

DEREK & JOHN'S PETROL EMPORIUM

written by

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JOHN

So you decided to slum it with us for a bit?

DEREK

That's one way of putting it, but I'm not going to turn my nose up at someone who's paying me to sit around think. What about you? I thought you were running some experiments for a theorist down at CERN?

JOHN

(Hesitantly) Yeah...that didn't go too well. He was running experiments with other physicists. When I found out he started spreading rumours about me, saying the LHC breaking was my fault, that I was related to Pauli. In the end it became too awkward to stay around there, and I've been here ever since.

DEREK

That's terrible. I can't believe he'd say that kind of stuff. And I'm not trying to defend him, but have you tried looking at it from his point of view?

JOHN

I hope you're going somewhere with this.

DEREK

Well I'm guessing you reacted pretty badly when you found out.

JOHN

(Interrupting) They did it in my lab! He used my electron diffractor beam! Is nothing sacrosanct?

DEREK

Well did you ever say that it was exclusive?

JOHN

Call me a traditionalist, but I've always been a one-theorist-one-experimentalist guy. I thought exclusivity was implied in working together. You don't (Pause) you don't cheat on your experimentalists do you?

DEREK

No, no, I don't cheat on any of them. Though I don't tend to stick with them long enough to.

JOHN

So, what do you do with these physicists? You just get up out of the lab, and leave?

DEREK

Sure.

JOHN

Well explain to me how you do it. What do you say?

DEREK

You'd say you have an early meeting, or have to go do a lecture.

JOHN

You don't lecture.

DEREK

They don't know that, they just met me.

JOHN

That's disgusting.

DEREK

I know, I feel terrible.

JOHN

You know, I'm glad I never ran experiments for you. I just would've ended up being the same experimentalist you had to get up out of the lab and leave at three o'clock in the afternoon and clean your lenses. and you don't even deal in optics. Not that I would have noticed.

DEREK

Why are you getting so upset? This is not about you.

JOHN

Yes it is. You are a human affront to all experimental physicists, and I am an experimental physicist.

DEREK

Hey I don't feel great about this, but I don't hear anyone else complaining.

JOHN

Of course not, you're out the door too fast.

DEREK

Anyway, the results are sound.

JOHN

How do you know?

DEREK

What do you mean how do I know? I know.

JOHN

Because they...

DEREK

(Interrupting) Yes, because they fit the model.

JOHN

And how do you know they really fit?

DEREK
What are you saying? That they fake results?

JOHN
It's possible.

DEREK
Get outta here!

JOHN
Why? Most experimentalists at one time or another have faked it.

DEREK
Well they haven't faked it with me.

JOHN
How do you know?

DEREK
Because I know.

JOHN
Oh, right that's right, I forgot, you're a theorist.

DEREK
What is that supposed to mean?

JOHN
Nothing. It's just that all theorists are sure it never happened to them, and that all experimentalists have done it. So you do the math.

DEREK
You don't think I could tell the difference?

JOHN
No.

DEREK
Get outta here.

JOHN
One point one six one point one five one point one six

DEREK

Are you okay?

JOHN

New set. One point two four one point two five one point two three. New set. One point three zero one point three one one point three seven. Anomaly. One point three two.

THUG

Oi! You, The one with the numbers.

JOHN

Me?

THUG

Yes, you. You eyen' my woman?

JOHN

No, no, of course not.

THUG

What so you're saying she's ugly?

JOHN

No, I'm entirely unable to make such judgements due to the fallible nature of my optic nerve.

DEREK

It's quite true. He's blind as a bat. He probably isn't even aware that you're talking to him.

THUG

Oh, uh, I'm, uh, terribly sorry. (Pause)
Where's your dog then?

JOHN

I don't use a dog, I (pause) echo-locate. Now if you'll excuse me.

SFX: SONAR IMPRESSION, FADE TO

SCENE TWO
(JOHN, DEREK)

SFX: RUNNING ON CONCRETE, SLOW TO STOP

JOHN

(Out of breath) Well I thought that was quite successful.

DEREK

And what, pray tell gave you that impression?

JOHN

The current configuration of my pretty little face.

DEREK

We need to get moving again, before he realises, and you require a new metric for judging future successes.

JOHN

We're quite far away, besides, he's not the sharpest brick in the sink, if he was going to work it out, I'm sure he would have by now. Unless (pause) you don't think he noticed me looking both ways before crossing the road do you?

DEREK

Seeing as he didn't notice your glasses I think we might be in the clear on that one. But anyway, I've had enough excitement for tonight, and it appears the chances of me having any other days with which to rival this one are directly proportional to my distance from you. It is here were we must part company.

JOHN
Sure thing, see you tomorrow.

SCENE THREE
(JOHN, DEREK, THUG)

SFX: FADE TO WALKING ON PAVING PART WAY THROUGH
FIRST WORD

JOHN
Anyway, so then the penguin says "No, I have seasonal affective disorder."

DEREK
Okay, I'll give you that one. It is rather hilarious, of course she could have just not been listening to you.

JOHN
(Interrupting) Heads down, the guy from last night is over there. Try not to get noticed.

THUG
Oi! You!

DEREK
Too late.

JOHN
Uh...hello.

THUG
Oh good, I was worried you wouldn't know I was here again. Anyway, I wanted to apologise about last night. I was unaware of the impairment of your ocular functions. As such I wanted to make it up to you, so I got you this.

JOHN
Why thank you, I shall treasure it greatly, and am sure I will find much use of it. You are entirely forgiven.

THUG

Now that I have made reparations for my transgressions I must depart. Lectures start soon.

SFX: RUNNING ON PAVING IS SOFTLY ADDED TO THE BACKGROUND BEFORE BEING REMOVED ONCE MORE

DEREK

Now John, do my eyes deceive me, or is that...

JOHN

(Interrupting)Yes, Derek. It is a guide-poodle.

SFX: YIPPING FROM SMALL DOG

DEREK

Could you shut that thing up?

JOHN

Now now, I'm sure it's only warning me of impending doom.

DEREK

You're making a massive leap of faith in assuming that brute took the pains to train it before stapling that yellow jacket to the side of the poor thing.

JOHN

You're being unnecessarily cruel to Howard.

DEREK

You named the Thug already?

JOHN

Well yes, but not Howard. Besides, I'm sure he'll come in useful, it's easier than buying myself a white stick.

DEREK

You're seriously planning on keeping that up?

JOHN
Worst case scenario: he's a fresher, that's at most three years of voluntary sensory deprivation.

DEREK
I'm pretty sure there's a law against stuff like this.

JOHN
Besides, he's certainly proven himself an easy one to fool.

DEREK
If not on the statures, it's certainly a breach of several moral codes.

JOHN
You're one to talk

DEREK
I may be a despicable excuse for a human being, but I'm an honest excuse. I'm not the one faking a disability.

JOHN
What will you have me do?

DEREK
Take your beating like a man?

JOHN
Tell you what, I'll put that on my to don't list. In the meantime, I wonder how easy it is to forge a blue badge.

SCENE FOUR
(JOHN, DEREK)

SFX: A DOOR OPENING

JOHN
Derek? Are you here? It's just you weren't at work today, so I thought I'd check to see if

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

you were... (Alarmed) Dear goodness, you look terrible! What happened?

DEREK

(Sombre) Well I've been feeling a bit off for a few weeks now. It got a lot worse this morning, so I went to the hospital. Anyway, they did a couple of scans, rushed me to theatre, and (pause) and amputated my beard.

JOHN

Will it (pause) grow back?

DEREK

(Angrily) Does a blind man grow his arms back John? Does he?

JOHN

How long did they say it would be until you could go back to work?

DEREK

How can I ever show my face there John? I'm a bald-chinned freak and you know it.

JOHN

Derek, look at me: it's not that bad. Plenty of people go through their entire lives without ever having a beard. 'Tis better to have bearded and lost than to have never bearded at all.

DEREK

Go on then, name me one beardless physicist.

JOHN

Dirac?

DEREK

He had a soul-patch.

JOHN

Newton?

DEREK

Goatee.

JOHN

Marie Curie?

DEREK

She had the full Abe-Lincoln

JOHN

What about Einstein? There's pictures of him walking around, chin-to-the-wind.

DEREK

For public appearances, sure but he had to spend weeks in isolation building his soup-catcher before he could make any real progress.

JOHN

Perhaps it's not common for physicists, but there's a couple of mathematicians who don't. Just pick up another eccentricity. You could walk with a limp, or keep a snake in your office. (Excited) You could have a snake with a limp!

DEREK

Leaving aside the logistical nightmare that is a handicapped snake, it's not going to help. No matter how hard I try, I can't do physics any more. I can't even break things down to vector components. The very source of my power is gone. This is not about being identified as socially maladjusted, I'm like batman without his fortress of...

SFX: YIPPING INTERRUPTS DEREK

DEREK

Seriously? You brought it with you?

JOHN

Of course, if I'm going out in public I can't risk being seen without him.

DEREK

This is not public, it goes outside.

JOHN

(Shocked) You can't leave Howard outside. He might get Dog-napped. How would you feel knowing that I'm getting him mailed back to me one piece at a time?

DEREK

If nothing else I'd be able to sleep easily, safe in the knowledge that a couple of enterprising young gentlemen set it upon themselves to liberate you from the twin worries of both lugging that ridiculous thing along with you; and purchasing luncheon meat.