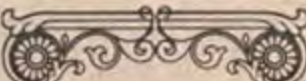



PROLOGUE:

There are always those who ask, what is it all about? For those who need to ask, for those who need points sharply made, who need to know "where it's at," *this*:



"The mass of men serve the state thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies. They are the standing army, and the militia, jailors, constables, posse comitatus, etc. In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgment or of the moral sense; but they put themselves on a level with wood and earth and stones; and wooden men can perhaps be manufactured that will serve the purpose as well. Such men command no more respect than men of straw or a lump of dirt. They have the same sort of worth only as horses and dogs. Yet such as these even are commonly esteemed good citizens. Others— as most legislators, politicians, lawyers, ministers, and officeholders— serve the state chiefly with their heads; and, as they rarely make any moral distinctions, they are as likely to serve the Devil, without intending it, as God. A very few, as heroes, patriots, martyrs, reformers in the great sense, and men, serve the state with their consciences also, and so necessarily resist it for the most part; and they are commonly treated as enemies by it."

*Henry David Thoreau,
Civil Disobedience.*



That is the heart of it. Now to begin in the *middle*, and later learn the beginning; the end will take care of itself....

BUT BECAUSE IT WAS THE VERY WORLD IT WAS... THE VERY WORLD THEY HAD ALLOWED IT TO BECOME... FOR MONTHS THE HARLEQUIN'S ACTIVITIES DID NOT COME TO THE ATTENTION OF THE ONES WHO KEPT THE MACHINES FUNCTIONING SMOOTHLY.

AND BY THEN, HE HAD BECOME SOMETHING THEY HAD FILTERED OUT OF THE SYSTEM MANY DECADES BEFORE.

HE HAD BECOME A PERSONALITY.



HE'S COMING!
THE TICKTOCKMAN
IS COMING!

OF COURSE
HE IS. IT'S TIME,
ISN'T IT?

JUST DON'T CALL
HIM THE TICKTOCKMAN
TO HIS MASK!

GOOD MORNING,
MASTER
TIMEKEEPER.

YOU DON'T CALL A MAN
A HATED NAME... NOT WHEN
THAT MAN, BEHIND HIS MASK,
IS CAPABLE OF REVOKING
THE MINUTES, THE HOURS,
THE DAYS AND NIGHTS, THE
YEARS OF YOUR LIFE.

TO HIS MASK
THEY SAID:

GOOD
MORNING,
MASTER
TIMEKEEPER.

IT WAS SAFER THAT WAY.

THE TICKTOCKMAN:
VERY MUCH OVER
SIX FEET TALL, OFTEN
SILENT, A SOFT
PURRING MAN WHEN
THINGS WENT TIMEWISE.

THE TICKTOCKMAN.

YOUR
REPORT,
MISTER
FUGIT.

YES,
MASTER
TIMEKEEPER...

SUBJECT FOR TODAY IS THE NOTORIOUS ENTITY KNOWN AS THE HARLEQUIN.

HE IS KNOWN BY THE APPELLATION, OF COURSE, ONLY TO AN EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED SEGMENT OF THE POPULACE.

TO US, OF COURSE, HE IS SIMPLY:

TIME-CARD
711-6AA-483...

SUBJECT MATTER:
CELEBRITY AT LARGE.

OBJECT:
APPREHENSION.

FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS DISCUSSION OF THE REACTION OF THE PUBLIC TO SAID HARLEQUIN, I HAVE DIVIDED THE POPULACE INTO THREE GROUPS:

IN CERTAIN CIRCLES -- MIDDLE-CLASS CIRCLES -- THE VERY IDEA OF PERSONALITY IS CONSIDERED DISGUSTING, VULGAR OSTENTATION. ANARCHISTIC. SHAMEFUL!

AND, BY THE UPPER CLASSES, HE IS CONSIDERED A MENACE TO THE STATUS QUO ... A HERETIC, A REBEL, A DISGRACE, IN SHORT A PERIL!

BUT DOWN BELOW ... AH, DOWN BELOW, WHERE THE PEOPLE ALWAYS NEED THEIR SAINTS AND SINNERS ... THEIR BREAD AND CIRCUSES ... THEIR HEROES AND VILLAINS ...

THERE HE IS CONSIDERED A BOLIVAR ...

A NAPOLEON

A ROBIN HOOD

A DICK BONG (ACE OF ACES)

A JESUS

A JOMO KENYATA

WHOEVER THEY ALL WERE, OF COURSE.

THE ONES WHO
KEEP THE MACHINES
FUNCTIONING
SMOOTHLY HAVE
ACCORDINGLY
TURNED HIS FILE
OVER TO US...

WE'VE GOT HIM
NOW, TICKTOCKM--

I MEAN --
MASTER
TIMEKEEPER--!

...ALONG WITH
HIS TIME-CARD
AND HIS
CARDIOPATE.

THIS IS WHAT
HE IS, BUT NOT
WHO HE IS:

THIS TIME-CARD
ON MY RIGHT HAND HAS
A NAME ON IT, BUT IT
IS THE NAME OF WHAT
HE IS, NOT WHO HE IS.

THE CARDIOPATE IN MY
LEFT HAND IS ALSO NAMED,
BUT NOT WHOM NAMED,
MERELY WHAT NAMED.

BEFORE I CAN
EXERCISE PROPER
REVOCATION, I
HAVE TO KNOW WHO
THIS WHAT IS.

WHO IS
THIS
HARLEQUIN?

THE TICKTOCKMAN
WAS NOT PURRING
SMOOTHLY.

TIMWISE, IT
WAS JANGLE.

HOWEVER, IT WAS
THE LONGEST SPEECH
THEY HAD EVER HEARD
HIM UTTER AT ONE TIME.

AND SO, THEY
ALL SCURRIED
TO FIND OUT!

WHO IS THE
HARLEQUIN?

FIRST
LEVEL:
ACTIVITY
NORMAL.

ENTREPRENEURS
ENGAGED IN
ENTREPRENEURING.

SECOND
LEVEL:
ACTIVITY
NORMAL..

CONSUMERS
ENGAGED IN
CONSUMING.

THIRD
LEVEL:
ACTIVITY
NORMAL.

PRODUCERS
ENGAGED IN
PRODUCING.

2:47 P.M.
SHIFT NOW ENTERING
THE TIMKIN ROLLER-
BEARING PLANT. ALL
WEARING REGULATION
SNEAKERS.

IN ONE
MINUTE, PRECISELY,
THE 5:00 A.M. SHIFT
WILL BE DEPART--
WAIT!

LOOK!
UP IN THE SKY--
THIS IS
UNHEARD
OF!

SOMETHING
UNSCHEDULED IS
GOING ON!!

HIGH ABOVE THE THIRD LEVEL OF THE CITY, HE CROUCHED ON THE HUMMING ALUMINUM-FRAME PLATFORM OF THE AIRBOAT*... AND STARED DOWN AT THE NEAT MONDRIAN ARRANGEMENT OF THE BUILDINGS.

AN ELFIN GRIN SPREAD ACROSS HIS TANNED FEATURES, AND HIS DIMPLES APPEARED FOR A MOMENT...

*FOOF! AIR-BOAT INDEED! SWIZZLESKID IS WHAT IT WAS, WITH A TOW-RACK JERRY-RIGGED. --HARLAN.

NEXT, HE SKIMMED OVER A SIDEWALK AND, INSERTING THUMBS IN LARGE EARS, HE STUCK OUT HIS TONGUE, ROLLED HIS EYES, AND WENT:

WUGGA-
WUGGA-
WUGGA!

ONE PEDESTRIAN SKITTERED AND TUMBLED, SENDING PARCELS EVERYWHICHWAY.

ANOTHER WET HERSELF.

A THIRD KEELED SLANTWISE, AND THE WALK WAS STOPPED AUTOMATICALLY BY THE SERVITORS TILL SHE COULD BE RESUSCITATED.

... THEN HE THREW THE JOYSTICK FORWARD, DROPPED TO THE SECOND LEVEL, AND CREASED THE TASSELS OF THE LADIES OF FASHION.



IT WAS A MINOR DIVERSION.

REPENT,
HARLEQUIN!
— SAID THE
TICKTOCKMAN

THEN HE SWIRLED AWAY ON A VAGRANT BREEZE, AND WAS GONE.



AS HE ROUNDED THE CORNICE OF THE TIME-MOTION STUDY BUILDING, HE SAW THE 5:00 A.M. SHIFT, JUST BOARDING THE SIDEWALK.




WITH PRACTICED MOTION AND AN ABSOLUTE CONSERVATION OF MOVEMENT, THEY SIDE-STEPPED ONTO THE SLOW-STRIP..



... AND (IN A CHORUS LINE REMINISCENT OF A BUSBY BERKELEY FILM OF THE ANTEDILUVIAN 1930'S) ADVANCED ACROSS THE STRIPS OSTRICH-WALKING..



... TILL THEY WERE LINED UP ON THE EXPRESSSTRIP.



ONCE MORE, IN ANTICIPATION, THE ELFIN GRIN SPREAD AND THERE WAS A TOOTH MISSING BACK THERE ON THE LEFT SIDE.

THEN, HE DIPPED...

... SKIMMED...

...AND SWOOPED OVER THE FACTORY WORKERS...

NEXT, SCRUNCHING ABOUT ON THE AIR-BOAT, HE GRASPED THE HOLDING PINS THAT HAD KEPT THE CARGO HE WAS TOWING FROM DUMPING PREMATURELY...

AND HE PULLED THE TROUGH-PINS!

AND ONE HUNDRED
AND FIFTY THOUSAND
DOLLARS WORTH OF
JELLY BEANS CASCADED
DOWN ON THE EXPRESS-TRIP!

AND THE JELLY BEANS
WORKED THEIR WAY INTO
THE MECHANISM, AND
THE SIDEWALKS ALL
STOPPED.

JELLY BEANS!
MILLIONS AND
BILLIONS OF
THEM...

... FALLING
ON THE HEADS
AND HARD-HATS
OF THE TIMKIN
WORKERS!

BUT--

THE SHIFT WAS
DELAYED GETTING
HOME BY SEVEN
MINUTES.

THE SYSTEM
HAD BEEN SEVEN
MINUTES WORTH
OF DISRUPTED.

IT WAS A HOLIDAY,
AND A JOLLITY, AN
ABSOLUTE INSANITY,
A GIGGLE.

A TINY MATTER,
ONE
HARDLY WORTHY
OF NOTE...

...BUT, IN A
SOCIETY WHERE
THE SINGLE DRIVING
FORCE IS CLOCKLIKE
PRECISION, IT WAS
A DISASTER OF
MAJOR IMPORTANCE.

THEY HOWLED AND
LAUGHED AND
WERE FELTED AND
BROKE RANKS...

THE MASTER
SCHEDULE WAS
THROWN OFF BY
SEVEN MINUTES.

JELLY
FOR
GOD'S
SAKE
BEANS!

SO THE QUESTION REMAINED:
WHO IS THE HARLEQUIN?

BUT THE
UNASKED
QUESTION (MORE
IMPORTANT OF THE
TWO) WAS: **HOW**
DID WE GET INTO
THIS POSITION, WHERE
A LAUGHING, IRRESPONSIBLE
JACKANAPES COULD
DISRUPT OUR ENTIRE
CULTURAL LIFE WITH
\$150,000 WORTH OF
JELLY BEANS?

THE MIDDLE
YOU NOW
KNOW.

HERE IS THE
BEGINNING.

HOW IT STARTS:

LATE AGAIN! NO
ALLOWANCE FOR YOU
FOR A MONTH,
YOUNG LADY!

HOW DO YOU
EVER EXPECT TO
GET ANYWHERE
IN THIS WORLD
IF YOU DON'T--

Dear Employee, has
Your absence for
been checked for
Twenty minutes
Please report out
now that we must

CHECK-OUT
TIME IS
2:00 P.M.

MISSED THE
COMMUTER
TRAIN AGAIN!
MY WIFE'LL
KILL ME!

I DON'T
CARE IF THE SCRIPT
IS GOOD.

I WANT
IT
THURSDAY!

I'M SORRY,
MISS GRANT, BUT
YOU WERE THIRTY
MINUTES LATE
FOR YOUR INTERVIEW.
YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT
TILL NEXT YEAR
TO APPLY TO THIS
COLLEGE
AGAIN...

AND SO IT GOES... AND ONE DAY WE NO
LONGER LET TIME SERVE US, WE SERVE
TIME AND WE ARE SLAVES OF THE SCHEDULE,
BOUND INTO A LIFE PREDICATED ON RESTRICTIONS
BECAUSE THE SYSTEM WILL NOT FUNCTION IF WE
DON'T KEEP THE SCHEDULE TIGHT.

UNTIL ONE DAY IT BECOMES MORE THAN A
MINOR INCONVENIENCE TO BE LATE.
IT BECOMES A SIN.

THEN A
CRIME.

AND FINALLY, A CRIME PUNISHABLE BY THIS:

SOME, LIKE MARSHALL DELAHANTY, TRIED TO...

...RUN.

To: MARSHALL DELAHANTY
 From: Office of the MASTER TIMEKEEPER

This is to advise you that, as per the directive of JULY 13, 2389, your lifetime will be terminated effective twelve noon tomorrow.

On your first offense, ten minutes of your life were revoked. On your second, one hour. Upon your third, you have been declared incorrigibly late.

THIS IS YOUR TURN-OFF NOTICE!



BUT, NEXT DAY, WHEN TURN-OFF TIME CAME ...



... THOUGH HE WAS DEEP IN THE CANADIAN WOODS...



... 200 MILES AWAY...



...THE TICKTOCKMAN SIMPLY **BLANKED** HIS PERSONALLY-KEYED **CARDIOPATE** ...



...AND MARSHALL DIED, THAT'S ALL.



DON'T LAUGH, BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO THE HARLEQUIN IF EVER THE TICKTOCKMAN FOUND OUT HIS REAL NAME.

IT ISN'T FUNNY.

EVERETT C. MARM, NOW LOOK WHAT YOU'VE MADE THEM DO!

A WANTED POSTER!?

NOW THAT IS REALLY DISGUSTING!

BY THE WAY, ALICE, I HAVE TO GO OUT AGAIN TONIGHT.



OH, FOR GOD'S SAKE, EVERETT -- CAN'T YOU STAY HOME JUST ONE NIGHT?

MUST YOU ALWAYS BE OUT IN THAT GHASTLY CLOWN SUIT RUNNING AROUND ANNOYING PEOPLE?

DID YOU KNOW YOU SPEAK WITH A GREAT DEAL OF INFLECTION?

WELL... I MUST BE OFF...!

I'LL BE BACK
AROUND 10:30,
OKAY?

WHY DO YOU
TELL ME THAT?
YOU KNOW YOU'LL
BE LATE--YOU'RE
ALWAYS LATE!

ALICE IS
RIGHT. SHE'S
ALWAYS RIGHT.
I'LL BE LATE.
I'M ALWAYS
LATE. WHY DO
I TELL HER
THESE DUMB
THINGS?

THEN HE SHRUGGED,
AND WENT OFF TO BE
LATE ONCE MORE.

WHY DO
YOU TELL
ME THESE
DUMB
THINGS??

EARLIER IN THE DAY, HE HAD
FIRED OFF FIRECRACKER
ROCKETS THAT SAID:

I WILL ATTEND THE 15TH
ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION INVOCATION
AT 8:00 P.M. PRECISELY! I DO HOPE YOU WILL JOIN ME!

THE WORDS HAD BURNED IN THE
SKY, AND OF COURSE THE AUTHORITIES
WERE THERE, LYING IN WAIT FOR HIM.

THEY WERE SETTING UP HUGE
SPIDERWEBS TO TRAP AND
HOLD HIM.

THEY ASSUMED,
NATURALLY, THAT HE
WOULD BE LATE.

SO, NATURALLY, HE ARRIVED TWENTY MINUTES ...

... EARLY!

AND, BLOWING A LARGE BULLHORN, HE SO FRIGHTENED AND UNNERVED THEM THAT THEIR OWN MOISTURIZED ENCIRCLEMENT WEBS SUCKED CLOSED...

... AND THEY WERE HAULED UP, KICKING AND SHRIEKING, HIGH ABOVE THE AMPHITHEATRE'S FLOOR.


THE HARLEQUIN LAUGHED... APOLOGIZED PROFUSELY... AND VANISHED.

THEN THE TICKTOCKMAN SAID, VERY QUIETLY, VERY SINCERELY, EXTREMELY DANGEROUSLY:

GO AFTER HIM...

AND DON'T COME BACK...

... TILL YOU HAVE HIM!



SO THEY
USED
DOGS.

THEY
USED
PROBES.

THEY USED
CARDIOPLATE
CROSSOFFS.

THEY
USED
COPS.

THEY
USED
FINKS.

THEY USED
FINGERPRINTS.

THEY USED
BETTERMENT
INCENTIVE.

THEY USED
RAOUL
MITGONG,
BUT HE DIDN'T
HELP MUCH.

THEY USED
TECHNIQUES OF
CRIMINOLOGY.

AND WHAT THE HELL;
THEY CAUGHT HIM.

AFTER ALL, HIS
NAME WAS
EVERETT C.
MARM, AND
HE WASN'T
MUCH TO BEGIN
WITH, EXCEPT A
MAN WHO HAD
NO SENSE OF
TIME.

REPENT, HARLEQUIN!

SAID THE TICKTOCKMAN.



GET STUFFED!



THE HARLEQUIN REPLIED, SNEERING.

YOU'VE BEEN LATE A TOTAL OF 63 YEARS, 5 MONTHS, 3 WEEKS, 2 DAYS, 12 HOURS, 41 MINUTES, AND 59.036111 SECONDS.

YOU'VE USED UP ALL THE TIME YOU HAVE, AND MORE.



I'M GOING TO TURN YOU OFF.

SCARE SOMEONE ELSE.

I'D RATHER BE DEAD THAN LIVE IN A DUMB WORLD WITH A BOGEYMAN LIKE YOU.



IT'S MY JOB.



YOU'RE FULL OF IT. YOU'RE A TYRANT.

YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO ORDER PEOPLE AROUND AND KILL THEM IF THEY SHOW UP LATE.



THE SCHEDULES HAVE TO BE MET. AFTER ALL, THERE'S A WAR ON.

ISN'T THERE ALWAYS?



YOU CAN'T ADJUST. YOU CAN'T FIT IN.

UNSTRAP ME, AND I'LL FIT MY FIST INTO YOUR MOUTH.



YOU'RE A NON-CONFORMIST.

THAT DIDN'T USED TO BE A FELONY.

IT IS NOW. LIVE IN THE WORLD AROUND YOU.

I DON'T LIKE IT. IT'S A TERRIBLE WORLD.

NOT EVERYONE THINKS SO. MOST PEOPLE ENJOY ORDER.

I DON'T, AND MOST OF THE PEOPLE I KNOW DON'T.

THAT'S NOT TRUE. HOW DO YOU THINK WE CAUGHT YOU?

I'M NOT INTERESTED.



A GIRL NAMED PRETTY ALICE TOLD US WHO YOU WERE.



THAT'S A LIE.

IT'S TRUE. YOU MAKE HER NERVOUS. SHE WANTS TO BELONG. I'M GOING TO TURN YOU OFF.

THEN DO IT ALREADY, AND STOP ARGUING WITH ME.

I'M NOT GOING TO TURN YOU OFF.

YOU'RE AN IDIOT!



REPENT, HARLEQUIN!



SAID THE TICKTOCKMAN.



GET STUFFED!

SO THEY SENT HIM TO COVENTRY, AND IN COVENTRY THEY WORKED HIM OVER.

IT WAS JUST LIKE WHAT THEY DID TO WINSTON SMITH IN 1984, WHICH WAS A BOOK NONE OF THEM KNEW ABOUT, BUT THE TECHNIQUES ARE REALLY QUITE ANCIENT, AND THEY DID IT TO EVERETT C. MARM.

AND ONE DAY QUITE A LONG TIME LATER, THE HARLEQUIN APPEARED ON THE COMMUNICATIONS WEB, LOOKING ELFIN AND DIMPLED AND BRIGHT-EYED AND NOT AT ALL BRAINWASHED, AND HE SAID:

I WAS WRONG!

IT IS A GOOD, A VERY GOOD THING INDEED, TO BELONG...

...TO BE RIGHT ON TIME!

'BYE

AND EVERYONE STARED UP AND SAID TO THEMSELVES, WELL, YOU SEE HE WAS JUST A NUT, AFTER ALL.

IT DOESN'T PAY TO FIGHT CITY HALL, OR IN THIS CASE THE TICKTOCKMAN.

SO EVERETT C. MARM WAS DESTROYED, WHICH WAS A LOSS, BECAUSE OF WHAT THOREAU SAID EARLIER, BUT YOU CAN'T MAKE AN OMELET WITHOUT BREAKING A FEW EGGS, AND IN EVERY REVOLUTION A FEW DIE WHO SHOULDN'T, BUT THEY HAVE TO, BECAUSE THAT'S THE WAY IT HAPPENS, AND IF YOU MAKE ONLY A LITTLE CHANGE, THEN IT SEEMS TO BE WORTHWHILE.

OR, TO MAKE THE POINT MORE LUCIDLY:

UH, EXCUSE ME, SIR...

I, UH, DON'T KNOW HOW TO, UH, TELL YOU THIS, BUT YOU WERE, UH, THREE MINUTES LATE.

THE SCHEDULE IS A LITTLE, UH, BIT OFF.

THAT'S RIDICULOUS.

CHECK YOUR WATCH!

MR MEE
MR MEE
MR MEE
MR MEE

FIN