

## **The Disciples of Gōdīn**

By Mary Warner

To say the door is understated would be an exaggeration. Thousands of people walk by it everyday in New York City. They never notice its bland greenness blending with the bland greenness of the tiny building supporting it. It's a muddy green that recedes and becomes its own shadow. The door is unmarked, no signage or number to identify it as a storefront or an apartment stairwell or a utility entry. Those who do notice it, the few already branded as initiates, see the crack that delineates the door first – a fine line of black that speaks of promise beyond.

They, the initiates, are the sort of people that, when dared to cross a particular line, will do it just to see what happens.

Initiates never come to the door in groups. Their groupmates would talk them out of entering. When they are ready, they come alone.

Upon trying the doorknob, they discover two things: 1. The door is unlocked. 2. Looped around the knob is a fat rubber band that simply says "Gōdīn."

The braver initiates slip inside, barely observed by the hordes swirling past on the sidewalk. Inside, they find themselves in a gray tiled cubicle glowing with lavender light emanating from a fixture suspended from an impossibly high ceiling. *The building from the outside did not appear to be this tall*, they think to themselves.

On the other side of the cubicle, they are confronted with another door. It is decision time. Go forward through the next door, or back through the last. Some are not as brave as they thought upon entering the cubicle and retreat into the light of day. Some boldly open Door Number Two with nary a thought as to the consequences.

Most are courageous, but tentative. They investigate the cubicle before committing to a forward path.

The tile work is impeccable: Six-inch square tiles set at a diagonal with quarter-inch grout lines so even and straight they could be plumb lines. The tile is rough, but attractive, and isn't exactly gray. Closer inspection reveals subtle pinks, blues and purples mixed into the glaze. The color warms what could be a cold space.

The impossibly high ceiling is too dark and far away to properly make out. Endless as the night's sky, but no stars, save for the lavender light. The light fixture, what can be seen of it, looks to be straight out of a Dr. Seuss book, with its loops and swirls of gold metal jutting about behind the bulb.

The second door is as nondescript as the first, save for a peephole lens. Curiosity is a sign of true initiates, who take a peek into the peephole. The word "Squidoo" swims

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inside the fish-eye lens. Before they can ponder the meaning of Squidoo, a voice bleats, “Quit waffling and get in here now!”

This voice from beyond chases more potential candidates out of the cubicle and back to their safe lives. They aren’t ready yet. Perhaps they never will be. Those who listen and stay acknowledge their waffling with chagrin as they launch themselves through Door Number Two.

Beyond is a cavernous room – an optical illusion, surely, for the building entered could never contain a room this size. If those who came through the second door weren’t stunned by what they saw, they might look for mirrors. Instead, they are greeted by a somewhat bigger than life-size talking purple cow, who calls each visitor by name.

“Hello, Gideon.”

“Welcome, Lola.

“What took you so long, Mitch?”

It’s not a real cow, not in the living, breathing, moving sense. It’s a fiberglass cow, the kind of thing that gets parked in public places in small towns as the main attraction. The purple pseudo-hide glows as though irradiated. A smattering of white spots, typical of a Holstein pattern, break up the luminosity. If they’d had a friend and a camera, the initiates would have posed for a picture. Barring that, they look around, some now looking for mirrors that give the illusion of space.

Save for the cow and a single initiate, the room is empty. It is a photo-negative of the cow: Brilliant white with large purple polka dots on the floor, the walls, the ceiling. The dots and the white, combined with the brightness of the room, give the effect of seamlessness, making it difficult to find the corners and edges of the room, the lines where floor meets walls and walls meet ceiling.

“Pick a spot, any spot,” invites the cow. “Touch it and see what happens.”

The obvious choice is a floor dot, and most move to stand on one. Some pick a wall dot and place a hand, or foot, or finger on their dot. The adventurous make contact with a dot through a knee, an elbow, an ear, or their nose. The romantics kiss a dot. The pie-in-the-sky, nothing-is-impossible folks choose a ceiling dot and puzzle over how to reach it. While they stand under the dot scratching their heads, they discover that their knuckles are scraping the dot, the ceiling having reached down to meet them. Or was the ceiling always this low?

Contact with a dot produces a hologram of a bald man vibrant with energy. Dot-by-dot, he launches into riffs and rants, imparting slips of wisdom through the stories he tells to the initiate standing before him. His speeches seem pre-recorded (how can they not be?),

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yet, if asked a question, the bald man responds to each pupil as though in face-to-face conversation. He never gets a name wrong.

The morals of the bald man's stories are simple.

Be remarkable.

Be authentic.

Everyone is a marketer. Deal with it and project the image of your choice.

Tell a good story. Believe that story and others will believe you.

Marketing is about talking and listening. You may be talking, but are you listening?

Start now.

Test and measure to see what works.

Produce a purple cow.

Do the never.

Act fast. Act, period.

Simple as they may be, the messages are difficult to carry out in the real world. Initiates know this. Many have been trying for years to do something remarkable, creative, world-changing – in short, attempting to produce a purple cow – but have been shot down by those who'd rather remain comfortable in their indistinct netherworld of security.

They wander from dot to dot for days, the bovine in the room sensing their every need – beverage, food, sleep, potty breaks – and filling those needs magically and in the appropriate fashion. Initiates are reenergized by the enthusiasm of the bald man, a kindred spirit. At some point during the dot process, the realization comes that the bald man is called Gōdīn, although the cow very well could be called the same, as the two are interchangeable in their remarkableness.

Somewhere in their dot hopping, initiates eventually connect with one of the spots on the purple cow. If they do not think to do this themselves, the cow invites them to it, wherein they are treated to a story about yak shaving.

By the time initiates are ready to leave the polka dotted room, they are disciples of Gōdīn. As they reenter the gray cubicle and the world, the only evidence they have of their adventure with the bald man and the purple cow is a fat rubber band around a wrist that says "Zoomer." The disciples are ready to start anything.

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