



Chapter Seven

Dr. Yawney's Presentation

As the conference room lights dimmed, a small spotlight illuminated Dr. Yawney. Emerging from the darkness, his PowerPoint video unveiled breathtaking footage of wild seas crashing against ancient, rugged rocks. In turn, Dr. Yawney locked eyes with each member of the Alumni Explorers' Club, his gaze confident and unwavering, traversing the darkened room.

"The Alumni Explorers' Club has always been a steadfast bastion of independence and sound judgment, even in the most turbulent times," Dr. Yawney commenced.

"Bullshit," one of the Explorers playfully interjected, accompanied by the clinking of wine glasses raised in a toast.

"He must be in desperate need of another vacation..." another warmly jested.

Miles observed the dynamic between Dr. Yawney and the core members of the club. They held deep affection and admiration for him, yet their trust in his judgment was not unwavering. It was a delicate balance between reverence and skepticism.



"I am dead serious," Dr. Yawney reined in the playful banter.

"In that case, we're in trouble," another Explorer stated, eliciting scattered amusement.

"Well, we are indeed in serious trouble," Dr. Yawney candidly responded, adjusting his posture to exude thoughtfulness and persuasion without pretense.

Having spent decades as a professor and a member of this peculiar congregation of refined misfits, Dr. Yawney understood their emotional strings. He had to improvise, like a seasoned stand-up comedian managing hecklers, while also acting as the conductor of an unruly orchestra, seamlessly adjusting the rhythm, harmony, and melody of his presentation.

"I offer you an insider's view that I hope will initiate a fundamental dialogue about human history," Dr. Yawney hinted.

An Explorer whistled gently, feigning astonishment.

"Is it more momentous than rediscovering the Black-draped Pigeon-Pillow?" one Explorer joked edgily.

"Get on with it," Dr. Tellandoll scoffed, interrupting the banter.



Dr. Yawney paused briefly and gathered his thoughts. "The conventional narrative of evolution..."

"You're not challenging evolution, are you?" an Explorer interrupted with skepticism.

"Of course not," Dr. Yawney responded. "But what exactly is evolution? What does it produce? The mechanisms of evolution are supposed to result in altered genes, novel traits, and adaptations. However..." He caught himself, realizing he was getting ahead of his narrative.

"Please, do enlighten us," an Explorer urged, playing along. "You are talking to a distinguished group of scientists, many of whom know vastly more about this subject than you do..."

"Yes, I appreciate that, so please indulge me... this is just the backstory, but it's important backstory. Let me describe it to you and then allow me to surprise you... which I am almost certain I will..."

The group of Explorers extended deferential quiet.

"Thank you. I will answer all of your questions at the end..." Dr. Yawney circled back and began anew. "The orthodox story of evolution depicts microscopic organisms emerging from a primordial chemical soup in the oceans four billion years ago—the first life to ever exist,

anywhere, throughout all time and space. Then, two and a half billion years ago, plants evolved photosynthesis, harnessing sunlight to produce carbohydrates and releasing oxygen, creating the foundation for life as we know it. Other organisms breathed in the oxygen and consumed the carbohydrates. More 'complex' organisms emerged, adapting and thriving as they diversified. Unicellular organisms merged into multicellular organisms, leading to fish, lizards, mammals, and so on, each adapting to changing climates..."

"I hope you're not challenging climate change either," an Explorer interjected with a tinge of despair.

"Of course not," Dr. Yawney clarified.

Dr. Tellandoll emitted a raspberry, expressing his disapproval.