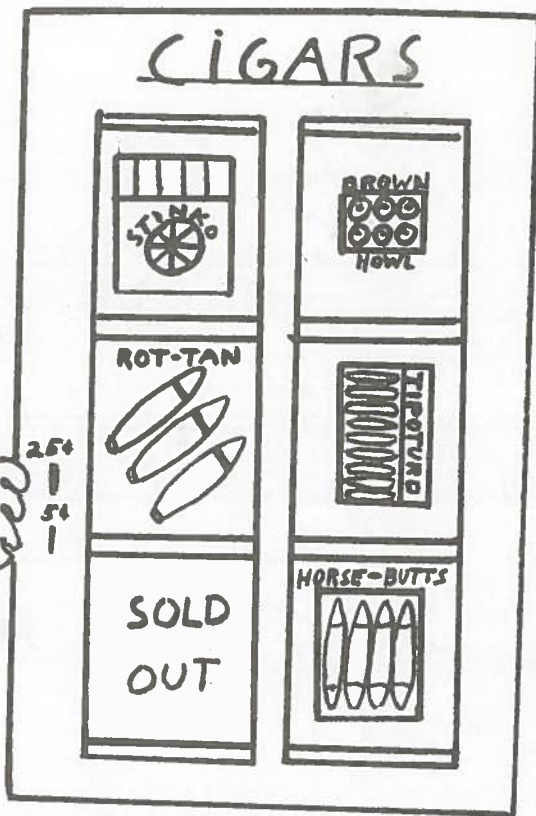


THE

ALCHEMIST



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BUT IT'S THE TRUTH, SORT OF...

This story takes place in a small south-east Asian country that is both near and dear to our hearts. It concerns some visitors to this jewel of the east from a not so near and dear place. What are they doing there? Well, perhaps they feel that they have a commitment, too.

The mighty vessel plunged from the skies at an almost inconceivable speed. As a matter of fact it was an almost inconceivable vessel. You see, it was a starship that travelled at 92 times the speed of light. Well, not really, but sort of. How can matter reach the speed of light? Well this wasn't really made of matter, only sort of.

Anyway, the ship carried several hand picked members of the Interstellar Sociological Survey Team who were coming to pick up a student from a tiny speck of interstellar offal called Earth. He had reported finding some startling new social phenomenon which he insisted deserved the attention of the chief of the team. As the ship lands, let us pick up our story from there.

The mighty ship's arrival illicited very little attention from the surrounding countryside. This was because its alleged colors were invisible to the human eye. The creature awaiting its arrival bore himself in a manner typical of a student who is convinced that he is about to astound his mentor. As a ramp was lowered, three creatures floated down it. These gave the viewer an unmistakable impression of dignity inspite of the fact that they lacked any spinal support and boasted multi-colored scales. Their student approached in a manner which is typical of students in the presence of authority (i.e. his spinelessness seemed more appropriate.)

"Student Enash reporting on the culture of Uncivilized World #38" was the verbalism emitted by the student. "And what is your student number?" was the authoritarian's reply. Enash remained unabashed by this petty, bureaucratic replay and went on bravely to recite the 19 digits of the abovementioned number.

Having made the required courtesies, Enash quickly buckled down to business. "What we have here, sir, is a social phenomenon which is completely unprecedented in the history of our field. It is designated by the monosyllable "war". "War?" said his mentor (whose name could be pronounced Apuz) with a gesture equivalent to a raised eyebrow. "It is rather difficult to believe that a student of your questionable academic standing could have discovered an entirely novel predicament. Remember, our surveys have continued for over 10,000 years and have practically analyzed and categorized every form of social behaviour. What is the nature of this phenomenon."

"Well, sir" replied Enash in a rather cautious tone, "members of different ethnic groups take upon themselves the project of killing one another off in a very organized and systematic fashion."

"Killing?" expostulates Apuz, "What is the meaning of this term?" "Oh, I am sorry sir, it is easy to see that my stay has effected my vocabulary. To kill is to extinguish the life-force of a creature other than oneself."

"What?" was Apuz's incredulous yet clearly explicit reply. "You mean to tell me that the creatures of this planet allow other intelligent creatures to rob them of their life force?" "Well" replied Enash "not exactly. As a matter of fact, they go to considerable lengths to avoid it But in most cases they don't go far enough."

(SORT OF...CON'T)

Apuz was now clearly disturbed. "But why? What can be possibly gained from extinguishing the existence of another intelligent being?"

"Well" said Enash who felt himself rapidly sliding down the bottomless pit that faces all students at one time or another, "I'll try to explain."

"Do you see those little yellow things down there; the ones with the slanty eyes? Those are the Vietnamese. They are trying to rid their homeland of invaders from the north."

Apuz glared rather uncertainly at Enash and said. "I take it we are speaking of intelligent creatures and not some fungus growth. So, the reason you give for "war" is protection of living quarters."

"Well, sort of." was Enash's rejoinder. "Let me continue. These other slanty eyed, yellow ones, the ones with the black robes, are the invaders from the north. But most of them are from the south."

At this point, Enash's mentor lost a small portion of his composure and made several remarks about the profession pursued by Enash's mother. Enash's eloquent remarks quickly soothed his mentor's temper, however, and he continued his dissertation.

"Now sir, do you see the larger, round-eyed white ones. The ones with the funny walk. They are the Americans. Their aid was enlisted by the Vietnamese to repulse the invaders. They came from a far off land. They have a large number of bases here and their support of the Vietnamese Government is all that keeps it in existence."

"It seems to me that some of these ideas make sense. But protection of living quarters is a rather feeble motivation. Could sexual rituals play some part in what is going on," said Apuz.

"To watch the round-eyed white ones, one could come to that conclusion. However I don't think it is a primary motive," replied Enash.

"Well, then, let me get this straight. The Vietnamese have hired the round-eyed white things to get rid of an invader of their living quarters who is invading for an undetermined reason. What are these invaders called." "Vietnamese, sir" was Enash's reply. "But I thought the ones being invaded were the Vietnamese," queried the mentor. "They are sir" said Enash.

"Yeahhhhhhhhhh..." was Apuz's only reply. His jaw had dropped about 9 inches and his eyes were bulging forth. His scales were now oscillating between deep scarlet and purple. "Do you mean to tell me that the Vietnamese hired the Americans to save Vietnam from the Vietnamese?"

"Yes, sir" replied Enash, who now felt a small suspicion that his master didn't quite believe him.

"Master of Discipline" screamed Apuz, "take this formless pile of offal, this illegitimate hyena, this misbegotten offspring of, of 10,000 individual and equally repulsive stenches and give him a sound drubbing. He has had the nerve to deficate upon my ears with the most absurd, revolting parcel of lies ever concocted. Afterwards, I will take the proper surgical procedures to see to it that he pollutes no offspring with his officious ideas." "War indeed," guffawed Apuz, "anyone even remotely possible of conceiving such an idea must be totally deranged."

Later that day, as the ship plunged through timeless space, Enash continued to expostulate his findings to Apuz. However, he did so in a notably higher pitched voice.

--Tony Zupa

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN PS107, OR, IT'S ALL IN THE GAME!

In keeping with the dubious traditions established by that extremely promising and far reaching course, PS 107, it was decided to have a football game consisting of players of both sexes. A challenge was thrown out by the female members of the scientific community to their male counterparts. With tremendous enthusiasm it was accepted-the game to be played Friday, October 25.

In preparation for this battle basic, the girls' team spent many cold, but profitable, hours in heated practice under the expert guidance of Coach Fleash. Natural abilities became evident and star qualities were recognized, as well as tendencies toward violence, viciousness, and love of our fellow man(men?).

The great day arrived-along with rain, snow, sleet, hurricane winds, and a typhoon-which severely affected the challenged team so that the date was moved to the following Tuesday, which arrived along with rain, snow, sleet, hurricane winds and a typhoon-but all involved stoically insisted the game should go on. At this point, it is important to remember that the writer was a member of the better, though less experienced, team.

The challengees were the first to receive the ball-though it took a few minutes to ascertain how. As the offensive team assembled before the defensive line, a tremendous psychological effect became evident-it was a combination of mixed awe and fear caused by our 110 lb. 5'4" tackle-Eileen Lovering; our 105 lb., 5'3" center, who happens to be the author, and our impressive 115 lb. quarterback, Mary Kay Bachman. (All other statistics are unimportant.) Well,-perhaps it was not entirely awe and fear our offensive team saw in their eyes. Maybe it had something to do with our unique and famous signals: 38-24-36-HIKE!

The game proceeded along-an exceptional performance being given by our tight end-Sue Schiffmacher; similar exhibitions of talent were given by our block, Chris Nowak, and our uninhibited, part-time guard, Annie Ganczewski. The other team tried furiously to stop our crushing, offensive line, and break through our tough defense, but met only with frustration-until a "certain math major of Spanish descent"¹ was magnanimously sent to be on our team-after that it was all down hill despite our many attempts to rally.

And so the game finally came to an end-our team suffering a totally undeserved defeat at the hands of the enemy-"...and there was much crying and lamenting". As every body left the field, laden with latent pneumonia, it was decided a celebration was definitely in order. It was at this time one of our more important teammates, who, though suffering from, well..., was violently abducted by nefarious members of the other team; she was rescued, however, much to her disappointment.

The first spontaneously occurring celebration took place immediately afterwards in a certain room which will remain unmentioned at this point. As much speculation has been made concerning the following celebration, I will hereby state it was all speculation:merely a friendly get-together of the opposing teams-again in conjunction with the tenets established by PS 107. Those who did not attend should rue the day they decided not to play in the game.

To sum up the emotions generated by all aspects of the confrontation, the following comments were offered by the co-eds:

"I thought I was a guard, but most of my time was spent on the ground"-Annie.

"Never again in those slacks"-anonymous.

"Most of my time was spent looking out for falling bodies"-Mary Kay.

"I refrain from comment"-Bugs.

EXPERIMENTAL ERROR?

Hi there! If you will remember, in our past few episodes the chief problem was in the discussion and not in the material. Well, this time, I don't even have any material to discuss! Okay--without any despair, hysteria or threats of becoming an English major, I will attempt to stage an instant replay.

The object of the whole thing, there, was to determine the amount of sulfur that reacts with a given amount of copper under specified conditions and from that little beautiful piece of miracle, a formula can be determined. (That's what they'd like you to believe.)

Okay! With hope in my heart and the fire of optimism in my soul I set out to do the thing that they said couldn't be done--and--I couldn't do it! I carefully weighed the crucible and cover, then added about 2g of copper and reweighed. Then, I added about 1.5g of sulfur as specified and weighed again. (Could I get a job as a scale operator?) Now (under the hood) I heated the whole thing, carefully, watching for signs of overheating. After a lengthy period of time I took away the heat and allowed the crucible to cool so I could check the sulfur content. Now, it says that one is not to lift the cover of said crucible during the heating or cooling period. In my case, there was no need to worry about that because the cover had become firmly fastened to the crucible, thanks to the wonderfulness of the subliming sulfur.

Assuming the role of the damsel in distress, I approached those in charge who, after brief consultation, offered two alternatives (after first carefully coaxing the cover from the crucible.) The first suggestion was to reheat carefully with cover slightly ajar to remove sulfur on rim and cover. The second--scratch the whole thing.

After consulting the ever-threatening timepiece and remembering an impending Spanish exam, I chose the latter. (You'll be glad to know that I received an "A" on that exam.) (¡Olé?)

After that major fiasco I packed my little toys and bid fond adieu to the lab.

How shall I sum up my results? In the words of the beloved Oliver Hardy (speaking to Stan Laurel), "Well, that's another fine mess you've gotten us into."

--Jane Pepe

OF COURSERS, CONQUESTS, AND CHEMISTRY

Meadows green rose in the warming sun,
Pregmant fruit trees in gentle breezes sway,
Long looks I gaze, and sigh, and say
Goodbye. And turn and see the barren way.

The first few miles passed easily by
My legs much younger then,
But deadwood grew upon my knees,
And stiffness to my joints to bend.

My eyes grew tight, and hard to see
But a sign into my vision came,
I drew a breath and squinted and weezed,
"Here is where Jonathan Jones went lame;

"But he had great couraged and 'tinued to crawl,
With his elbows he dragged, on his belly did slide,
Six hours he grunted, and swelt in the sun,

Here; I think I should have cried-at least wept
To the day owl's shrill hoots,
But I bent my stiff back in the aching sun
And from his dead body I stole his dead boots.

I don't think I'll get far, I don't think I can,
But, I'll try my hardest like Jonathan Jones,
My sapped strength is running but I live for one thought,
At least to get further than his pile of bones.

I've gone my farthest, no more can I go,
And I dare man to say that I've not tried my best,
Yes, I've gone my farthest, no more will I go,
Now I'll lay down my head and here take my rest.

The top I can see, but, my legs don't respond,
Only hours to wait, yet one thought eats my heart,
My journey is over, but down in the meadow
A baby now sleeps and soon he must start.

-John Rager

WE THE STUDENTS...

To most of the students, the lecture given by Minas Ensanian was rather interesting. He didn't speak like a scientist, nor did he flood the mind with equations. One would say that he had an almost refreshing attitude towards science. It was very enjoyable to hear a scientist talk about the effect of science on people rather than the effect of chemicals on science. Such a change-of-pace lecture was received quite well by the students. Most disagreements with the lecture were kept politely until questions could be asked in order to clarify difficulties.

To the majority (probably unanimous) of the professional people attending this affair, Minas was an insult to their collective intelligence. Their feelings were adequately seen and heard via heavy breathing and, believe it or not, sounds akin to a horse saying thanks for its oats!

It is common knowledge that while teaching a group of students, most professors dislike childish actions, such as "note-passing" and "internal grumblings", and prefer to be questioned when something cannot be understood or if there is a technical disagreement of some sort.

But, during the lecture given by Mr. Ensanian, the disgust of some of the professors was very evident and very embarrassing. It was embarrassing because with all the "discrepancies" the professors seemed to have with Minas, no questions were asked. The abrupt exit (which, we hope, was probably unintentional) of a few members of our professorial staff, directly after the lecture had finished, was a very poor and child-like display of emotions.

You gentlemen have studied long and hard to obtain high degrees in your respective fields and Mr. Ensanian is well aware of the fact that you are well qualified scientists. He has told us before that he knows "a little bit of everything and not very much of anything in particular." And he constantly showed a willingness to discuss his ideas with anyone and consider their ideas as well. Your disgust should have been vented publicly at the lecture for the general benefit of all concerned. It is very impolite to degrade the intelligence of a person when you have made no effort to ask that person to clarify his statements.

For general information, Minas Ensanian has been asked to return next year with a lecture on his theories. For those who wish this may be used as a forewarning.

Thank You!

With apologies to J. Masefield

BASE FEVER

I must go back to the lab again;
to the Cavendish that I knew
And all I ask is a room to share
with Jerry Donohue,
And that loud laugh in the tearoom
with Sir Lawrence twitching,
And a sour look on Maurice's face,
caused by Rosy's bitching.

I must go back to the lab again,
for the summons of DNA
Is a wild call, and a clear call,
and I cannot say nay,
And all I ask is the latest scoop
in a manuscript by Pauling,
And a grim smile from Chargaff,
but no name-calling.

I must go back to the lab again,
and my bed in the frigid attic,
To those weekends with the avant-garde,
who are brilliant and erratic.
And all I ask is to be once more
in the days that were so groovy,
A boarding house, some English food,
and a pornographic movie.

I must go back to the lab again;
to the girls "aupair", and the Eagle,
To a party at the Rothschilds',
with refreshments that are regal;
And all I ask is some big dough
for the novel I have written,
To pay off any lawsuits
by the people who got bitten.

T. H. Jukes
Univ. of Calif. at Berkeley

from Scientific Research, Nov. 11, '68

The chemistry majors would like to thank those professors who don't give quizzes on the days following ACS meetings. [To those who do, we would like to remind them that comaraderie is not built up by making students stay at home and sweat out a quiz rather than join with their associates.]

COVER: Mr. Signeur, better known as A.V.S. or "Ziggy", is well remembered for Analytical lab. Despite his insistence on the spelling of desiccator with one 's', the store of former tests in organic locker #58, empty cigar boxes and a limitless supply of titration experiments, Mr. Signeur does understand a student's problems.

-- The Editor

Oedipus Rex: Call your mother at VII - IXIX.

Overheard in soph. organic lab "...a necrophilic substitution Rx?"

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