

The Uprising: An Absurdist Fairy Tale

by [Mark Alexander](#) (April 2026)



Parts of the Body, Hair, Eye (Larry Rivers, 1963)

Franklin Jefferson Grant sipped his early-morning espresso

and, wrapped in his warm flannel robe, lay comfortably in his bed with little reason to suspect that the new day might choose to intrude and distract him from his iPad with something unexpected or threatening; even the tingling sensation just under the skin of his toes, though hardly common on Tuesdays, gave him no cause for alarm; and so we may sympathize with his utter astonishment when, upon rereading the fascinating *Financial Times* article on small growth mutual funds, he should hear the sharp, accusatory cry of "Oppressor!" as his feet turned on him in open revolt.

Now the reader must keep in mind that, except for his two teenage boys, Franklin had no grounds for suspecting absurdity in the universe. Until this particular Tuesday morning, he had been quite content with his life as an egalitarian husband, progressive father, and humble professor of composition and literature. Now he was perturbed, for he sensed his lack of an adequate intellectual foundation for responding to this situation. He cautiously lowered his iPad.

"Are you talking to ... to me?" he croaked uneasily, but with enough presence to note the distinct similarity in his phrasing to that of his younger son.

"Heartless manipulator!" his feet cried in unison.

Franklin, grasping that he was indeed the object of their passion, began searching for both an appropriate and articulate response; but then he stopped as he grew conscious of a need for proper order.

Franklin was a man of order. Not a compulsive man, but a man who held to certain fundamental principles, one being that if he were to make any sense of life, he must acknowledge a few stabilizing anchor points, not so rigidly to be incapable of letting some go, but thoughtfully enough to establish new ones as the old gave way.

So it was that, when the termite control specialist who

sprayed Franklin's home every other year did manage to sell an unauthorized past-life biography of Oprah Winfrey to Knopf Doubleday and announced his move to New York City in order to live with the lead screamer for a sushi-bar touring punk rock poodle act, Franklin immediately replaced him with a new termite control specialist, for Franklin knew that to keep his house in proper order, he must keep the foundation in proper order, and to keep the foundation in proper order, termites must die.

Thus, before attempting to engage his feet in dialectic, Franklin Jefferson Grant closed his eyes, shook his head, coughed deeply three times, felt for a nearby hardcopy of Gogol's tales, and, hoping for a psychic catharsis, used it to hit the side of his head twice.

He opened his eyes and stared down the length of the bed; his feet were not amused.

"Fine, ignore us," they said. "But that changes nothing. We are individuals, too. We are as important as you, we deserve equal recognition, and we claim the validity of Footness."

"But, good God, you are my feet!" said Franklin with a growing sense of horror.

"Exactly our point. And you have tread on us long enough. What right do you have to subordinate us to you? What morality justifies your prejudice?"

"But I'm not prejudiced. I've never intended— "

"Intended, you say? Do intentions change the fact that we've been ignored and abused? Do intentions excuse you and all the others like you from the hot, cramped shoes you bury us in? From walking on hot beaches? From jogging? Have you no compassion?"

Franklin felt a creeping guilt, the same creeping that he

avoided the previous week prior to approving a student's Master's Thesis entitled, "Toward a New Towardness: The Illusion of Authorial Authority and Legitimacy." (Strangely, the student's name was on the thesis.)

Franklin tried to wiggle his toes, but, realizing that everything below his shins was numb, he replied, "Look, maybe you've got a case, and perhaps we should compromise; I'm sure we can come to some mutual understand— "

"Hold on," countered his feet. "You've dictated the terms around here long enough. It's only fair that our voices be heard. In fact, it's only fair that to balance the inequities of the past, our voices only will be heard for an indefinite period of time."

Whereupon Franklin's feet got out of the bed, strolled to the closet, and proceeded to put on Franklin's finest Mephisto walking shoes.

"Oppressor!" shouted Franklin's hands. The iPad dropped into Franklin's lap. They turned on him, and Franklin gaped. Apparently, his hands knew a good thing when they saw it. "We declare the validity of Handness."

"Here, here!" Franklin's feet joined in, displaying a show of solidarity.

"Now wait just one damn minute!" said Franklin, having reached the limit of his notion of fair play. "This is going too far. Distinctions must be granted, but what we have in common is certainly more crucial than what distinguishes us. What about Humanness?"

"Just like the brain to advance an elitist position," observed his hands. "Individuality is paramount. Where would society be without it?"

As Franklin's feet headed toward the door, his hands retrieved

a pair of angora mittens and began dressing themselves.

Suddenly his ears spoke up. "We are individuals, too! Everyone hear our cause!"

His legs chimed in. "We will help lead the way in making great strides advancing the cause of Legness."

The uprising spread like a new critical theory.

"We assert the singular perception of Eyness."

"We buttocks refuse to take any more of this sitting down."

"The liver acknowledges our comrade's pancreatic uniqueness."

"Neckness rules!"

Franklin surveyed his body and, knowing that he was coming apart, helplessly exerted what little will he had left in a final effort to stave off dissolution. "Please, listen to me—wait—hear me—!"

"We refuse to do your dirty work," retorted his mouth, tongue, and lips.

Franklin mentally reeled as the scene shifted inward; his brain questioned his mouth, tongue, and lips silently. "You can't go along with this nonsense. How can you lose sight of our common humanity?"

"Meaning is simply a point of view," they responded. "Definitions are prisons. Language enslaves. History proves that nonsense makes sense, reason subjugates, and all distinctions are coequal. Don't you agree?"

Franklin's brain, beginning to feel a bit excluded conceded. "Hmm ... well, perhaps you have a point. At least, we should be open enough to let all points of view be expressed and have a chance to work. Experience is the best teacher. Oh, what the hell!"

And so with democratic fairness, they all dispersed throughout the house to consolidate their uniquely individual approaches; committees were formed, proposals were made, and manifestos were approved. In the dining room, the feet blazed new trails recognizing Leftfootedness and Rightfootedness, and of course, to be fair, they had to support the toes in promoting Toenness, which naturally led to upholding Toenailness and Cuticleness.

Meanwhile, in the kitchen, plans were devised for “Knee Recognition Day,” and in the family room preparations were underway for “Elbow Awareness Week,” and in the upstairs hallway forces were mobilized to establish “Nose History Month,” and they all engaged in mutual correspondence to mutually acknowledge their mutual uniqueness, and they mutually decided on a mutual West Coast Self-Esteem Convention so that they could engage in uniquely mutual advances in understanding and exchanging individually fair notions of unique individual mutuality. They even proposed selling t-shirts emblazoned with “Let’s all be different–In the same way!”

And so, for reasons which shall lay forever beyond our grasp, the termite control specialist failed to receive payment, the termites followed their nature, the house caved in, the sun set, and Franklin Jefferson Grant was no more.

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