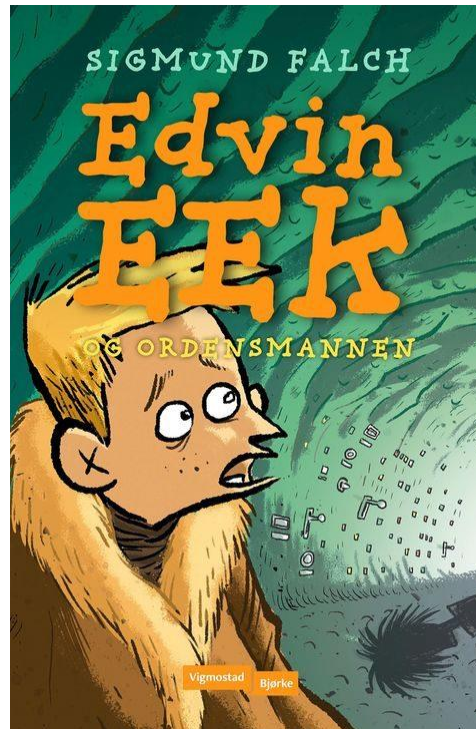


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**Sigmund Falch:**

## **EDWIN EEK AND THE EMPEROR OF EQUILIBRIUM**

ENGLISH SYNOPSIS AND SAMPLE TRANSLATION

### **SYNOPSIS**

Translated by Alison McCullough

Not everybody knows this, but the world contains as many round objects as rectangular ones. The same amount of the colour green as the colour blue; the same number of degrees above freezing as below it; as many cellars as there are lofts and – actually – exactly the same number of wolves as there are clowns. The world is continually being kept in a state of balance, and although very few understand why, there are always exactly the same number of fire engines as there are snowy owls.

And the person responsible for keeping track of all this is known as ‘the Emperor of Equilibrium’.

The Emperor of Equilibrium lives deep in the mountains, under kilometres of ice at the South Pole. He’s a dexterous and organised sort of person, who has always ensured that our world

remains in a kind of balance. *Always*. The Emperor of Equilibrium has a huge responsibility, and over hundreds – perhaps even thousands – of years, has performed his important work with great care and attention to detail. Until now.

Because even someone as capable as the Emperor of Equilibrium can suffer a breakdown, and that's exactly what's happened. He's experiencing what you might call a mid-life crisis – a kind of 500-year crisis, if you will. And such things have consequences – including for eleven-year-old Edwin Eek, who is simply supposed to go home and pick up a mobile phone charger before heading off to spend an uneventful autumn half term holiday with his aunt. But Edwin never manages to get home. He discovers that the hill up to his house never ends – it has become infinitely long. With his parents on a 'romantic getaway' in Lanzarote, Edwin is forced to handle this mystery without their help. Via his somewhat eccentric aunt, her even more colourful friends, and not least his hyper and adventurous cousin, L.I.V., Edwin follows the clues to figure out what's going on – and finds out about the Emperor of Equilibrium. Edwin is a rational and careful guy, who believes problems like infinite hills are the kind of thing that the authorities should sort out, but when his energetic cousin rushes off towards the South Pole and the Emperor of Equilibrium, Edwin is forced to follow her. They end up in a world populated by all kinds of oddballs who have got lost in the area over the years. Hurrying after his cousin through this peculiar universe, Edwin faces many challenges – he drives an underground train at 380 kilometres an hour, takes to the skies and falls out of a 100-year-old airplane, has to cross a plain occupied by exactly 22 billion 485 million 694 thousand and 756 mosquitoes, and much more, before he finally reaches the Emperor of Equilibrium's kingdom under the ice.

But a major mid-life crisis like the one the Emperor of Equilibrium is struggling with isn't something that can be cured in a flash, and the world is about to completely unravel by the time Edwin saves the day by making the Emperor of Equilibrium laugh. It turns out that the Emperor hasn't laughed in hundreds of years. But when the cork finally pops and his laughter is released he becomes himself again, and brings balance back to the world.

## Sample translation chapter one - four

Translated by Mark Neil Patterson

Deep beneath the ice at the South Pole, lies something very few people have ever seen. Buried beneath mile upon mile of solid ice, never melting, deep into the rock, lives a very unusual man. A remarkable, very busy, man.

Right now, as you read these very words, he sits in an old, worn-out office chair, hundreds of metres along an ice-cold corridor. You can't see him through the icy fog that swirls around down there, but you can hear him. He's breathing heavily, mumbling and muttering to himself. He's working.

He is the Emperor of Equilibrium.

The corridor he sits in is exactly 980 metres long, with one wall covered by a gigantic control panel, festooned with millions of tiny green lights. There are no other lamps down there, so the whole corridor is lit with a sickly green glow. The Emperor's corridor is not a pleasant place to be.

It's hard to explain exactly what it is that the Emperor is doing down there, but you could say that he's making sure everything here on Earth ends in a zero. A perfect balance between the pluses and the minuses, maintaining the world's complex algorithms. Basically, it's nothing more, and nothing less, than mathematics.

### **FACT:**

**There are as many clowns in the world as there are wolves. Exactly as many. If you had the chance, you could take the time off school to travel the world and count them.**

**This means that if you shoot a wolf, somewhere in the wilds of Norway, somewhere else in the world a clown will disappear. The very second the wolf dies, a man called Oliver Haddock in Manchester might suddenly decide to give up his job as "Olivero" the clown, and take up rally driving instead.**

**And the very same moment as a wolf is born, anywhere in the world, an accountant in Madrid might decide that the time has come to follow his dreams, and start pulling rabbits out of hats for a living.**

But something was changing. The Emperor's work had been getting less precise than it ought to have been, for quite a while. Put simply, he had started making mistakes.

And if the Emperor starts to make mistakes, you're going to notice.

## CHAPTER ONE

Edwin Eek was walking quickly. He was on his way home. He was going to fetch his phone charger, and he knew exactly where it was: lying on the duvet in his bedroom. Edwin was a tidy child, the sort who didn't usually forget things, but that morning had been unusually hectic. It was the last day of school before the autumn break, and his mum and dad were going to be visiting Lanzarote for what his mother was calling a "romantic getaway". A holiday just for two. Two grown-ups. Edwin would be spending the whole week with his weird aunt and his very annoying cousin. He was pretty sure he knew what a "romantic getaway" was, and understood that it was probably important, but still, the whole thing seemed unfair. All of it. A bad deal, plain and simple.

The morning at home had been chaotic. The corridor had been full of bags and suitcases, and Edwin had been drowning under a pile of instructions. Most of them were about how he should remember to eat, not to freeze, to get plenty of sleep, and to do what his aunt said.

Under the circumstances, it's hardly surprising that he'd forgotten his phone charger, he thought, as he began to speed up. He reached the long road up the hill, where the town ended and the forest began. It was a quick walk on the way to school, but it was downhill that way. In this direction it was uphill all the way, and he didn't have his bike. This was going to be a long week, he thought, walking faster. Past the old, collapsing, rotten fence. Past the empty beer crate in the ditch. Then the sign, warning of deer in the road. Not far now. Just round the next corner, and he'd be able to see his house.

Then it happened. The thing that would turn this into the strangest holiday Edwin had ever had.

He came to an abrupt halt, and looked ahead.

The house was gone. Completely gone.

It wasn't even as though the foundations were still there, like somebody had somehow managed to demolish the building. No. The whole house, the garden, the garage...they were just gone.

In their place was more forest, some bushes, and more hillside - all of them familiar, but suddenly in completely the wrong place. Edwin turned to look back in the direction he'd come from. Everything looked normal. There was the road, snaking around familiar curves down towards town, towards the school. He turned again, looking at where his house should be. There was nothing there. Just more road, disappearing up the hill around yet another corner. Edwin took a few hesitant steps forward, feeling the gravel crunch beneath his feet, the way it was supposed to. The wind was whistling through the trees, the way wind usually does. Birds were twittering and chirping in all directions, the way birds usually do. In other words, everything seemed to be exactly the way it ought to be. Except for the fact that the house was gone. Which was, thought Edwin, admittedly a fairly huge exception.

He walked a little further, along what should have been the driveway to his home, through a few bushes and some tall grass, until he was standing where he was sure their house ought to be standing. He reached out a hand, feeling at the air in front of him. Waved it around. A small knot of panic began to rise in his throat as he thought about his parents. Had they disappeared, too? Or were they already on Lanzarote, smiling and relaxing, without a clue that there wasn't going to be so much as a corridor to dump their bags in when they

got back next week? Edwin pulled out his phone and called his mother, breathing a deep sigh of relief when she answered after only two rings, the way she always did.

“Hi, Edwin!”

“Is everything OK?”

Edwin wasn't sure how he should respond to that. Honestly, absolutely nothing was OK.

“Edwin? Are you there?” Now she sounded worried.

“There are palm trees here, Edwin!” shouted his father, in the background. “I'm about to go and get your mum a coconut!”

He sounded happy, maybe even a little giddy. The way you should be on a romantic getaway, thought Edwin.

“Edwin? Hello!” His mother's voice was starting to get high, and thin.

“Hi, mum!” replied Edwin, as calmly as he could. “Sorry, wrong number - I meant to call Thomas. Everything's fine here, Auntie says hi.”

He hung up. After all, how would he even start to explain this to his mother? He couldn't even explain it to himself, and he was standing right in the middle of it! He really should try to get hold of Thomas, he thought. His best friend. His only friend, really. There were plenty of people at school he could talk to, but whenever he did it felt a little bit like they were starting from scratch, every day. Not with Thomas. It felt like they'd known each other forever. They fit together like a pair of gloves, as Edwin's mother had once put it.

But Thomas and his family were already on their way to their holiday cottage in Scotland, so that wasn't an option. Edwin lifted his phone, taking a photograph of the empty space where his house should have been. Then, without really even knowing why, he took a selfie. He looked at the photo, seeing a short little eleven-year-old with a concerned wrinkle between his eyes, beneath short, pale hair. So pale that it was almost white. “Fluffy”, his mother had called it one time when she thought he couldn't hear her. Edwin had tried plenty of times to get a tougher haircut, like some of his classmates had. But he went to the same hairdresser as his dad, so he always ended up with the same haircut as his dad. A short, pale, and fluffy haircut. Edwin's dad thought they both looked great.

Edwin put away his phone and sprinted back to the road, before continuing further up the hill. He must be wrong. The road probably just felt longer because it had been a while since he last walked up it, rather than riding his bike. That had to be it! Filled with a new sense of hope, Edwin hurried around the next corner. Then he stopped dead in his tracks, staring at the road ahead of him. It stretched off into the distance with no curves, up what looked to be the longest hill Edwin had seen in his life.

Edwin rubbed his eyes, hearing a strange choking sound coming from his throat. What was going on? He didn't dare go any further. Turning around, he ran as fast as he could, back towards the town.

## CHAPTER TWO

By the time he reached his aunt's house, Edwin had calmed down a little, recovering his breath. He'd spent the past ten minutes trying to convince himself that what he'd seen couldn't be real. The longer he thought about it, the more explanations he came up with for how he could be wrong. Had he not been getting enough sleep lately? Had he been eating healthily? Getting enough vitamins? And weren't people always calling boys his age absent-minded? Unfocused? Fanciful? That was certainly what his teacher said. By the time Edwin approached his aunt's house, he'd almost managed to convince himself. Almost.

It wasn't hard to spot which house was his aunt's, even though she lived on a street of identical houses. They were all painted white, with identical white fences, separating long rows of identical gardens. But in the middle of this calm, orderly row of houses sat his aunt's house, in an explosion of bright colours, strange plants, and garden ornaments. The house had been done up many times, mostly by his aunt herself. The problem was, she was bad at it. Edwin's mother had often tried to persuade his aunt that she needed help from somebody who knew what they were doing, but his aunt had always given the same reply: "Pish, posh."

It was the same answer she gave to any difficult, grown-up questions. Edwin's father had once said that if Auntie Pish-Posh's house (a name he'd given her many years ago) caught fire, she would just have stood in the garden in a singed nightie and smouldering hair, saying "pish, posh." Edwin's mother and Auntie Pish-Posh were sisters, but it was hard to imagine a pair of sisters more different. Ian Eekk was very happy to have chosen the right one.

Edwin pushed open his aunt's gate, a battered, sea-green wooden door that had once been attached to a boathouse somewhere in the Hebrides. Walking into the garden, he immediately had to squeeze past a wild, overgrown bush covered with thorns. One time he'd run through the gate too quickly and become completely stuck, and since then he'd learned to be careful, turning himself almost completely sideways to make it past unharmed. From various corners of the wild jungle of untamed undergrowth that was his aunt's garden, he could hear the trickling sounds of water. Edwin knew that if you wandered away from the path you could find innumerable small, home-made waterfalls and fountains.

Almost everyone Edwin knew had a doorbell right next to their front door, and he'd always thought that was handy. You press the button, a bell rings inside the house, and the people inside know that there's someone at the door. Simple, and effective, and most people seemed fairly happy with the system. But not Auntie Pish-Posh. She wasn't like everyone else. Through a hole in her door dangled a red cord, with a small wooden troll tied to the end. Pulling on the cord would ring an enormous, loud ship's bell, suspended in the hallway. She also had two different, huge, iron doorknockers - one shaped like a snarling lion, the other a laughing fool's head. Poking out of the middle of the door was something that looked like a big black gumball, but Edwin knew that it was actually one end of an old-style bicycle horn, the rest of which was sticking out on the other side of the door. There was even a big, red, plastic button that turned on a blinking light somewhere inside the house. Edwin wasn't feeling especially whimsical right now, and after some consideration he settled

on the ship's bell as the most effective option. He heard it clanging, loudly, inside the house, and soon enough, the door soon swung open and Auntie Pish-Posh came bursting out, an explosion of bright clothes, loud voice, big smiles, and a hug that took Edwin's breath away.

"Eddie! Come in, come in!" She stepped aside to let him in. Auntie Pish-Posh was the only person who called Edwin 'Eddie', and Edwin had never been quite able to decide if he liked it or not.

"Don't you usually use the horn? I thought you must be Leslie - he always uses the bell."

Edwin mumbled a reply, walking into the hallway and taking off his shoes before following Auntie Pish-Posh towards the kitchen. He sniffed at the air. He could never quite get used to the smell of his aunt's house. Every home has its own smell, but Auntie Pish-Posh had managed, through years of eccentric cooking, home-made tea, and an utter lack of interest in cleaning, to produce a distinctive smell unlike anything else. Edwin carefully removed an enormous pile of knitting from one of his aunt's kitchen chairs, and sat down.

"Do you want some tea, Eddie?" His aunt clapped her hands together, a broad line of bright white teeth flashing in her hectic, flushed red face as she grinned at him. Her hair sprung out from her small, round head like a crackling orange bonfire, her short, stocky body bristling with barely-contained energy. Without waiting for a reply, she started searching for tea and cups.

"Auntie?" Edwin decided that it couldn't hurt to share his missing-house problem with her. You had to give his aunt that - if there was anyone you could talk to about an endless road and a house that wasn't there, it was her.

"Have you ever heard of a never-ending road?" His aunt stopped rummaging through what looked to be at least fifty different mugs, in all shapes and colours, filling the cupboard.

"A never-ending road? What do you mean?"

Edwin squirmed in his chair, about to explain, when the world's worst cousin suddenly came bursting into the kitchen. His cousin was a year younger than Edwin, and was Auntie Pish-Posh's only child. Her real name was Lucretia Isadora Volcano, but Auntie Pish-Posh had been officially forbidden by the government from calling her that. It had caused quite a commotion, but in the end Auntie Pish-Posh had found the perfect solution, and given her the name "Liv". After all, there wasn't really anything the government could do about the fact that her mother always pronounced it "L.I.V." Edwin and L.I.V. really weren't really friends. They fought, as the saying goes, like cats and dogs. Ever since they were tiny, L.I.V. had clearly been determined to dominate Edwin, and the really irritating thing was how much better she was than him. At everything. At school, at games, at sport...she was faster, smarter, funnier, and undoubtedly stronger, than Edwin. Whenever they got together, the way things usually ended up was that Edwin would get angry, then L.I.V. would call him an idiot, and then he'd get even angrier.

"What do you mean, 'a never-ending road?'" repeated Auntie Pish-Posh. Edwin glanced at L.I.V., who had obviously noticed the question. He came to a quick decision. There was no way he was going to sit here and explain something this crazy in front of L.I.V., just so she could call him an idiot again.

"It was just a riddle" he said, thinking as quickly as he could. "What sort of road never ends?"

L.I.V. leaned forward, eagerly. "Oh, I love riddles", she said. "But they're always too easy. 'A road that never ends?' Let's see..."

Auntie Pish-Posh had lost her concentration, and returned to the kitchen bench and her cupboard of mugs.

"I need a clue", said L.I.V.

"Didn't you just say that most riddles are too easy?"

"Yes, but if you came up with this one, it probably doesn't work properly", she said, sticking her tongue out.

Suddenly, she clapped her hands.

"I've got it!"

"What is it, then?" asked Edwin, quite sincerely. After all, he didn't know the answer himself.

"An escalator!" L.I.V. cried out. "They never end, they just keep going!"

Edwin was impressed, in spite of himself. She'd found an answer to a question he'd just made up off the top of his head. To get this over with, he conceded with a smile.

"That's right!"

"Of course, an escalator isn't really a road, so it was a stupid riddle", said L.I.V. Edwin sighed, and just at that moment Auntie Pish-Posh put two cups of tea down on the table in front of them. Edwin stuck his nose into the cloud of steam rising from the cup. It smelled a bit like the inside of a wet woollen mitten, and about as appetising. He stood up, abruptly.

"I just remembered something! My phone charger! I left it at home. I'll just go and fetch it!" As he hurried out, he heard a quiet "idiot" from L.I.V. behind him.

## CHAPTER THREE

### FACT:

#### THE HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT:

**The Highways Department works to ensure that you can always get to where you're going safely, whether you're travelling on foot, by car, cycling, or taking public transport. They are responsible for operating, maintaining, and repairing Britain's roads and motorways.**

Edwin didn't go home. Ten metres down the road, he pulled out his phone and googled "who's responsible for the roads?" The answer, inevitably, was the Highways Department. Conveniently, there was a branch office not far from his aunt's house. *Now we're getting somewhere*, he thought to himself, pleased. If anyone could explain that mysterious road, it had to be the Highways Department.



When he arrived at the department, he stopped for a moment to study the enormous sign that had been erected outside the imposing concrete building. The royal crown with a pair of wings in gold on a red background. Solid, thought Edwin. Official-looking. Most likely everyone who worked here would be engineers, like Edwin's mother.

Once, when Edwin was five, he'd built an especially impressive building out of Duplo, and his father had proudly declared that they were going to have another engineer in the family. Edwin himself wasn't quite so certain that he wanted to be an engineer, but he definitely preferred things that could be explained, to anything vague or mystical. When he was little, he didn't enjoy having fairy-tales read to him at bedtime. He preferred to go to sleep to the sound of somebody reading aloud from an encyclopaedia. Now he was going to meet other people who were just the same, he thought, smiling, as he walked towards the entrance.

Just inside the automatic doors was a box, below a sign marked "please take a number". He drew a ticket. Number 11. He carried it with him as he walked further into the reception area.

There was a long row of green chairs lining the wall. On the opposite side of the room, where the walls had been painted in a colour not unlike peanut butter, there was a small window through which Edwin could make out a lone figure, sitting in the darkness. Above the counter was a glowing screen showing the number '10'.

Excellent, thought Edwin. I'm next. He stood waiting, right inside the door, looking back and forth between the person sitting behind the window and the number above. The room was completely silent. Nobody talking on their phone, or typing on a keyboard. Not so much as the sound of a creaking chair from behind the window. An engineer, concentrating on their work, thought Edwin, pleased again.

Perhaps they'd already been to his house and sorted everything out, and he would just be greeted with a polite "sorry" from the head of the Department? If he was really lucky, he might even get a hat, or at least a cool pen with a coat of arms on it.

But everything remained silent. Edwin looked over towards the green chairs, and started heading towards the nearest one, but just as he was about to sit down, he heard a loud 'ping!' The number above the window had changed. But instead of the '11' he'd been expecting, the number now read '9'. Edwin looked at his ticket, as though it could explain anything. Then he looked back, questioningly, towards the window.

The person inside the kiosk had leaned a little further forward, and Edwin could make out a little old lady peering out into the light. Two wide, round eyes looked out at Edwin from behind a small pair of glasses.

"Excuse me...I've got number..." But before he could finish, he was interrupted by another ping. The number had changed back to '10' again. Edwin took a few steps forward, holding out his ticket towards the unmoving woman behind the glass. Another ping rang out, and the number changed to '11'. Three more quick pings, then it was an '8'. Edwin stood still.

"Can somebody explain what's going on here?" he asked, confused. He could make out some small movements behind the glass, before there came another series of pings as the numbers counted down to '0'.

Then the tiny woman pulled out a pair of homemade sockpuppets.

"Hi! I'm Plink", she said, in a high-pitched voice, wiggling one of the puppets.

"And I'm Plonk", she added, in a deeper voice, moving the other puppet around on the desk.

“Sorry, but what are you doing?” asked Edwin, baffled.

“We’re the bosses here at the Highways Department!” she exclaimed, in Plink’s voice. “And we’ve decided that this Department isn’t about roads anymore, but cakes that taste like chocolate!”

“Don’t you mean chocolate cake?” asked the Plonk puppet.

“No! I mean cakes that definitely aren’t chocolate cake, they just taste like it!” replied the Plonk puppet, irritated, as the old lady shook it animatedly.

“Is there anyone else here I could speak to?” asked Edwin. “Preferably an engineer?” He walked up to the window, trying to look through to the room beyond, past the two sockpuppets and the little old lady. She looked at him for a moment, before shoving Plink and Plonk under her desk and slamming the window shut. Edwin jumped in shock. The illuminated board blinked ‘0’ three times, then went dark. Edwin tapped cautiously on the window, but nothing happened. He knocked harder. Still nothing. Eventually he gave up, stomping angrily back out of the door where he’d come in. On the street outside, he threw away his ticket.

Edwin was very, very disappointed in the Highways Department.

## CHAPTER FOUR

Edwin was still feeling angry and disappointed when he finally kicked off his shoes in the hallway at Auntie Pish-Posh’s house. He’d just gone straight in this time, not even ringing any of the various doorbells or knockers. He heard his aunt in the kitchen, and walked in to see her. She was standing at the kitchen bench, a cheerful look on her face, as she poured something that was sort of brown, sort of green, and very strange indeed, into small glass bowls. She turned to face Edwin, grinning broadly.

“Something very weird just happened”, she said.

“What’s happened?” asked Edwin, with little enthusiasm. He suspected it had something to do with whatever was happening on the kitchen bench.

“I heard on the radio that a postman has disappeared! Up where you live, actually”, continued Auntie Pish-Posh, drying her hands on a tea towel. Edwin’s ears perked up.

“Did they say anything else?” he asked.

“Not much. He’d just driven off, the way he was supposed to, and never came back. That was basically it. You haven’t seen him today, have you?”

Edwin looked at his aunt, realising that she was obviously the right person to talk to after all. He should have done it right away. Edwin took a deep breath, the way everyone does before starting to say something important. And then he told her everything that had happened to him today. The only bit he left out was the bit about the Highways Department. He was still too disappointed to talk about it.

Auntie Pish-Posh listened, her eyes wide, and stopped doing whatever it was she’d been doing on the kitchen bench. She fetched a couple of teacups, and when Edwin was finished,

she sat down next to him and nodded as if she understood. Edwin threw out his arms, awkwardly.

"I know it sounds crazy, but..."

Auntie Pish-Posh held up a hand, leaning back in her chair.

"Nothing in this world is crazy, Eddie. Plenty of things are strange or different, but never crazy." She looked at him, her eyes flashing.

"Do you know what we're going to do?"

"Go to the police?" suggested Edwin.

"No, no. We need to be smarter than that." His aunt filled both cups with hot water, before tipping in a couple of sachets of something mysterious and yellow.

"If you're thinking of getting in touch with the Highways Department, I've got something to tell you..." Auntie Pish-Posh interrupted him with a snort.

"The Highways Department? No, no, no...they'd just look through their papers and tell us that *'it's impossible for any road to be longer than itself. That's the sort of thing we know about at the Highways Department. That's why we're the Highways Department.'*" She put on a silly voice, and giggled. His aunt was pretty good at silly voices, but Edwin was feeling the seriousness of the situation, and couldn't bring himself to laugh.

"And the police would just give us more of the same. No, there's only one thing to do with an inexplicable mystery like this, Eddie!" She threw her arms out, expansively.

"What's that, then?" asked Edwin, not sure he was going to like the answer.

"We need to call a meeting of WEIRD!"

That was exactly the answer Edwin had been afraid of. He knew WEIRD all too well, and this wasn't good news. It wasn't good news at all.

When Auntie Pish-Posh had decided on a plan, she tended to get it underway immediately. So, between five o'clock and eight minutes past, there came the sounds of two blasts from the bicycle horn, one ring of the ship's bell, and two knocks, one hesitant and one powerful, on each of the doorknockers. By nine minutes past five, every member of WEIRD was present and accounted for: Leslie Heap, Dr. Peter Munch, Sanjay Agarwal with his dog, "Dog", Liz Dyson, and old, dumb, Oscar Wollman. Edwin wasn't exactly thrilled.

#### **WEIRD:**

**World Experts on the Intriguing, Random, and Different.**

**Leader: AUNTIE PISH-POSH**

**Deputy Leader: LESLIE HEAP,**

A former professional wrestler. Quit because he got tired of aching all the time. Secretly hopes one day to photograph a UFO.

**Treasurer: LIZ DYSON,**

A small, scatter-brained woman, not unlike a bird. Eats mostly fruits, nuts, and seaweed.

**MEMBERS:****DOCTOR PETER MUNCH,**

Prefers to be called Doctor Volt. Firmly believes in the possibility of communicating with dead relatives through the careful use of electricity.

**SANJAY AGARWAL,**

Originally from India. Rarely seen without his dog. A dog, by the way, he has forgotten the name of, which is why he only ever calls it "Dog".

**OSCAR WOLLMAN,**

An old man of 83. Doesn't speak. Usually wears a dark suit, with triangular-rimmed glasses.

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