

Jimothy

by Alim Ramji

"Throw *him* in the cell *with* the detector." The police commissioner was grinning but didn't point.

Mind you, when the police commissioner said "him" what he really implied and what was virtually understood was "it", which allowed him the distinct freedom of not having to point at anything. He said "him" in the hopes of appearing more politically correct, something his psychiatrist had recommended in order for him to appear more knowledgeable with people, especially with women. "They love political correctness." His psychiatrist was 64 years old and had never had a serious relationship.

Two large gorilla-like men, one with a Havana-Straw hat and one without, with their disproportionately long and overly-built arms, grabbed him, walked him slightly behind the threshold of the detector-cell's gaping door, let him go, and stepped back stealthily.

He just remained, with a vacant but resolute stare onlooking the dimly lit room that would become his home for the next several days — days? More like months.

The Havana-gorilla violently kicked him in the lower back, sending him walking into the room. The door slammed shut.

He stepped in disjoint rhythm, almost as if he were about to dance, towards the middle of the room, lied down flat on his back, and closed his eyes. His face was lethargically lit with the dimly lit ceiling lamp slightly to his left, the smoke detector's infrared-red beam, and a nonchalance that was hard to place.

He tried to remember how he ended up in the prison, but such thoughts, as they usually had, led him into a strange, chaotic, and

irrelevant mental-realm that, if he tried to describe in English, would go something like this: “Pretend there is a large cloud in the shape of a bipedal anteater and this bipedal anteater is equipped with large utility belt. Circumventing this belt is an array of circular rings that cloud-anteater uses to battle other creatures. Each circular ring is actually a rainbow that the cloud-anteater caught, mercilessly twisted into a circle, and then shrunk using a ancient rainbow-shrinking song that could only be sung using a pitch beyond the human soprano. Once the shrinking process is complete, the cloud-anteater uses his cloud-tongue to lick off excess wavelength from the rim in order to transform the rainbow-ring into a rainbow-disk-o'-death. He would then throw these disks into the rib cage of the... he slapped his left eye in order to awake from the trance and tried again to remember why there was a smoke detector laser heating a small portion of his forehead. Why?

“Oh, Yes!” he exclaimed silently, “because I am in prison!” He felt any remnant of the cloud-anteater being hit by one of his mind-zephyrs and drifting away.

“How did I *end up* in prison?” he whispered out loud in a pathetic tone, as if it was the first time he asked himself the question.

Instead of a disk-throwing-cloud-mammal, he began thinking of his past life. This time he didn't slap himself in the eye — which was now oozing slightly from being hit too hard — as he realized this was probably the best mental course take in order to answer his question.

He remembered his birth in the parallel dimension. Births in parallel dimensions are strange. Rather than mother suffering from labor pains, the baby actually does because, the literal second it is time for the new life to emerge, the mother instantaneously transforms into her baby, and then the baby proceeds to “give birth” to the mother. Very strange process.

When it was time for him to leave home at the age of U0BdEQ (the numbering system in his culture is virtually impossible to translate into characters humans can understand) he decided to jump, not walk, out of the parallel dimension and landed on the Moon. After walking around for several months (in our time) he tripped over a protruding mound in the shape of a rectangular box and decided to break it, not out of anger — he never got angry — but out of boredom.

He kicked it and his foot got stuck in the object, which was actually a box made out of a sturdy cardboard covered in moon dust. Scraping off the crusted moon-matter with his triangular finger nails, he came across a tattered card that read, “To Whoever Is Out There, May This Gift Be Useful To You” and, in smaller letters, “In Hopes Of Avoiding War.”

Needless to say he had no idea what he was looking at but, as coming across this object, kicking it, and staring at its welcome note was without a doubt the most exciting thing to befall him in years (sad, I know), he voraciously ripped open the box, using the gaping hole in its side as the route of entry.

Disregarding the mutilated box cover, he began to sort through its contents: a collection of books, a Frisbee, and a glass helmet in the shape of a sphere, loaded with an assortment of lighters and cigarettes inside. Attached to the glass sphere was a note that read, “Let this helmet be your window into the world of Tobacco. Oxygen/Air Included.” and a printout of a digital photo of a man dressed in a Hawaiian shirt and cargo shorts, holding the rectangular box with a small child on top, both smiling. He had a NASA cap on.

He looked through the reading material. From what he could tell, this farrago of books was a self-contained language learning collection of every major language known to humankind. It included

dictionaries, visual-aids, and even a used copy of the hit DVD, Learn Spanish In 10 Minutes A Day For 36 Days!

He punched a hole through the Frisbee.

The helmet, however, caught his attention. It was an intricate mechanism equipped with a holder for a uniquely-built oxygen cartridge, six of which were included in the box, a vent to let out smoke, and even an ashtray. The user would put a cigarette in his mouth, place the helmet contraption over his head, lock the neck piece, place an air cartridge in the air cartridge holder and press a green button which filled the helmet with enough oxygen to keep a cigarette lit, but not explode. After placing a lighter in a compartment of its own, the user could aim his cigarette at a small hole, press a red button, and a very minuscule spark would appear and light the end of the cigarette. Once the user was satisfied by his nicotine and tar uptake, he could press a blue button which would expel all the smoke (and oxygen). The user could then place the used cigarette in the provided ashtray.

Over the next three years (in our time), he learned 95% of Earth's languages, physically consumed the hit DVD which created a small stomach ulcer, and had smoked 90% of his tobacco stash. The language learning process was weird. Because there was no direct translation book from his language into English, let alone any other major language, he could never really comprehend the other languages. Thus, he could read and write, but could not communicate, which can also be attributed to the fact that he had absolutely no one to talk to. He did talk to the stars and yell at the pretty blue planet though (in his own language, mind you).

There did come a time when he ran out of air. Unfortunately, by this time, he was hopelessly addicted to human tobacco and so he would spend his days trying to think of activities to take his mind off of his remaining cigarettes. Every now and then he would just stare

at them and wish that the cloud-anteater would chop them in half using the sharp rim of a recently made rainbow-disk. Of course, that never happened because the Moon doesn't have clouds.

One day he awoke to the sound of a trembling Moon. He laughed — it sounded as if the Moon had indigestion. The indigestion was actually, as he would soon find out, the landing of a large tubular machine. When the Moon stopped trembling, he walked to the landing site, crouched behind a moon rock that was a little smaller than him, and watched in confusion as several white suits began to jump around. He recognized the letters on the tubular machine: the same letters as on the hat of the man that had supposedly given him the box. He also realized that the helmets that the suits were wearing resembled his tobacco-sphere and that the cases on their backs had the same letter as did his once full tanks for air: “O”. O for Oxygen!

He couldn't control himself. He ran back to where he was sleeping, grabbed his now moon-dust covered helmet, ran back, and then walked slowly towards the white suit, who appeared to be captivated by a moon rock.

He was going to ask to borrow some oxygen, he really was, but then decided against it and forcefully yanked the tube that connected the helmet of the white suit to its oxygen tank, stabbed it where the oxygen cartridge should have been, hoped for the best, and successfully lit a cigarette. The white suit turned around as fast as it could and stared, immensely frightened and now suffocating a little, at the creature standing before it.

He waived at the suit as the suit tried to grab his hands. He was just trying to thank it. Next thing he knew he was being stabbed in the leg with what resembled a large metal arrow — the white suit had a partner — and then through the side. The pain was excruciating. The blood formed little puddings in space. He inhaled

a large amount of air in hopes of letting out a painful scream (in English, he thought he could practice a bit), but instead passed out as he took in too much nicotine, tar, excitement, and oxygen.

He woke up several days (our time) later in a secure military prison. Prison!

“That’s how I got here!” He yelled, sitting up.

He took a cigarette out of a fold of his skin (where he kept an emergency supply of cigarettes and one lighter), lit it, and took several satisfying puffs — overly satisfied at his figuring out how he arrived in his current situation. Within seconds the smoke detector went off and transformed into a large carbine, aimed at the source of the smoke, and fired a burst shot of three bullets, hitting his frontal lobe, his cigarette, and his chin. He died immediately.

On his report, the police commissioner wrote: “An unnamed alien life form addicted to nicotine was shot dead today by the smoke detector.” He then signed “Jimothy” on the line where the deceased prisoner’s name should have appeared, and filed the form in his decrepit cabinet.

He went back to his desk and smiled at a faded photo of his astronaut father holding a rectangular box with him on top, trying desperately to grab his father’s hat.

