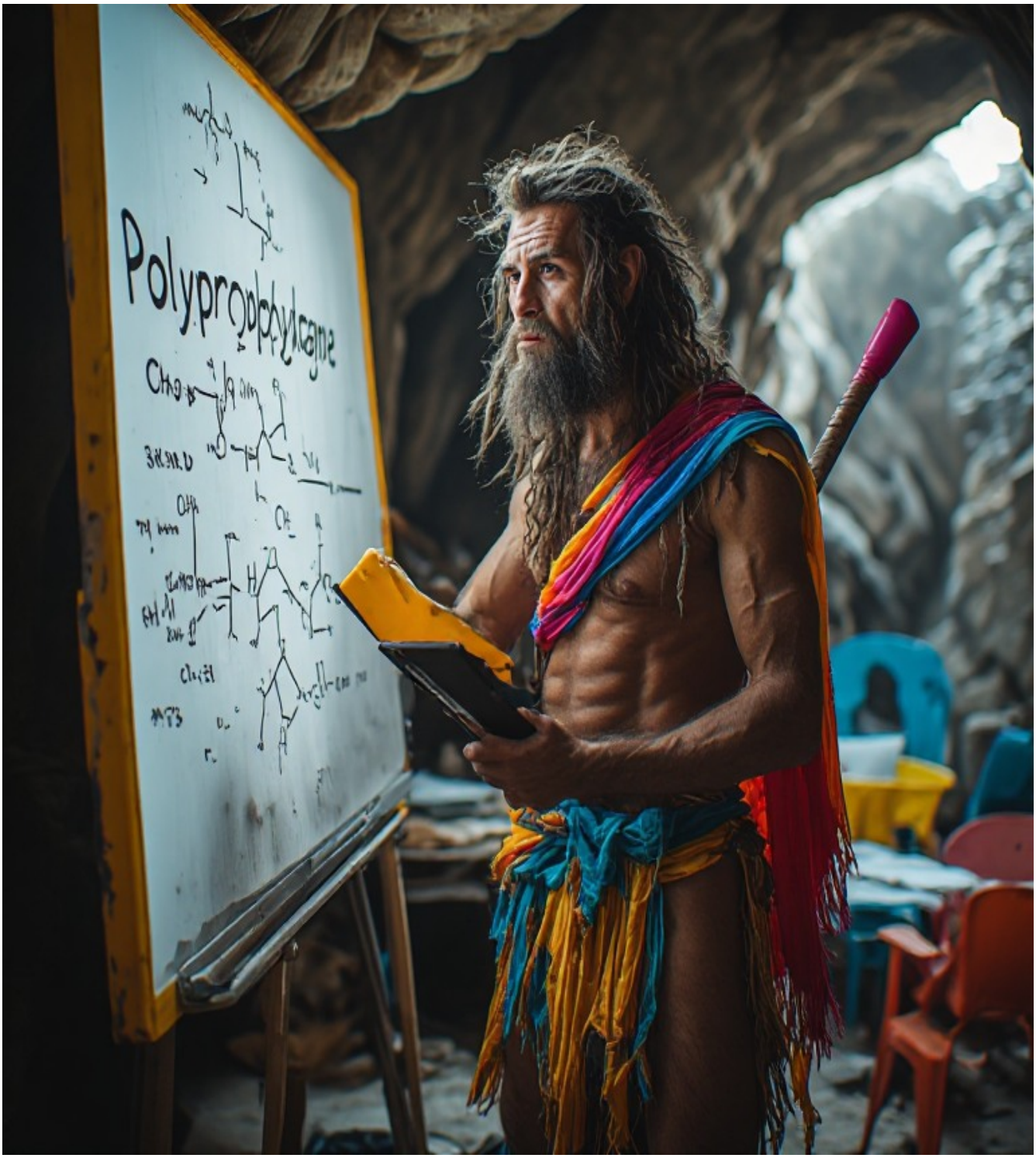
E-Anderthal



by *Carlos Valldeperas*

E-ANDERTHAL

In a world far, far away, or maybe in the very world you sit right now reading this, just a very, very long time ago, something happened that changed the course of every living thing's eternity, or maybe just followed that one constant everywhere any living thing lives that cares about such things, which is change. Whatever. Change, ever present, here, there, everywhere, all the time, took this world in a particular, perhaps peculiar, though maybe not unique, direction.

"Arrgh, grr," says one.

"Hmph, pst," replies another.

A third adds, "bah, oogh, plth," though the 'plth' may have been an expulsion of hot air from it's derriere rather than it's sustenance-intake-orifices. Hard to say as the stench tends to be similar with this trio.

The dialogue, if you will, of these three goes on like this all the time. Even once they finally fade to silence, or at least the sounds from their sustenance-intake-orifices (to be referred to as "mouths" from here on to save time, brain cells, and limited patience) fade, since the sounds from their derriere tend to never fully stop. Ever.

Anyway, this dialogue happens often and even when it does stop, the echoes of it bouncing off cave walls and down along tunnels, explored and mysteriously shadowy unknown, go on much longer than seems possible or right, if this world came to be by the power of merciful, caring, ever omnipotent entity.

Night after night, day after day, past the length any of these curious creatures keep track of time, and among many, if not most, just like this trio, dialogue like theirs happens. Ad nauseam.

But saying it again, change happens. Much like doo doo occurs, and, as it happens, equally messy. Change happens and it happens with this trio. It goes like this:

"Arrgh, grr."

"Hmph, pst."

"Bah, oogh, as shit, fucking hell!"

From there it goes, "fucking asshole, shit on self." Laughter follows, and well, laughter is pretty universal so no need to do more than say they laugh their butts off. Then they sleep. Again.

Sometime later, maybe days, years, centuries, who really knows. Later, the dialogue has, well, changed. Evolved, if you will. Note, speech has collateral… damage. I mean, it brings other changes, other progress, if you will. So the trio brought speech, then other things happen.

Speech brings a new separation. Before, you were from the cave by the big dead tree, or the smelly cave, or the cave not really a cave but a hole, (not many came from there or would admit to it). With speech, now one can be from smelly cave but with that weird lisp. Some largely populated caves have separation by place the sun light shines. And so on.

The point of this separation change is that it, well, separate these creatures. Now each small group has to be special and different, they can not change their origins –nor their lust for what the other group has. Over time, special and different groups learn to do things, make things, that others don't, and lure other groups to trade, buy, sell, and naturally, steal.

Need brings innovation. Desperation creates advances. And change rolls on.

Days, years, centuries pass. Who knows how long. Doesn't matter. Dialogues now are like this:

"Arrh, shit, fuck, just lost my fuck network."

"Pst, network connections are fuck shit in here."

"Bah assholes, me fuck on just fine. Ssshit."

And they go on. Only their echoes fade, lost in the din of many, way too many, loud voices, all expressing mostly nothing of substance.

"Swipe shit asshole left, ain't no good."

"Shoot you fuck shit poser. Take this gamma laser blast up your asshole!"

That ever constant change drives a diaspora of these creatures. Away they go. Familiar grounds are left behind for unknown, bizarre, to altogether different. Multitudes of kith become handfuls of faithful traveling companions, or total strangers.

Like some diffident tsunami, slowly spreading out away from its origins, these creatures go. Prime cave real-estate goes fast. Then go the dives. Soon, holes in trees or hollows become homes.

Some enterprising soul adjusts; changes. A tree, chopped down and turned into uniform pieces can be put back together to form a shell of a shelter. In a blink of an eye, or it happens over a long time but when looking back it feels like it just happened, suburbiahappens.

Open land once seen as too wild and dangerous, hunting ground for predators and those few crazy, young cavers with little common sense, becomes an expanse of homes. All in neat little rows, looking alike, confining folks all looking alike.

Oh, and these folks, can they multiply. They give wet Gremlins and healthy rabbits run for their money. No, put two of these cave folks together, get the right combination of male and female, and in no time there are hordes of little cavers running amok. No creature, great or small, amicable or ruthless predator, stands in their way.

"**B**ah, shit fuck I miss home." Common sentiment fo suburbanites.

"Hmp ass, but didn't your folks turn the old commodious cave into some fuck shit posh collection of rat-size flats for the au courant, coitus hungry youth?"

"Arrh, grrr ass hell. I remember when they gave you the news, then gave you the boot, sending you out on your butt."

"Hmp ass, and don't they now live up near the Allanthus cave?"

"Bah, shit fuck, yeah. They made bank converting the cave into flats. Not a dime for me, of course. As if I were some social bête noire."

"Oogh smack," the two confrere say in unison. "Harsh."

Life away from the caves, with its mixture of cads, bête noire, bellwethers, and abject working folks, is about change. Adjust and change, assimilate or become society's excreta. (Hmm, or become the newest, biggest, trending thing.)

"Arrh-o, coño mierda tengo hambre."

"Bah-o, no! Ningun niño mio, oogh-o, hablara como una criatura de montaña bajo mi techo!"

"Hmp-o, cariño mio, grr-o, el niño tiene que asimilar y aunarse o, coño, ser condenado al ostracisino."

Some, perhaps foolhardy souls, do try to hold on to old ways. Much like hardwoods caught in strong winds, when pushed beyond limits, the break is colossal. Only just a few can hold on, asserting something that becomes a new norm.

"Blah-o, caca apestosa! ¿Porque tienes que usar ese ¡Robot bajo mis pies?"

"Arrgh-o, coñ… grr-o, no soy culpable, arrgh-o. Esta programado a limpiar donde hay sucio. ¡Oogh-o!"

"Bah-o, nada, ¡caca! No bajo mis pies."

"Hmp-o." (A good, faithful husband, wanting to stay in good graces, under a roof, and fed, does not contradict a woman's edict. Thus change starts.)

"Bah-o, niño chingado indolente. Pierde esas groserias de calle y falt de respecto, oogh-o>"

¡Wah-kah-tah! (Sorry. 'Smack!' to the head to drive in her edict. All that is a mother's attempt to leave old habits, mostly bad, behind, and embrace change and possibly better ways.)

"Arrgh-o, si mamá. Perdon. Grrr-o."

"Hmp-o." (Oh, that ever agreeable husband -safe.)

"Bah-o. Quiero lo mejor para ti. Las grocerias no son parte del futuro nuestro. Oogh-o."

"Arrgh-o. Si mamá." Ah, bliss. Youth compliance.

"Arrgh, say Southside, mother f*****, grrr."

"Bah, g** damn, what's hap'n, brah?"

"Hmp, huzzah! Dang dwags, you see that baize Redcave is sporting?"

"Bah, GD, its got like LED's init."

"Arrgh, I hears it hooked up with GPS so he caint loose it."

"Hmp, huzzah, that's tight bedizen."

"Bah, my baldiggan not hooked up with lights or GPS, but it keeps me warm."

"Hmp, dang, yeah."

Sometimes change creeps in. It shifts customs slowly, like a creek changes path over time. A home with a distaff lead –think, Italian Godfather controlling strong, but motherly-- change can start there with that strong woman's demands. Maybe the new trend or principle is adopted by a docent of some kind. It'll spread, or die.

"Arrgh, see what I'm saying?"

"Hmp, yeah, lots of followers too."

"Arrg, seen it in other posts, you feel me."

"Bah, that's what I'm trying to tell ya. It's no more god dang cussin. You feel me."

And what happened was, change slid in, becoming cool, hip, smokin', and well, trendy.

The irony, possibly lost on many, is that the change affecting them came with a more pronounced, significant change, not as debouch. That shifting creek, its course change adumbrating a current triple in strength.

They are less profane but also less skilled at speaking, face to face, long, meaningful conversations. They leave the grunts, groans, and growls of the caves to cold, detached words on a screen.

Wet Gremlins, folk tale clap-trap. Healthy rabbits, gone like bosky expanses. The cavers now cover every surface, packed tighter together than passengers on a plane. Well, very similar situation, being inches away in space but worlds apart in social unity.

Ask an adolescent about an anime and you may get a compendious account, from origins to possible future direction. Follow up with a question about a next door neighbor and face brain itching silence.

"Arrgh, the couple three houses down, to our left, might be spliting up."

"Hmp, hmm."

"Arrgh, the sun two naps past acme, it's there."

"Hmp, what?"

"Arrgh, her leaving, with bags and stuff.."

"Hmp, mmhm."

"Arrgh, on the doorbell camera."

"Hmo, oh."

Inches apart, day after day, no clue who they are. The insight to the life's is a recorded compendium. Know each other's lives with no idea or interest in knowing who they are. Why not? The ice box knows what it stores, what it is out of, and how fast you go through a pint of Rocky Road, yet the parent doesn't know the name of their offspring's BFF.

"Arrhh, check in-box."

"Hmp, who ru?"

"Arrgh, link up."

"Hmp, friend me?"

"Arrh, turn camera on."

"Hmp, K."

"Arrgh, ur teeth so white. Dang."

A nightly application, costing as much as a week's worth of food for a family of four, gets those teeth unnaturally white. Just disregard the throat cancer the bleaching agent causes. Those sun-bright teeth get attention, followers, and subscribers.

Take a once-daily pill and soon your skin is one uniform tone. No worries, change it. One day, your 1/20th Fakecoin investment may help your kid's kids pay off your debt.

"Arrgh, this red LED light mask will take away all my wrinkles."

"Hmp, hold on hon, they're picking the lotto numbers."

"Bah, mom, can I try the blue LED? 'Suppose to help with facial hair."

"Arrgh, what hair, you're eight!?"

"Hmp, what wrinkle hon, you're 25?"

One pill to rule us all. It might just take all to pay for it. Until then, enjoy your family priced, individually package in layers of plastic, portion for one, engineered chicken roast. Don't forget to send plastic back, along with week's salary contribution, to the worm farm plastic breakdown facility near you.

"Arrgh, breaking news again as we come on air. Plastic breakdown worms eat out of their containment. Authorities confabulate public safe, if no plastic present."

"Hmp, fuck!"

"Bah, shit dang."

"Arrgh, other news, trillionaire breaks into top 1% after selling off all stock in organic petrol based material mitigation company."

Time passes. Worms don't measure time so they don't care, don't know if it is hours, days, or years. They don't question change, or reminisce on the way things used to be. Things just are, then they aren't anymore. The cavers though, wow! Do they feel change.

Pick any popular cynosure in any populated area, the hot topic of discourse is the break down.

"Arrh, started with my pops. It just started to fall apart. Grr."

"Hmp, don't he work near that worm place?"

"Arrgh, that's what I'm trying to tell you. Like, he brought something home. Dang. Hit mom's next."

"Bah, my G20 started to melt on me."

"Hmp, dang!"

"Bah, took it in right away, you feel me. All they did was take it and give me another. Lost all shit on it."

"Arrh, you not backed up?"

"Bah, what happened was, they say they are having technical issues with back-up cloud servers."

"Hmp, dang!"

The folks try to play it all down, like crew on a sinking ship saying it'll be alright, as water rushes in. The hungry for plastic worms issue soon is like water to the knees of that sinking ship crew.

When officials aggressively suggest to not panic, it is time to panic. When the calls to not panic come, the plastics breakdown issue has shifted from mild annoyance to death to all connected teens and adults living off that connectivity hunger. This forced unconnected status for teens interferes with their mental health, followed by general decline in health of all other age groups.

"Arrgh, you can live without that chat thing."

"Hmp, grrr."

"Arrgh, you can still chat, live, by walking over to your friend's, next door."

"Hmp, grrr."

Specialists try to equivocate the threat at first. "Hmp, worms designed to reduce only distinct types of polypropylene substrates."

Then "Hmp, their short life cycle…"

Followed by, "hmp, contained to immediate area."

All the while the worms eat. The endless supply of plastic pushes an exponential explosion in the number of plastic hungry worms.

The little gadgets go. Toys are no more. Creature comforts go next. Infrastructure breaks down.

"Arrgh, the best minds are working on a solution…"

Those best minds are the same who created the problem.

Plastic, in some form or another, is in everything. Cheap, easy to make, and … cheap, it is everywhere. Brilliant then to engineer and replicate a horde of mindless, live only to eat creatures to break down, to eat the very thing that is a crucial component of modern life. Duh!

"Arrh, if you detect what appears like fine dust on or near a malfunctioning or defectiv… "

"Hmp, fuck that. This dust is everywhere."

When the "dust" is found at water treatment plants, then mass food processors, panic is that volcano explosion and lava flow.

The worms came because plastic, whether big like shipping crates, tanks, etc., or micro particles, is everywhere. That includes the water the caver's food drinks as well as the water the cavers themselves drink, bathe in, and play with.

"Arrgh, limited time only, $19.95. Filters out micro plastics as well as bacteria and other microbs."

"Hmp, say, brah, the filter cartridge is made of plastic!"

And many water lines, medical instruments used to treat people infested with plastic eating worms, and weapons some may try to turn to to end life sooner than the worms can do it- all made with plastic.

"Bah, our premium caskets are guaranteed 100% plastic free!"

The ones left alive, living back in the caves, don't much care about caskets or burrials.

"Arrgh, grrr…"

"Hmph, pst."

"Bah, ooh, shite."

When you let change drive you, you may not like were it takes you.