

Baboons and Bureaucrats



Kenneth R. Szulczyk

All characters, places, and situations that appear in this work are purely fictitious, created in the writer's mind. Although the places in the novel do exist, any resemblance to real people – living or dead – are entirely coincidental.

Baboons and Bureaucrats
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The Short Story

My friends and I headed to the local coffee shop. We walked down the sidewalk. The spring sun shone above us while a cool breeze brushed against us.

My friends approached a patio table with an umbrella in front of the coffee shop. They reshuffled and pushed the chairs around the table, then began sitting down.

“I’ll grab the coffee,” I called to the group.

Jeff answered, “And add extra cream and sugar to mine.”

I opened the door, and a dangling chime rang as I entered. I approached the counter.

The barista left the kitchen and approached the other side of the counter.

“Ah, you must be new,” I said.

She smiled and added, “I just started yesterday.”

“I’m a regular, so you’ll see me around. I think this place is almost my second home.”

She smiled again and added, “Well, welcome home, stranger. How may I help you?”

“Four medium cappuccinos – one with extra cream and sugar. The others are regular.”

She rang up the order, “That’ll be eighteen-fifty.”

I slid the wallet out of my back pocket and slipped the credit card out of one of its pockets. Then I passed the card to the barista.

She studied the credit card, looked up at me, and asked, “I’m sorry, but I need to see your ID, sir. I hate to do this to you, but I don’t know you yet, even though this is your second home.”

“No problem. I’m happy you’ve asked. You know – with all the identity theft and stuff going around.”

I pulled my driver’s license from the wallet and handed it to her.

She held the credit card in one hand and the driver’s license in the other, moving her eyes from one to the other. Then she held up the permit and compared the license photo to mine.

I smiled and waved my right hand a little.

She returned the driver’s license and slid the credit card into the machine. Then she added, “I see your driver’s license is about to expire.”

“Oh, shoot. I knew I was forgetting something.”

I glanced at the expiration date and saw that my license was still valid for two more weeks. Then I slipped the license back into my wallet.

“You may want to go early. My brother just renewed his driver’s license and said it was a nightmare. He said they acted like a bunch of dumb apes at the license bureau.”

“Apes, huh.”

The machine spat out the receipt. Then she handed me the credit card, tore the receipt, and passed it to me with a pen...

The alarm buzzed at 8 AM. I reached over and pushed the snooze bar. Then I rolled to my left side and repositioned the blankets.

After a minute, I jerked my legs, rolled over, and forced myself out of bed as a thought flashed: I must go and renew my license. I grabbed a towel and headed to the bathroom for a shower. Luckily, I had a day off from work and could make the trip to the Department of Motor Vehicles, or DMV for short. I kept thinking - that stupid trip to the DMV – dumbass motherfucking Van-Dycks.

After showering and dressing, I approached the desk and searched for my birth certificate. I slid one desk drawer open, shuffled papers around in the drawer, and sorted through the stacks. Then I closed it. After approaching the bottom drawer, I spotted it under a stack of utility bills. Then I grabbed a recent credit card bill from the top desk drawer and slid the documents into a folder.

I headed to the kitchen and placed a coffee cup in the Nestle Gusto. I grabbed any coffee cartridge, plopped it into the machine, added water, and pushed the magic button, and the machine buzzed to life. Then I popped a bagel into the toaster. After minutes, the toaster spat the bagel out, and I slathered a thick layer of cream cheese onto it and wrapped it in a napkin. Then I grabbed the folder, bagel, and coffee cup and headed out the door, starting my trip to the DMV.

I drove slowly and rationally to the DMV while eating my bagel and sipping my coffee. Pulling into the plaza, I saw the parking lot was filled with cars. I glanced at my watch – 9 AM exactly.

I parked the car and jogged to the front door of the DMV. Before opening the door, I saw a long line of people standing. “Damn,” I uttered under my breath. The lines become longer every time I come here; they move slower, too.

I opened the door and stood in line in the last position, fidgeting, glancing at my watch every several minutes, glancing at the sea of faces around me.

About every five minutes, I moved a step forward.

After an eternity, I reached the help desk.

An old lady stood there, staring at me blankly. She didn't smile, blink, or yawn. She appeared to be a robot without emotions.

I stated in my happy voice, "I'm here to renew my driver's license."

She snapped, "Let's see your documents."

I pulled the birth certificate and a credit card statement from the folder and handed them to her. Then I slid my wallet from my jeans pocket into my back pocket. I opened it, slipped the driver's license out, and handed it to her.

She placed the documents on the counter and studied each one as her index finger traced through all the information. Then she pushed the documents toward me. "The date on your birth certificate is too old. You must get a new birth certificate issued within one year from today's date."

"What?" After the information sunk into my mind, I asked, "Are you serious? When I renewed my driver's license four years ago, I used this same birth certificate. I had no problems then," pleading with her in my sad voice.

"The Motor Vehicles has updated its procedures to renew a driver's license. You must bring a recent birth certificate." Then she pushed a checklist printed on light blue paper across the counter.

I glanced at her, smirked, and shoved the checklist into my jacket pocket.

I remembered the barista's comments and read about the baboons' behavior. The first rule popped into my mind - Baboons are very clever. When a baboon faces a choice – the easy way or the hard way, they always choose the easy way. The baboons chase all the distractions away to sit and socialize with the other baboons. The bureaucrats reacted similarly and showed no concern. They scared people away permanently by forcing them to fill out complicated forms or spotting every tiny error on their documents, demanding that people redo them.

I grabbed my documents, ran to my car, and rushed to the downtown courthouse.

I entered the building and studied the Directory. I became confused by the numerous department names: Family Court, Circuit Court, Misdemeanor Court, and so on until ad nauseam. Finally, I spotted the office I needed—Court Clerk, Office 401.

Another fact about baboons popped into my mind. Rule 2 - Baboons create complicated, hierarchical societies. Every baboon knows its position in the hierarchy and which ape controls and leads the herd.

I ran up the stairs to the fourth floor and burst through the door.

All heads turned to watch me as I entered.

The old office building had a mildew smell lingering in the air, which was common in the southern United States. The immense humidity during

the summer rotted everything, and mold grew everywhere. Then I realized I came across Rule 3. Baboons can adapt to any environment and habitat - whether they occupy a desk in a brand new office building with fresh paint and new furniture, sit in old condemned buildings, in the dusty back rooms of factories, or in office cubicles arranged in a maze. Bureaucrats similarly sat at their desks counting everything they saw – the number of beans in a jar, the number of staples in a stapler, or the number of wood shavings in a pencil sharpener. They scrutinized every document, searching for i's with missing dots or t's missing their crosses.

An elderly woman strolled to the counter. She resembled the old lady at the DMV – a relative, perhaps. I was amazed because all baboons look like. - a cold, calculated stare, the long snout, the sharp, yellowing teeth, the puffy cheeks, and hair sticking up in wild clumps. They all came from the same genetic pool.

I approached the counter and removed my documents from the folder. After I had reached the counter, she asked, “May I help you.”

“I need to get a new birth certificate,” I said. I paused to catch my breath and added, “They told me at the DMV that I needed a birth certificate that is dated within a year of today’s date.”

“Oh, the DMV changed its rules. We’ve been getting many requests lately.”

Then she pushed a form across the counter, “Please, fill this out.”

I rotated the document and examined the first page, skimming through all the questions and blank lines. I chuckled and added, “It’s like you want my whole life history. I don’t see religious affiliation or whether I forgot to return all my library books when I was a kid.”

She raised an eyebrow and enlarged her eyes, showing the whites. Apparently, my joke didn’t amuse her. Then I remembered Rule 4 about baboons. They show displeasure by raising their eyebrows and showing the whites of their eyes.

I closed my mouth, grabbed a pen, and filled in those numerous blank lines.

She walked to her desk and sat down, chatting with her colleague directly across from her.

Perhaps she wasn’t a complete baboon. She didn’t sit next to her friend to groom and pick lice and bugs out of her hair and swallow those tasty morsels, or at least I couldn’t see it. Although I couldn’t hear their conversation, several words sounded like grunts. Baboons constantly grunt throughout the day as the grunts form the core of their language.

Then I remembered the fifth rule of baboons. Baboons will live, socialize, eat, and drink with the same individuals their whole lives,

remaining side by side with the same baboons for the rest of their lives. If anything, that would be depressing.

I glanced in her direction.

She picked up a fork and stabbed at bits of food in a casserole—an American concoction of noodles, broccoli, chunks of mysterious white meat of dubious origin, and a thick glue of pale gravy. Crunchy worm-like onions and specks of ant-like seasonings wiggled across the gravy as she picked at the food with her fork. Then she popped the fork with food into her mouth, chewing and swallowing it.

I grimaced as my stomach churned and grumbled. I tasted acid in the back of my throat as the bagel and coffee wanted to flee from my stomach the quickest route possible. I bent my head down and massaged my stomach. After a minute, the sickness subsided and faded. Then I remembered Rule 6 – baboons are omnivores. They can eat anything. Nothing is too rotten, disgusting, or unappetizing for the baboons.

I began filling in the remaining blanks on the application as best I could, leaving several blanks here and there. After 15 minutes, I reached the end of the application, scrawled my signature, and scribbled the date.

I cleared my throat, “Uh-uh.” Then I muttered, “I’d filled it out the best I could.”

She turned to stare at me. Then she dropped the fork onto the casserole, slowly rose from her chair, and returned to the counter. She took the application and studied every detail. Then she laid the application on the counter and moved her finger to a blank line.

“You forgot your father’s birthday.”

“Oh, that’s right.” I started thinking—I knew he was born in 1960, and we always celebrated his birthday in July, but the date kept eluding me. We usually dined at an expensive restaurant on the weekend before his birthday. Then I raised the pen and scribbled July 13, 1960.

She took the application and returned to her desk. She slid the keyboard near her and stroked several keys.

I became nervous and prayed that a wrong date would not ruin my day.

Then she inserted the official paper for birth certificates into the printer as the printer whirred into life. After several seconds, the printer spat out the paper. She grabbed the paper, signed it, and pressed it with the official court seal. Then she returned to the counter, “That’ll be thirty dollars, sir.”

I grumbled. Then I counted the cash from my wallet and handed it to her.

She took the money and laid the birth certificate on the counter.

I placed the new birth certificate next to the old one and compared them. They were identical, except the old birth certificate had yellowed more and

had a frayed crease through the center, where I always folded the certificate in half.

She wrote a receipt and handed it to me.

I slid the documents into my folder and returned them to the DMV.

I approached my place at the end of the line, which moved slowly. After another hour, I approached the same woman.

I was unsure if my anger had started playing tricks on me, but she smirked slightly as I approached the counter.

I pulled out my new birth certificate, driver's license, and credit card statement, and she studied them all.

A man exited from one of the numerous offices that formed a straight line at the back of the DMV. The overweight man struggled to breathe, and his skin was infested with an unhealthy reddish hue.

The office workers became quieter, shuffling more papers and tapping keyboards louder. They looked down as he passed, and they snuck glances at him once he had passed. He walked to one of the desks and dropped a bundle of documents into the tray.

Then Rules 7 and 8 for baboons popped into my mind. Rule 7 - Baboons always know their place in the hierarchy. And they fear, envy, and compete with the higher-ranking baboons. Rule 8 - higher-ranking baboons usually develop severe health problems over time as they become afflicted with high blood pressure, hardened arteries, and high cholesterol. The leadership role wreaks havoc on their bodies.

Once the higher-level baboon had returned to his office and closed the door, the woman slapped the documents onto the counter and snapped, "You need one more proof of address."

"What?"

"Didn't you read the checklist?"

"The checklist?"

"I gave you a checklist this morning."

Then I remembered. I pulled a crumpled light blue paper into my front jacket pocket. I unraveled it on the counter and slid my hands across it to smooth out the creases and crinkles.

She pointed to the top center of the paper, and I began reading the heading – Two Proofs of Address. Then a list of approved documents followed the heading.

I let out a long sigh. Then I grabbed the light blue paper and shoved it into my pocket, shaking my head back and forth. I turned to go.

The old lady snapped, "Next customer."

I rushed to my car, jumped in, and sped home. I ran into the house, searching for anything with my name and address on it. I searched the pile of utility bills accumulating in the bottom desk drawer.

I finally saw a water bill with my name on it.

I glanced at my watch—ssshhhhit. The license bureau would close in ninety minutes. I ran to the car as my stomach started growling and grumbling, screaming for food. But I drove the thought of food and hunger from my mind. I returned to the license bureau, violating numerous traffic laws.

I ran to the door, rushed in, and stood again at the end of the long line. I just made it as a security guard flipped the sign on the door—closed.

He nodded at me and said, “You’ve just made it.”

I looked for my nemesis, standing behind the wooden counter. She glanced at me as her eyes widened and jerked her head back in surprise.

After another eternal hour standing in line, I approached the old lady, removed all my documents from the folder, and slapped them down onto the counter in front of her.

“I finally got everything,” sighing with relief.

She shuffled through the documents, holding them and straightening them on the counter to make the pile align neatly. Then she placed the stack on the table and added, “Did you bring your proof of health insurance?”

“What?”

“A proof of health insurance.”

My mouth hung open while my eyes squinted for several seconds. Then I snapped, “I don’t understand. I didn’t see health insurance on the list.”

I pulled the light blue paper from my pocket while she pulled a light pink paper from a stack and placed it in front of me. Then she stated, “The department has just updated its requirements for a driver’s license.

I studied the pink paper and saw that a fourth column had been added – Proof of Health Insurance.”

My heart started racing, and my face reddened. I just wanted to scream at her, but I inhaled a deep breath, keeping my anger under control.

I asked slowly, punctuating every syllable clearly, “What does health insurance have to do with a driver’s license?”

“I didn’t come up with the regulations, sir. I only make sure we follow them.”

“But a driver’s license only proves a person can operate a motor vehicle?”

“Then perhaps you should write to your legislator. They are the ones who write the laws that the department must follow.”

I wanted to stand my ground and argue with her, but I knew that would be futile. Although she appeared old and frail, baboons are exceptionally strong.

I grabbed the documents and pink checklist and shoved them into the folder, and turned to go, muttering “damn it” under my breath.

After exiting the DMV, I screamed, “God damn it,” as I shook my fists at the heavens.

The guard peered outside and snapped the door lock shut with a click.

I stomped my way toward the car and screamed, “Those goddamn baboons have made everything impossible!”

Then understanding invaded my mind. I must say those baboons are quite clever. When no one was looking or noticing, the baboons grabbed control of our government. What became even more frightening was that a large gathering of baboons formed a congress, and they sure have made a mess of everything.

The End.

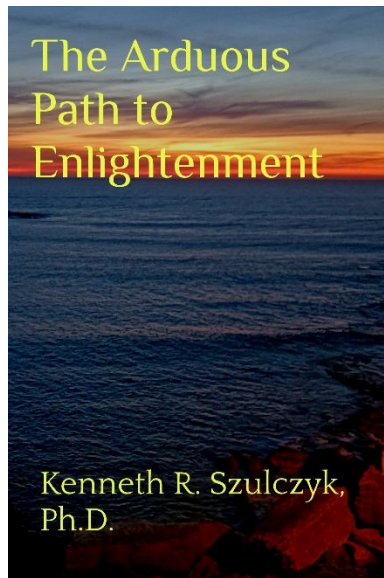
About the Author

I was born in a small town in Michigan, filled with the noises of factories. While growing up, I witnessed factory closures, which brought high unemployment and few economic prospects. I left the town to pursue my dreams and enrolled in a university. My education opened the door to the world, where I graduated with a Ph.D. in environmental and natural resource economics from Texas A&M University. With my degree, I traveled and lived in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Kazakhstan, Morocco, Malaysia, and the United States. Currently, I teach economics and finance at a small university in Morocco. Despite my humble beginnings as a poor boy from Michigan, I am doing alright. I am living life to the fullest.

Other books from the author:

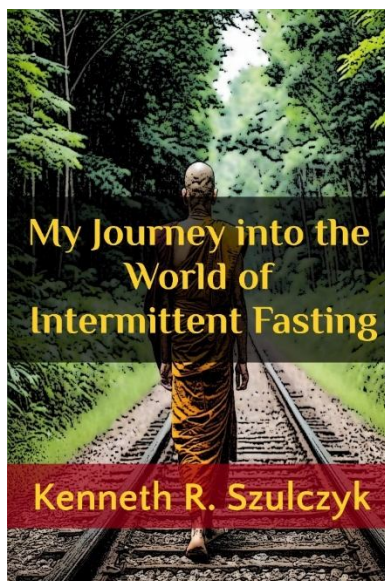
The Arduous Path to Enlightenment

As human beings, we often ponder upon our existence on this earth and ask ourselves why we are here. We search for answers through various religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. They share a common theme where God wants us to use all our talents and become closer to Him. We examine methods like fasting, meditation, lucid dreaming, sensory deprivation, and mind-altering drugs such as psychedelics and marijuana to explore our minds and awaken our spirituality. We delve into the deep depths of our minds and psyches to gain greater awareness and uncover hidden aspects of ourselves. Through this journey, we discover our true selves and purpose in life while traversing the path to enlightenment.



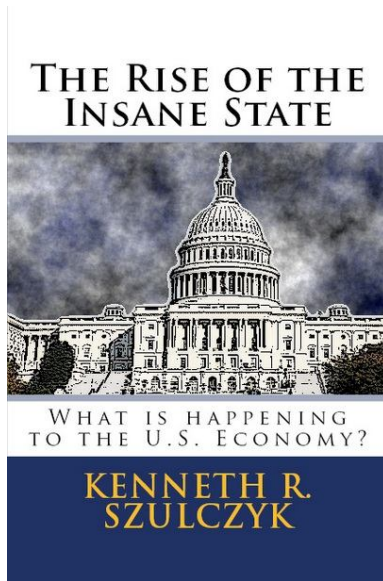
My Journey into the World of Intermittent Fasting

Intermittent fasting is a journey with many twists and turns. We may not be exploring ancient stone ruins in the jungles of Cambodia or savoring the exotic flavors of spicy Thai cuisine from the food carts on the streets of Bangkok. However, fasting is a journey to a healthier body. In this book, I take you on this journey, sharing practical insights and tips on all aspects of fasting. I've distilled my knowledge and extensive research into an easy-to-follow guide, including 50 practical tips on fasting, exercise, and nutrition. My book is a tool that can help you discover the power of intermittent fasting and unlock the doors to a healthy, long life.



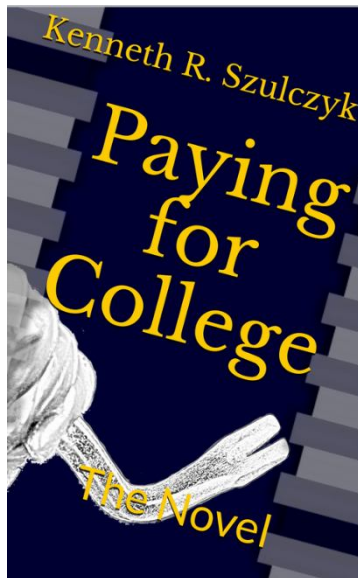
The Rise of the Insane State – What is Happening...

This book offers a comprehensive view of the U.S. legal system, explaining the relationships between the people, businesses, and their government. It's not filled with complicated statistics or high-level economic jargon. It's written for any intelligent person who wants to understand why a government takes over its economy. The book uses numerous examples and cases from the United States, but these ideas can apply to any country. It's a book that makes complex concepts accessible and understandable.



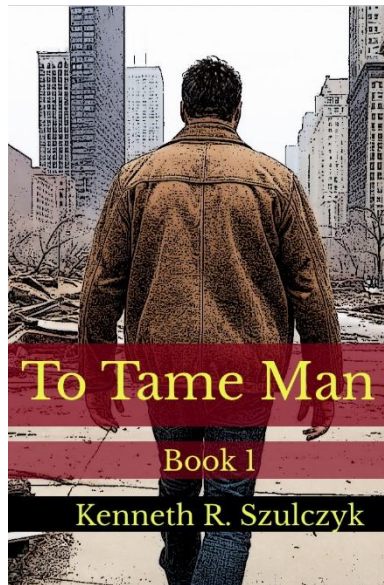
Paying for College – The Novel

Brothers, I only wanted to attend a university and escape a small town with no job prospects or future. But every time I opened my mailbox at the dorm, I pulled out another tuition bill with a looming due date. So, I had to do the unthinkable—break a few rules and do some insane things. Then everything just became crazy.



To Tame Man

The United Federation of Cities has been at peace since the Great War, and one of its great cities, Chicago, has experienced no violence, no crime, and no murders in 68 years. Then Susan, the director of the Male Processing Unit, ran out of Growth Inhibitor 37, and several males, including Brown 447, didn't get their treatment. Unfortunately, Brown 447 shows an uncanny intelligence and rises up and challenges the society of Chicago. Mayor Lilith and the Mayor's Guards must restore the social order and return law and order to Chicago.



Searching for Stolen Love

Fox is an American finance professor. He is thrilled to teach at the Bosnian University of Management, a place, where he hopes to make a difference. His future is bright, and he fell in love with a Serbian woman. Having just completed his first semester, he is looking forward to a peaceful winter. But one night, his girlfriend disappeared without a trace, and he is left with a growing sense of unease. Determined to find her, Fox embarks on a search that would lead him to uncover a mystery in the land of blood and honey.



The Second American Revolution – The Building of an Empire

As a child, Jerrick Ray Davis dreamed of delivering powerful speeches to the people. He also dreams of building an Empire across the North and South Americas. These are not simple daydreams but ideas that map out Jerrick’s destiny. Jerrick rises out of the wreckage and devastation of the Michigan economy and turns his dreams into reality. Jerrick Davis and his political party, the National Workers’ Party, took over the United States government and the rest of the Americas. Jerrick Ray Davis becomes the most powerful man in the 21st century, and the world trembles at his sight. Jerrick Ray Davis also makes a promise to the people. After the 2008 Financial Crisis, he will put all Americans back to work. Good-paying jobs will be plentiful again. Of course, Jerrick Davis puts everyone back to work, building his Empire. This story is about Jerrick Ray Davis’ life from early childhood to rising in power. Please read this story with caution; we may be all toiling hard on Jerrick Ray Davis’ Empire. As Jerrick Ray Davis says, “All Americans will be united under one flag.”



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The Second American Revolution

The Building of an Empire