

At the Jennifer Aniston Intensive Haircare Clinic

by Con Chapman

Living Proof, a company whose owners include two MIT-trained engineers, adopted a scientific approach to haircare, then reached out to Jennifer Aniston, “possessor of what is perhaps the most famous hair on the planet.” “I read the testimonials about how Living Proof products actually changed women’s lives,” says the company’s CEO. “I’d never seen anything like that before.”

The Boston Globe

We were sitting in the lounge at the Jennifer Aniston Intensive Haircare Clinic, shooting the breeze, as is our wont; it’s not easy maintaining a constant focus on saving the world’s hair, one split end at a time.



“Please—don’t hate me because my hair is beautiful.”

“You guys want to try something different today?” I asked my colleagues, Dr. Etang Chin and Dr. Anil Gupta, both world-renowned hair care specialists.

“Like what?” Chin asked, and I noticed his tone was somewhat harsh. “What’s more important than hair?”

"I dunno," I said. I figured it was better to take a roundabout approach rather than broaching the subject head-on. After all, I wasn't wearing my broach.

Broaching a broach.

"You brought it up," Gupta chimed in. "What in the world were you thinking?"

They had me back on my heels. Hunger made people hungry, but bad hair—it could ruin your whole day.

"I was thinking maybe . . ."

"Yes," Chin asked, ready to pounce.

"There's this thing called . . . cancer."



"Cancer—please!" Gupta fairly shouted. "How is that a problem?"

"Yeah," said Chin. "Cancer's got its own zodiac sign—it's all set. Hair is the most neglected outgrowth of the skin of an animal there is!"

"But cancer," I said, trying to recover from the gale force of their arguments, "people . . . die from it."

“Listen,” Gupta said, turning on me so that I couldn't avoid his gaze. “Have you ever heard of cancer of the hair?”

He had me there. “I . . . I guess not.”

“So case closed. Please—start thinking about the important things in life, would you?”

I shut up for awhile, having painted myself into a logical corner from which there was no escape until the oil-based premises of my syllogism dried. I had to admit, my fellow researchers had a point. For years, decades—*centuries*—women had been yanking down just any old haircare product from drug and beauty store shelves, the ingredients depressingly the same; heavy silicones, greasy oils. It was a wonder there were still humans left on planet earth. If men hadn't been so ignorant of the fundamentals of shampooing—how you have to lather, rinse, then repeat—they would have risen up and *demand*ed the new molecules we had invented at the Jennifer Aniston Intensive Haircare Clinic.



Nice nippers!

This stuff is top-secret, which is why I'm only allowed to disclose it in the realm of fiction. We patented octafluoropentyl methacrylate, which shields hair from humidity, thereby reducing frizz and

repelling dirt. Can you *imagine* what a difference that would have made to someone like Shirley Temple, forced into early retirement when her hair curled up like Gordian Knots. You know the kind tied by angels' hands to bind true friendship? Huh. I guess you don't know that poem.



Shirley Temple: "Let's get frizzy!"

Or how about poly-beta amino ester-1, which according to advertising approved by our crack team of lawyers working round the clock, "creates a microscopic pattern of thickening dots on every hair strand." What's the point you ask? Oh yes you did, I heard you on the other side of this computer monitor. I'll tell you what.

That friction makes thin hair look and behave "like textured, full, thick hair." Who writes, this stuff, you ask? With all those commas, probably Henry James or some other Harvard man.

But the idea for PBAE's—I'm going to have to use shorthand or else my fingers are going to faint from all these multi-polysyllabic chemical compounds—came out of MIT, down Mass Ave. My rule of thumb: MIT discovers stuff, Harvard makes money off of it.

"But," I began after this internal reverie played out, "isn't there something fundamentally . . . *trivial* about using the breadth and depth . . ."

"Don't forget the height," Gupta interjected.



"Finally I have found scientific explanation for light blue eye shadow!"

". . . okay, fine, all three dimensions of our scientific training to develop—hair care products?"

They drew themselves up, offended that I would question their *raison d'etre*. Also their *voulez-vous couchez avec moi*.

"I guess you don't understand," Gupta said, and there was more than a trace of menace in his voice. "I came to the Jennister Aniston Intensive Hair Care Clinic with *no preconceived notions about what could and couldn't work in beauty products*," he hissed at me.

"Apparently, you can't say the same."

"The same what?"

"That you have no preconceived notions in the realm of beauty products, the mission to which everyone at JAIHC but you has dedicated his life, his fortune, his sacred honor," Chin continued.

"The study of what is perhaps the most famous hair on the planet!" Gupta snapped.



"I'm detecting unusually high concentrations of dry, flyaway hair."

I gulped, and felt a *frisson* of guilt flow down my spine like a rat scampering along a downspout. I *had*, after all, been drawing a paycheck from the Institute for three years, first as an intern, then as a fellow, then as a jolly good fellow.

"Look guys," I said, trying to placate them. "I know our haircare products have changed women's lives—I get that okay?"



"We have a ph imbalance on test subject no. 3914."

"I'm not sure you do," Chin said, "but go on."

"I know a woman who's unhappy with her hair can suffer from depression, anxiety, heartbreak of psoriasis and yellow waxy buildup."

"But you don't seem to understand that *our* haircare products *literally change women's lives!*" Chin said with emphasis.

"But what you guys don't understand," I said—and I meant it—"is that it doesn't make a damn bit of difference."

"Now *that*," said Gupta, "is scientific heresy."

"No it's not," I said, regaining my self-assurance. "You wanna know why?"

"Why?" they said in unison.

"Because no matter how dramatically you turn around a woman's problem hair . . ."

"Yes?"

"No matter how happy she is with the new look of her locks . . ."

"Yes?"

"She's still not going to out with either of you two dweebs."

