

# PALO ALTO ODYSSEY

## In Palo Alto, you're over the hill at 40

“SERIOUSLY,” said Jeremy, “it’s hard being a slacker in Palo Alto these days. There is all this pressure to work. To get a good job.”

He continued, “To sit in front of a screen at a picnic table everyday with a bunch of coder drones, or whatever they are doing these days.”

“I guess the coding is outsourced, and they are doing something else in those groups, spying on people, or whatever. What a lousy job.”

Miranda was sitting at a table outside Cafe Venetia on University Avenue drinking her latte.

She was talking with Jeremy, a friend’s grandson, who was making a movie about trying to be a slacker in present day Palo Alto.

“You’re lucky, Miranda,” said Jeremy. “When you were growing up in

This is part 25 of a 48-part fictionalized serial by John Angell Grant.

Palo Alto, it was easy to be a slacker. Now it’s quite difficult.”

“Tell me about your movie,” said Miranda.

“It about a bunch of tech people in Palo Alto,” said Jeremy. “They get fired when they reach age 40, so they steal a bunch of gear and go down to live by San Francisquito Creek, where they build a communal tech village and take back Palo Alto from the invaders.”

“It’s science fiction,” he added.

“Sounds interesting,” said Miranda.

“For old people like you,” said Jeremy, “They say 65 is the new 40. But for tech workers in Palo Alto, it’s the other way — 40 is the new 65.

Forty is when they get fired. At age 40, you’re over the hill, unemployed, and broke.”

He added, “There will soon be masses of them, crawling around the bogs of the Peninsula. Like the living dead wandering the earth looking for other people to eat.”

“You’ll see,” Jeremy continued. “It’s going to happen. I’m a prophet. You can say you heard it from me.”

“I’ve been talking about it with Eddie, you know the street guy, your brother Tom’s friend. He agrees with me. He’s helped me with my script.”

“How far along are you with your movie?” Miranda asked.

Jeremy dodged the question. “My girlfriend Taylor is going to star in the film,” he said. “She’s a waitress at Coupa, but she’s taking acting classes at Foothill.

She’s good. They have a good theater program up there. Let me show you her picture.”

Jeremy pulled out his phone, and showed Miranda his girlfriend’s picture.

To her astonishment, Miranda realized it was the waitress at Coupa Cafe she had ridiculed earlier for saying “Perfect” to every customer who placed an order.

Miranda felt chagrined. “Yes, I think I know her,” she said. “Sort of. I had coffee there the other day, and I remember her.”

“She’s great,” said Jeremy. “And a great actress. She’s in ‘West Side Story’ right now at Lucie Stern. Want to go see it?”

“Sure,” said Miranda. “When?”

“Tonight.” said Jeremy.

So they went to the theater.

**More tomorrow.**