



Veritas Nos Liberabit

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About Janz:

Kristin Janz works as a medicinal chemist for a Boston-area pharmaceutical company, but insists that none of her co-workers are anything like the characters of this story. She has also been known to moonlight as a bartender and as a pastry chef, although not usually at the same time.

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Title: Veritas Nos Liberabit

From: jess hentzchel

Sent: August 1, 20— (12:42 a.m., EDT)

To: Amy Pearson

Subject: Dancing bear - kind of funny (fwd)

Attachments: dancingbear.gif

Amy - Check out the dancing bear, it's sort of cute.

From: Amy Pearson

Sent: August 1, 20— (9:23 a.m., EDT)

To: jess hentzchel

Subject: Re: Dancing bear - kind of funny (fwd)

This isn't like you, Jess. Forwarding cute animated graphics of anthropomorphic predators? What next, angel poetry penned by senile old ladies in the Midwest? Or - heaven forbid - "Footprints"?

So it's official. David is getting divorced. I overheard him telling Vikram in the cafeteria this morning.

Amy

From: Jonathan Lu

Sent: August 1, 20— (9:31 a.m., EDT)

To: Amy Pearson

CC: Medicinal Chemistry

Subject: Re: Dancing bear - kind of funny (fwd)

>

Jonathan - Check out the dancing bear, it's sort of cute.

Amy, why you send this to me? I don't know what it means, Veritas Nos Liberabit. It is French?

From: Amanda Czesniuk

Sent: August 1, 20— (9:34 a.m., EDT)

To: Amy Pearson

CC: Medicinal Chemistry
Subject:

Re: Dancing bear - kind of funny (fwd)

>

Amanda - Check out the dancing bear, it's sort of cute.

I don't get it.

Amanda Lynn

From: David Kelleher

Sent: August 1, 20— (9:36 a.m., EDT)

To: Jonathan Lu

CC: Medicinal Chemistry

Subject: Re: Dancing bear - kind of funny (fwd)

The bear's banner reads "Veritas Nos Liberabit", Latin for, "The Truth Will Set Us Free".

Since we all seem to have received it, my guess is that it's a virus and that Amy didn't intend to send it to anyone. I suppose a virus which causes a dancing, Latin-spouting bear to run across your screen is probably pretty harmless, but just in case, if you haven't opened Amy's dancing bear e-mail yet, don't!

David Kelleher

From: jess hentzchel

Sent: August 1, 20— (10:01 a.m., EDT)

To: Amy Pearson

Subject: Re: Dancing bear - kind of funny (fwd)

i didn't send you that, i think it might be a virus. i got it from kisho last night, but he says he didn't send it to me - he got it from a cousin in seattle. i deleted it right after reading it, i didn't forward it to anyone. (footprints - ha ha, very funny)

is david getting divorced really a surprise, his wife and kid have been living in maine for the past year. have you made your move? invited him into the flammable solvent room for a little heart-to-heart? (or whatever other body part pleases you)

i heard back from novartis. they gave the job to someone else.

From: Amy Pearson

Sent: August 1, 20— (10:26 a.m., EDT)

To: jess hentzchel

Subject: Re: Dancing bear - kind of funny (fwd)

>

i didn't send you that, i think it might be a virus. i got it

Yes, thank you, I already figured that out. Actually, David figured it out. My e-mail sent it to everyone in the med chem group here. He explained what "veritas nos liberabit" meant. Jonathan asked if it was French. I wish I could have seen the expression on Sandrine's face. She's probably in his office right now, on her French language rant.

David mentioned my name twice in that e-mail he sent to the department. Do you think that means anything?

Amy

From: jess hentzchel

Sent: August 1, 20— (10:58 a.m., EDT)

To: Amy Pearson

Subject: Re: Dancing bear - kind of funny (fwd)

>

David mentioned my name twice in that e-mail he sent to the

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department. Do you think that means anything?

omigod! he didn't!

how should i know if it means anything? probably not, how could it? how many times have you talked to him in the last month, three or four? i bet all he knows is that you have the same name as his soon-to-be-ex-wife.

ask him out for coffee sometime. tell you him you're looking at new tents and need advice on which brand to buy. or at least join his table at lunchtime, instead of mournfully staring at his ass in the cafeteria lineup.

From: Amy Pearson

Sent: August 1, 20— (11:48 a.m., EDT)

To: jess hentzchel

Subject: David

I WOULD join David's table if it weren't so awkward. It's not like when you were here, when people would sit with anyone. Ever since we moved into the new building it's gotten so segregated. All the Chinese sit at their own tables and speak Mandarin. The young PhDs all sit together. Most of the project leaders and wannabes sit together, preferably with Bob so they can kiss his ass while they eat. David always sits with Vikram and the other older PhDs who can't be bothered playing the Mr. Corporate America game. They're all guys, and older than I am. It would be really uncomfortable for me to just plunk my tray down at their table.

I can't stop thinking about him though. He's so smart, and we have so many of the same interests. He's an incredible snowboarder. He came in second in the Mt. Washington bike race last year. I just think it would be so amazing to date someone who would actually go backpacking or kayaking with me. I'm sick of dating depressed artists who wear too much black and smoke clove cigarettes. Not to mention the ass that you so rightly accuse me of admiring.

Anyway. Enough about David.

You won't believe what that bitch Sandrine said to me this morning. She told me that if I expect to get an acceptable rating this year, I'd better spend more time in the lab and less time forwarding virus chain letters around. Can you believe that? Yes, Sandrine, it's MY fault that my computer got infected. How was I supposed to know that the gif file was some weird virus? I'm sure she opened it up too. It's not like she's smart enough not to.

I think she's just pissed because Bob gave Jennifer the latest project, and Sandrine thinks she's entitled to it. Why, I don't know. Jennifer's been here longer, she's smarter, and everyone doesn't hate her. But Sandrine had some secret meeting with Bob earlier this morning, and I bet she was complaining about that and he wouldn't budge, so now she's taking it out on me.

At least this time she can't claim she was passed over because she's a woman. Maybe there IS no glass ceiling, Sandrine. Maybe you're just incompetent.

Anyway. I have to go set up the next batch of prep HPLC injections before lunch.

From: Jonathan Lu

Sent: August 1, 20— (12:04 p.m., EDT)

To: Amy Pearson

Subject: Re: David

>

I WOULD join David's table if it weren't so awkward. It's not

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like when you were here, when people would sit with anyone.

Is this another virus?

From: Jim Huang

Sent: August 1, 20— (12:05 p.m., EDT)

To: Thomas Jacobson

Subject: Re: New tailpieces

>

Even if a candidate gives us confidential information during

>

his interview, we can't use it. It's illegal.

Thomas,

If unpatented, what is problem? That guy will not ever admit that he told me about those compounds, because he will not want to get in trouble. And Phytokine is not doing well. They can not afford to start legal challenge, and if they do, we have resources to defeat them.

It does not matter who thinks of compounds first. It matters who can afford best lawyers!

Jim Huang

From: Amanda Czesniuk

Sent: August 1, 20— (12:07 p.m., EDT)

To: Erin Tissenbaum

Subject: Re: David

Can you believe Amy's e-mail? OH MY GOD!!! I can't figure out why she would send it to the whole department. I can't believe she likes David, either. I mean, he's old!

I think she'd have a better chance with him if she got a new hairstyle. I mean, who still wears bangs? And she should stop dressing like it's 1999. And maybe put on a bit of makeup every now and then. (OK, let's face it, Amy needs a total makeover. That's totally confidential, though! Don't tell her I told you that, or she'll kill me!)

She's right about Sandrine though. I'd kill myself if I had to report to the French-Canadian bitch.

OK, I gotta run! See you downstairs at lunch! Call my cell if you want to talk before then.

Amanda Lynn

From: Kenneth Quade

Sent: August 1, 20— (12:09 p.m., EDT)

To: Andrew Johnson

Subject: Re: Merck patent

I agree, it's a problem. Still, I'm reasonably confident that Merck never put the methylpyrazole and methylimidazole groups on the benzo-thiophene core, even though they're theoretically covered in the patent. There's no mention of those compounds in the experimental section, and we know that the synthesis is anything but straightforward.

But you're right, our lawyers aren't going to like it. It's no secret that Rich holds onto old notebooks for years before sending them for microfiche. Maybe you can get him to write out a few fake syntheses in something 2 or 3 years old, so it looks like we made those compounds before Merck filed their patent application. I had a couple of my associates do that several years ago back at Novascryptech, and I think it helped with some of our intellectual property claims. If he resists, bring up his productivity issues. Didn't he only make 10 or 11 compounds last year?

Let me know what transpires.

From: Sunita Madhavan

Sent: August 1, 20 (12:11 p.m., EDT)

To: Juan Zhou

Subject: Re: Our compounds kill rats!

Oh no! That's too bad, Juan. And I had such a good feeling about that compound. The human whole blood data was so much better, and you had seen quite a good improvement in the in vitro metabolic stability assays.

Don't worry though. Before Vikram's project went into the clinic, not only did their compounds kill rats (and mice, and dogs, and a few non-human primates), they also made the animals turn bright yellow, lose all their hair, and develop a nervous twitch. And they sorted it out. The clinical candidate is very safe, and well-tolerated in all species (including humans).

But you should keep it a secret from your friends and family. If ordinary people saw what the early versions of our drugs did to all those poor animals, they would never take another pill.

Sunita

From: jess hentzchel

Sent: August 1, 20— (12:20 p.m., EDT)

To: Kisho Takahashi

Subject: Re: Woeful Monday

hey there kisho babe,

sorry about your troubles with colin this morning. don't worry, i won't tell him what you said, your secret is safe with me.

yeah, thanks, it is too bad about the novartis job. i guess i'll find something. though i don't know who in the area i haven't sent a c.v. to. people used to say that a medicinal chemistry associate scientist would always be able to find a job, but now everyone has a hiring freeze and any expansion is handled by outsourcing jobs to china and india, soon no one will be employed in this country except ceos and burger flippers.

i'm really sick of amy. all i hear about is this david guy she works with. i told her about the novartis job and she couldn't forget about herself for the 30 seconds it would have taken her to write, oh jess i'm sorry to hear that. i wonder if she even reads the parts of my e-mails that aren't about her and her issues.

not like her self-absorption is anything new. one summer she left her cat in her apartment for a whole weekend with all the windows closed and no ac and not enough water. it was dead on the bathroom floor

when she got back, i guess it was trying to lift the toilet lid because it knew there was water in there.

not like she even listens to my advice. i tell her, if you like some guy, ask him out, don't think about it so much. instead she agonizes over him for months or years until she makes herself sick. so she either misses her opportunity because he starts dating someone else, or else she takes him aside some afternoon and pours her heart out, declaring her undying love, because by the time she gets up the nerve to say anything she is practically in love with the guy (or imagines she is). how well do you think that works?

sorry for rambling. see you when you get home this afternoon.

love ya!

From: David Kelleher

Sent: August 1, 20— (2:15 p.m., EDT)

To: Medicinal Chemistry

Subject: VIRUS ALERT - DELETE THE DANCING BEAR E-MAIL IMMEDIATELY!

Folks,

The dancing bear e-mail Amy's account sent around this morning seems to be infected by a more insidious virus than any of us realized. If you haven't yet opened it, DON'T! It would probably be best to delete any e-mail from Amy until we're sure her system is clean. Amy, maybe you have an unaffected web-based account you can use, on someone else's PC?

We have the IT department investigating. What seems to have happened is this. Opening the dancing bear attachment infects your e-mail account, but the virus lies dormant until triggered. While dormant, it scans your outgoing messages for certain key words, such as "secret" and "confidential". When it finds one of these words, the virus activates itself, and starts sending out blind carbon copies of all your e-mail messages to everyone in your distribution lists. Without notifying you that it's done so.

Just in case this isn't clear: if you clicked on the dancing bear attachment, there is a danger that any e-mail you send will be bcc'd to everyone in the department. So, until this problem has been sorted out, don't send any e-mail that you wouldn't want everyone else to read.

David Kelleher

From: jess hentzchel

Sent: August 1, 20— (2:21 p.m., EDT)

To: Amy Pearson

Subject: Re: Woeful Monday

um ... i guess you got that e-mail? along with everyone in my family, all my housemates and my list of local biotech contacts... the dancing bear e-mail really is a virus. i hope you aren't infected.

this account is clean again, my housemate lisa the computer goddess was telecommuting today.

From: Robert E. Sanford

Sent: August 1, 20— (2:22 p.m., EDT)

To: Medicinal Chemistry

Subject: Re: VIRUS ALERT - DELETE THE DANCING BEAR E-MAIL IMMEDIATELY!

David - thank you for the update. We all appreciate it.

Perhaps this would be a good time to remind everyone that company e-mail is not an appropriate forum for personal or private conversations. Because of the nature of our work, there is always a possibility that e-mail archives will be examined. In the past, a number of pharmaceutical companies have had e-mail archives subpoenaed during legal challenges, and folks who believed that everything they wrote would remain secret indefinitely were in for a nasty surprise.

Take a look at your e-mails before you hit Send. Is this something you would feel comfortable having posted on the bulletin board outside the seminar room for everyone to read? If not, perhaps it would be more appropriate to send the e-mail from a web-based account, from your own PC at home. Or, better yet, don't send the information via e-mail at all. Many experts are convinced that there is no such thing as internet privacy. Consider sharing the information over the telephone, or in person.

From: Amy Pearson

Sent: August 1, 20— (2:57 p.m., EDT)

To: jess hentzchel

Subject: virus

>

um ... i guess you got that e-mail? along with everyone in
What do you think?

Look, I'm sorry you didn't get that Novartis job. I'm sorry about all those jobs. Of course I read those parts of your e-mails. But what was I supposed to say? Everything I could think of sounded stupid and patronizing. "Oh, gee whiz, I'm sorry Jess, I'm sure you'll get the next one." Maybe I could have said, "If you hadn't been such a drama queen about quitting your job here and telling everyone off, you wouldn't have this problem now, would you?" Would that have been better?

Anyway, my life here at work is ruined, if that makes you any happier. Everyone in the department got that long e-mail I sent you about David. I'm afraid I might get fired, after what I said about Sandrine being incompetent, and everyone sucking up to Bob. No one will look at me. I can't look at David.

Maybe you're right. Maybe all my problems with men are my own fault, for not coming out and telling them what's on my mind before it becomes so all-consuming. But you're no better. Did you ever stop to think that maybe you could apply the same advice to yourself, with me? We're supposed to be friends. If you were so upset with me, why didn't you ever say anything?

Amy

From: Robert E. Sanford

Sent: August 1, 20— (3:08 p.m., EDT)

To: David Haberman

CC: Michael Adams , Gary Larson , Vikram Keshvala

Subject: Re: VIRUS ALERT - DELETE THE DANCING BEAR E-MAIL IMMEDIATELY!

David:

I don't know. It's tempting to theorize that its original purpose was corporate espionage, considering which words act as triggers, and that more than one message admitting to or endorsing illegal behavior by members of our department has gone out to colleagues at other pharmaceutical companies. I believe that IT and Corporate Security are investigating whether the virus was directed at Evesham-Sterling-LaCroix

Pharmaceuticals, or whether our infection was a coincidence. The source of the first e-mail has them concerned, coming as it does from a disgruntled former employee.

As far as I know, my account was not infected, as I deleted the original virus e-mail unread. On the other hand, I had been under the impression that it was impossible to embed a virus into a .gif file, so I won't make too many assumptions. Nor should you!

I need each of you to reiterate to your own groups what I expressed in my earlier e-mail to the department. Even comments obviously intended as harmless jests, which would be interpreted thus by any member of this department, may appear ominous to outside observers.

I will be dealing with some of those whose comments were not quite so harmless, over the next day or so.

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Bob,

>

Has there been any word from IT on what the designers of this

>

virus hoped to accomplish?

From: Amy Pearson

Sent: August 1, 20— (4:09 p.m., EDT)

To: jess hentzchel

Subject: I'm sorry

I guess I could have phrased that last e-mail better.

It's weird that I'm sending you this by e-mail rather than calling. I thought of calling, but then I would imagine saying I was sorry and hearing only silence on the other end. Or calling, but you never pick up, and I get your voicemail, and I wonder if you really had the phone turned off, or decided not to answer because it was me - at least with e-mail I know you'll hear what I have to say.

I think e-mail is the purest form of communication. All other forms are compromised in their clarity by input from the other person. If I'm talking to you face to face, the nonverbal cues I get will probably change what I say and how I say it, so it's impossible for either of us to know what I really would have said. I guess letters are just as pure, but the

near-instantaneous property of e-mail makes it more real. Letters are the light of distant stars, reaching you so long after they're sent that they don't have any real impact.

Anyway. I have been a lame friend, sorry. I didn't know how to be encouraging with your whole job search thing, so I didn't say anything at all.

I don't think I'm any more selfish than anyone else though. Every one of us is at the center of her own universe. We just pretend to believe that others are equally important. And when we judge others as selfish, it's usually because they're acting as if we're NOT the center.

And you really didn't have to tell Kisho the cat story. I still get nightmares about that - Rapunzel come back from the dead to hunt me down, vengeance glittering greenly in her slitted pupils.

Whatever. Waiting for your reply.

Amy

From: jess hentzchel

Sent: August 1, 20— (7:05 p.m., EDT)

To: Amy Pearson

Subject: heisenberg and the art of e-mail

>

I get will probably change what I say and how I say it, so

>

it's impossible for either of us to know what I really would

>

have said.

yeah, but then the more certain i am of exactly what you meant to say, the less certain i am of exactly what it meant.

never mind, you were right the first time, i should have said something.

i hope everything's okay with your job. but you know, as much as i've always said bob is a dickhead, i don't think he's enough of a dickhead to fire you over something like this. who hasn't said things about their supervisor over e-mail that they never intended that person to read? and he must know sandrine is a terror. i swear, that woman gave me her evil

look one afternoon, and all my reactions had crappy yields for an entire week.

let me know how things go. call if you don't want to e-mail (ha ha).

don't worry too much about david - even if he isn't interested, he's got to be flattered by the attention you've been directing towards his ass.

From: jess hentzchel

Sent: August 2, 20— (2:13 p.m., EDT)

To: Robert E. Sanford

Subject: Re: Virus assault on ESL Pharmaceuticals

bob,

of course i didn't send amy the virus, my infected e-mail account sent it. i have no idea where it came from. i got it from my boyfriend, who got it from a cousin, who got it from someone in japan he's never met. that's all we know. i can send you that person's e-mail address if you want.

if i could design a virus like that, would i still be looking for a chemistry job in a shrinking market?

jessica hentzchel

From: Amy Pearson

Sent: August 3, 20— (8:11 p.m., EDT)

To: jess hentzchel

Subject: update

So I'm not fired.

I had a talk with Bob yesterday. Well, mostly he talked. He said pretty much what I'd expected. Don't use your company e-mail to say anything that would be considered offensive if posted on a public bulletin board, etc, etc. If you had problems with your supervisor, you should have come to me, and we might have been able to mend the situation. He actually said very little, considering how long it took him to say it. But you know Bob.

I'm NOT reporting to Sandrine anymore, as of next Monday. I'll be reporting to this guy Jim Huang. He's not the greatest either, but he was a lot closer to being fired than I was, so I figure he'll be fairly easygoing, at least to start off. So that's good.

Ken Quade got fired for suggesting we try and infringe on a Merck patent by writing fake experimentals. I guess he had a bunch of Merck chemists in his address book, so they all got bcc'd. Bob and Mike Adams have to fly down to New Jersey later this week for damage control. The thing is though, from what I've been hearing around the department, we may have managed to infect pretty well all the big pharmaceutical companies worldwide - in one afternoon! - and I don't think there's a single one whose employees didn't broadcast information about stuff that they shouldn't have been doing.

Okay, so let me tell you what happened with David. You'll be proud of me. When I went down to the cafeteria for my coffee this morning, he was there, alone. I walked up to him and said hi. He said hi back. Then I asked if he'd be interested in going hiking together sometime. He said he didn't think that would be a good idea. And I just smiled and said, "Okay, no problem," and wished him a good day. I think. I even remembered to take my coffee with me.

The funny thing is, I am actually okay about it. Now that I've asked, it doesn't seem like such a big deal. I wish he'd responded differently. But it isn't the end of the world. And now I feel like I was carrying some huge weight all this time, and I've finally put it aside. It feels good to be reminded how much easier it is to walk without it.

Liberating, even.

Amy

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