unanticipated yet soothing reaction calmed Edward down. As a rush of curiosity streamed over Edward, he decided to answer the creature's question.

“I am fine,” answered Edward, still keeping a safe distance from the outlander. “What are you doing here so high on our mountainside?”

“Well, truth be told, I was just about to have a swig of this fine dark IPA ale,” answered the creature. “Would you like some? It's a joyous brand called Cactus Bristle, named after my favorite Tucson, Arizona microbrewery. I'm sure you would enjoy it.”

“No thank you,” ruffled Edward as he shivered from the unfamiliar odor. “I can smell it from here.”

The creature took a huge swig of his ale, burped, and wiped his mouth with his sleeve.

Edward watched this perplexing ritual take place with wonder as he slowly lurched forward and asked, “What is your name creature?”

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The creature grimaced. “I am *not* a creature. Well, technically that’s not true, I *am* a creature, but more precisely, I am a human being. Let me introduce myself. My name is Joshua Pummelgrass. My friends call me Josh. By the way, what is your name Billy goat, if you don’t mind me asking?”

“My name is Edward. I live on this mountainside, but why are you here?” asked Edward.

Josh took another swig of his ale and stretched his arms high into the air until his back cracked.

“You see, I made the long pilgrimage up your mountainside to become *One* with the *Great Beyond* and begin my omnisciently ordained duty to start a new religion for the betterment of all humanity.”

“That sounds like a huge assignment. Is that why you were sleeping in such a strange position?” asked Edward, still wary of the being in front of him.

“I know it looks like I’m sleeping, but it’s what we humans call meditating,” Josh answered. “There’s a big difference. Sleep is what every living creature on the planet does. Meditation, on the other hand, is an elusive mental process used by aspiring contemplative monks like me.”

Edward gasped with wonderment.

“If meditation is not sleep, even though it looks like sleep, then maybe I don’t quite understand what meditation means.”

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Josh let out a muffled laugh. He took another swig of ale, slowly began tapping his fingertips together, and continued his explanation.

“Meditation is a discipline where the practitioner sits still in one place for days on end attempting to stop their mind from whirling on the world’s irrelevancies. After years or even decades of regimented practice, the world’s dastardly influences vanish, unearthing a glowing white light hovering in complete darkness deep inside the soul. Remaining laser focused on the light results in connecting with the *All* until one day achieving Enlightenment. Once a person gains Enlightenment, they begin to hear the resonant *Tone* of the *Infinite*. Once in touch with the *Tone*, the practitioner receives special superpowers. That’s the sweet spot of meditating.”

“Sweet spot? Is there food involved?” asked Edward, finding food mentioned as part of an intricate cognitive process confusing.

“No! No! The *Tone*’s superpowers usually involve ultra-heightened abilities that meditative monks use to accomplish their pre-ordained destinies while hovering above the noisy world around them,” answered Josh. “I haven’t hit the sweet spot yet. I am still at the stage of trying to stop random irrelevancies from bouncing around inside my head, but I’m working on it.”

Josh stopped to reposition himself and then took another long swig from his jug.

“You see Edward; I’ve learned all this from a plethora of books I bought on online. My immediate objective is to leapfrog the long-term aspect of meditating and gain Enlightenment in a matter of weeks. After I accomplish that I will compile what I’ve learned into an exclusively branded metaphysical manifesto called *The Billion Gazillion Invisible Threads of Existential Being – Gaining Enlightenment in Less Than Two Weeks*.

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It's going to be a bestseller and is the basis of funding a global religious enterprise that will profoundly change civilization. I just have to finish my research, start writing it, find a publisher, and, of course, connect with the All through the meditative process."

Edward was flabbergasted. "You speak like Kolefabba, the wisest Billy goat on the mountain," said Edward. "Kolefabba says that the mysteries of our Billy goat life remain hidden because the mountain keeps them stored away in a huge vault hidden deep in its belly. Then one day when the mountain is no more, the mysteries will shine upon the world like the day's sun."

Josh nodded his head in approval.

"That's very poetic Edward. I want to meet your Kolefabba. However, publishing a bestselling metaphysical manifesto is merely the start of my venture. After reaching Enlightenment and gaining my superpowers, I jump-start a new 21<sup>st</sup> century religion. From there, I begin opening up franchise monasteries all over the world. In fact, now that I think about it, I'll build the first monastery on this exact spot where we met. It's important for a new religion to brand itself with a good creation story. It ranks up there with creative logo design, vibrant coloration, and elegant font usage, not to mention the wardrobe and accessories required for a charismatic stage presence."

"Maybe I missed something along the way," Edward responded, shaking his head from side to side somewhat confused.

Josh smiled and patted Edward on the nose.

"It's a difficult notion at first, so your confusion is understandable. That's due to my religion's unique and daring business model that scales without any socio-economic

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resistance. Let me start with an example using the book's revenue model. Let's say a million people buy my book, and I get one dollar for each book, then that's one million dollars in my pocket. Here's a little test. What if I sell 250 million books? What if I sell a billion books?

Edward's mind started swirling with computational puzzlement.

"I'm sorry, I'm not too good in math," squirmed Edward.

"You don't have to be good in math. Take it from me. It's a very big number. The good news is that it's going to be effortless to attain that whopping number given the assured popularity of my book."

"I assume in human terms it represents a lot of books and a lot of money," said Edward. "Just one thing, how do you know your book is going to be so popular before it's even written or published?"

Josh let out a small cough, cracked his neck, and then looked Edward right in the eyes.

"It is well known among apocalyptic visionaries that we live in the most despairing times civilization has ever seen. In its attempt to cope with this gloomy situation, humanity craves something to believe in to cast away their despondency and bring true happiness into their lives. My prophetic response entails creating a modern religion slashing through the dark walls of social depravity that imprisons the modern psyche."

"Oh my goodness," twitched Edward. "Please, continue."

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“The human soul needs to breathe in its individuality to feel vibrant and alive. Once my manifesto hits the market, people from all over the world will experience an invigorating breakthrough in their lives and throng to my new religion. As money pours into my coffers, I re-invest the book’s revenue to develop the technological infrastructure.”

Edward felt his body begin to tremble, and although perplexed, wanted to hear more about Josh’s exciting religious enterprise.

Josh continued unfazed.

“You see Edward the world is going through a psychological rough patch and suffers from an avalanche of depression and highly nuanced cognitive dissonance. Technology collapses the world into bite-sized pieces of mind candy. People gorge themselves on dank memes and social media concoctions causing a rash of psychological addictions. In the end, all they find is a dark caliginous void waiting for them. To make matters worse, this existential crisis pairs perfectly with a collapsing environment on track to annihilate all human life from the face of the planet.

Edward wondered what type of world human beings lived in that made life so unbearable. The only despair Edward ever felt on Kensington Mountain was the loss of his best friend Cheddar to a hungry wolf last year. Aside from the normal eat-or-be-eaten laws of nature, Edward’s world was serene.

Josh pulled a long stick of beef jerky from his pack, tore off a hunky chunk with his teeth, and stared into Edward’s eyes with a tranquil gaze.

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“To solve this grave problem, I’ve added one more core component to the mix. In my estimation, the one missing ingredient in all human institutions, in fact, in all human endeavors, is the need for every individual, regardless of birthright, riches, or social status to gain an unimpeded path to perfection.”

Edward gasped in awe.

Josh straightened his back, closed his eyes momentarily as if pondering to find his next words, and continued his explanation.

“Historically, civilization sought democracy as the ideal solution to human happiness. Obviously, that particular Age of Reason idea failed.”

Edward was confused about the term democracy, but he understood failure in the face of so much human suffering.

Josh continued his explanation as Edward’s eyes began to sharpen to a pinpoint focus.

“The question is why did it fail and what should replace it. You see Edward, the cornerstone of democracy is “one person — one vote.” Voting is merely access to selecting government leaders. It touches nothing else in a person’s life, hence, its failure.

Perfection, on the other hand, covers all aspects of a person’s life. If every individual in the world walked around as a perfect human being, the result would be exhilaration and personal contentment, not to mention world peace.

The only problem with perfection is that people don’t want to make a monstrous effort to achieve it. As you well know, perfection requires the need for innate talent, rigorous

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discipline, and relentless persistence. Yet, the fact remains that most people have no talent, they abhor discipline, and stop working on their dreams at the first sign of trouble. Sure, there are a few natural roadblocks that the individual can't control, but most people are lazy, lack ambition, and do not harbor anything resembling talent. Yet, they yearn to romp at the top of the social pyramid."

"The suspense is killing me Jason, tell me more," Edward blurted.

"You see Edward the humongous proceeds of my book allow me to monetize perfection with a secret sauce ecommerce app that makes perfection available to anyone willing to pay for it. All they have to do is download the app and sign in with a credit card or PayPal. A menu of certified perfection levels pops up, offering perfection at different price points, from startup pricing that most anyone can afford, expanding to ultra-levels of perfection designed for wealthy perfection seekers and corporate sponsors.

With an initial perfection purchase, the buyer automatically becomes a member of my new religion. They receive a downloadable, serialized, and uniquely decorated Monastery Perfection Certificate for each perfection level. They are eligible for upgrades that include merchandise, software plug-ins, never-ending workshops, and luxury cruise get-a-ways. As converts continue to upgrade they start collecting Certificates and begin trading them through our arbitrage<sup>1</sup> exchange centers located in our franchise monasteries all over the world. In a few years, we begin banking services and offer monastery credit cards. As my pro forma spreadsheets indicate, there's nothing left but listening to the All's Tone go cha-ching. As everyone knows Edward, spreadsheets don't lie."

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<sup>1</sup> Arbitrage: the simultaneous buying and selling of the same negotiable financial instruments or commodities in different markets in order to make an immediate profit without risk

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Edward's head nodded up and down awed at the genius of Josh's business model. In a fit of joy, Edward grabbed Josh's jug of IPA ale and began sloshing it down. As the calm-inducing liquid began to take hold, Edward fell into a quiet stupor, his ears drooping, and his wobbly legs attempting to maintain his balance. He wanted to hear more.

“Edward, I've opened up a sector that targets 99.999% of the global population. By using a pay-to-play model, it makes innate talent, skill, and perseverance obsolete. Our members don't win or lose. There's no inside versus outside view of life. All that's required is paying for the perfection level of your dreams. There is no guesswork, no existential crisis, no despair, and their life conversion happens instantly -- ALL WITHOUT LIFTING A FINGER! The big bonus is that it's all tax exempt because it's a religion, and not a commercial enterprise. It's destined to make me the richest individual in the history of the world, along with my early investors.”

“Amazing!” squealed Edward. “A no effort, everyone wins social buffet of perfection, certified by collectable Monastery Perfection Certificates, a franchise chain of monasteries, banks, and arbitrage exchange centers generating billions of dollars in revenue, all tax free, while creating the richest people in the history of existence, jumpstarted by a bestselling manifesto.”

Edward's mind was buzzing. He began calculating the difference between his roles as a simple Billy goat residing on Kensington Mountain versus becoming a big-time ground-floor player in a disruptive pay-to-play global religion.

As Edward sauntered in an IPA ale phantasmagorical ecstasy, he blurted, “I want in!”

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**EPILOGUE**

Over the next six weeks, Jason and Edward huddled in a grass-hut think-tank, creating a launch strategy to make Josh's religious and financial visions come true. They christened the hut the NOIR VALLEY MONASTERY. They began the arduous task of creating the monastery's perfection certificates.

Alas! The effort never made it to the finish line. Josh ran out of money and IPA ale in his attempt at finding the right design, fonts, and coloration for his certificates, not to mention his priestly ensemble. His dire situation forced him to return to his job in the craggy world below. Although on a happier note, before Josh left, he anointed Edward with sainthood in his religion, knighting him St. Edward the Enlightened. He bestowed on Edward his crooked wooden staff, appointed him Pontiff of Noir Valley Monastery, and then bid him farewell.

Edward, now St. Edward the Enlightened, transformed the staff into a sacred relic as his first act of sainthood, renaming it the Sacred Staff of Noir Valley. Today the sacred relic is legendary for its healing properties and producing profound mystical illusions of perfection. He used his self-ordained power of papal infallibility to decide on the right fonts and coloration for the design of the monastery's perfection certificates and began to sell millions of them online. He doubled down on his infallibility power by creating a wondrous papal ensemble that became the talk of Kensington Mountain. Edward lived out his life in luxury until the same wolf that claimed the life of his best friend Cheddar also consumed St. Edward the Enlightened.

As time passed, a new generation of Billy goats inhabited the mountainside. They spent their days foraging for food, jumping from rock to rock, and frolicking through the foggy mist as they did in the ancient days of St. Edward the Enlightened.