

<p style="text-align: center;"><strong style="mso-bidi-font-weight: normal;"></p> <p style="text-align: center;"></p> <p>"Look, Mommy, look, a big cave!" The train is stopping, and Little Johnny is pointing excitedly at a huge black hole at the bottom of a cliff, flanked by a wide river. The intercom comes alive: "Everybody please assemble at the cave. Municipal by-laws at @Paradise# require that you do a worthiness test. But don't worry, hardly anybody has ever flunked it."</p> <p>After the recent love test I am not all that reassured. Then I felt distinctly fortunate to have made it. But I've always thought my character was not too bad, lot of good stuff there....</p> <p>♦</p> <p>It takes time, but we cross the fast running river on a small pull-rope ferry. Heaps of marked and unmarked stone age garments, accoutrements and equipment await us at the cave. We have to select and put on what seems most suitable. Little Johnny and Teacher-Mom chose fairly conservative skins and grass skirts, leaving everything to the imagination in her case, and Little Johnny free and easy. With some approval I note her adornment with several colourful necklaces of stones, seed pods and bone beads, as well as quite extravagant dried fruit rattles on shapely ankles. Dancing mom?</p> <p>When I inspect my options, I find the whole gamut of human endeavour represented: Chief, shaman, hunter, tool provider, tool user, artist, entertainer, care giver, old timer; and also, undesignated: Slob, lounge lizard, weasel....</p> <p>♦</p> <p>The first surprise is that every role is filled by at least one person. Usually it takes time to fill all the niches in a new community.</p> <p>The second surprise is a big one: There is an outburst of cries of alarm and terror from the back of the cave, and the deep raucous roar of several angry monster bears! ♦</p> <p>♦</p> <p>The conductor shouts to us from the other side of the river:</p> <p>"I can♦take a boat over to you filled with weapons, so you can try and defend yourselves and some may survive.♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦</p> <p>Or, you can use the♦boat on your side so that a small number of people can escape.♦♦♦♦♦♦</p> <p>Choose, because♦♦we ♦♦cannot ♦♦do♦♦both!"</p> <p>♦</p> <p>A 'chief' and a 'weasel' jump onto the ferry. "My leadership qualities will be needed in @paradise#, I must not die!", says the 'chief', and the 'weasel' smirks: "Lots of people at home depend on my social grant. I must not die! Good luck, everybody!"</p> <p>They push off, but a big wave capsizes the vessel and with despairing cries the two disappear down-river.</p> <p>There is an even bigger surprise: The 'bears' whip off their disguises, and now as train waiters proceed to offer congratulations, tea and reconstituting spirits all round. The musicians start a lively tune, and in a mood of euphoria fuelled by relief and much good will, respect, and appreciation, a wonderful impromptu party ensues.♦♦</p> <p>Much later, ♦Little Johnny♦admits: "Lucky that Mom held me tight, because I was going to jump on the ferry with her. Why♦should I care about other people,♦well, maybe except♦you, Mister?"</p> <p>Children... they epitomise social♦no-conscience.♦"I'm sure happy to hear that.♦But if everybody only focussed on themselves, their precious Number One,♦we would♦all be extinct!"♦</p>