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Pardon: “ly” adverbs

Intermediate Fiction Workshop: Application and Story Proposal

Hi, my name is Amberger Tseng, or ‘Burger’ for short. In this letter, I’ll present what, in a different context, would appear to be the skeleton of an apology: An explanation of what just happened and a proposal for a change. The application story (attached), titled *It Was Full of Sorrow, But True* and my proposal for a future story, titled *A Conversation Between Friends* both examine the nature of conversations between friends. The former is absurd, short, very general, and a bit rushed. The latter is almost autobiographically real, longer, specific, and has yet to be written.

It Was Full of Sorrow, But True examines the relationships between friends in dangerously insular communities. It’s about the inbreeding of ideas, and how these can turn large enough groups against themselves and small enough groups against other small groups. The prose is very silly—it’s absurdity-level is lower bounded by *The Nose* and upper bounded *How to Keep Your Volkswagen Alive* (both of which I re-read while writing this story). The intent of this absurdity is a to criticize how willing we are to instantly either accept or reject ideas based not on their merit but they style in which they are presented. The fact that the story should either connect with the reader or miss completely is thus itself a facet of the story.

Also, a silly story is just what I needed after trying to write what I will now propose for my next story, which I plan to write for either my next fiction workshop (should I get into this one) or just for myself. It is ostensibly a conversation between two friends who’ve known each other for a couple of years and are very comfortable with each other. Over the course of the story, they converse and one friend slowly realizes they have romantic feelings for the other

while the other realizes they probably don't want to be hanging out with the other friend nearly as much as they currently are.

It's a not an uplifting story. I was also attempting an ambitious structure consisting of dialogue, commentary, dialogue, commentary, etc., where the commentary sections present both characters' reactions to the dialogue's jokes, the questions, and awkward pauses in parallel.

Thus, the story can theoretically be read from either characters' perspective, or from both at the same time. The reason I abandoned that story is that I don't think I have the emotional nuance/stability or technical ability to write it right now. But I hope to in the future.

Sincerely,

Burger

It Was Full of Sorrow, But True

A group of angry alien cavepeople sat around a fire, preparing for a grand (but ultimately unfulfilling) banquet, bitter that they were not better friends with each other. The banquet was meant to be a meet-and-greet mixer, a way for them to understand themselves better as a species. Every alien caveperson knew that best way to find happiness was by finding friends, but lacked the proper networking and social skills to do just that.

In fact, these angry alien cavepeople had yet to develop some of the most basic skills of intelligent lifeforms. Their alphabet had only one letter. They had no phrase or plan of action for what to say or do after a sneeze. They had ambition, but they did not have luck. That is, until one day.

A trio of these angry alien cavepeople—Groggle, Mike, Juniper—left their rock-nest one Saturday evening to discover the rest of the universe. They invented space travel, a hand-held cubes of metal that could generate more power than a star, and a new office or craft product that is unphysical in nature and best described as the perfect intersection of string and glue. But perhaps their most important invention of all was also their most simple: teamwork.

And with that, Groggle, Mike, and Juniper set off to invade the planet of Earth.

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Earth did not see this coming, mostly because Earth had no brain and no optic nerve. But there were other reasons, too, like that fact that Earth was too distracted by flirting with the other planets in its solar system, or the fact that Earth did not care about its own well-being, and most importantly the fact that Earth already had yet to take a Myers Briggs personality test and discover its true identity.

The humans, on the other hand, did see this coming. They had noses that could see, teeth that could hear, pluckable and malleable skin that could move objects upon direct contact. The humans had pets that growled and pets that bit and pets that they would fight to protect. The humans were confident, goddammit.

And the humans were not “okay” with being invaded.

So they gathered their sticks and their big sticks and their even bigger sticks and their nuclear missiles and they tried their best to hurl each and every one of these at Groggle, Mike, and Juniper. But their weapons could not hurt the aliens. The Trio had the aforementioned energy cube. It powered the ship’s laser-microphones and with those they etched this sentence in screaming crop circles across the planet:

True weapons are built to hurt species other than your own.

These were powerful words because they hurt the humans on an emotional level and also destroyed a good amount of their corn and rice fields. Pre-translation, in Groggle, Mike, and Juniper’s native language, there message was:

|||||||.

Or something isomorphic to that.

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In the midst of Earth’s first apocalypse (which this was), many people updated their Facebook statuses. They listened with their teeth and they listened with their saliva glands, which oozed uncontrollably in a way large corporations probably wanted them to. They listened with

vicious rage, a hatred they could not contain no matter how many bins or storage containers they went to the store to purchase.

Hatred ruled everything. Birds hated trees and trees hated birds. Phone poles were no better. A new swear word was invented every day. Groggle, Mike, and Juniper hated humanity. They all agreed upon that (though weren't sure what to do with it). But did Groggle, Mike, and Juniper hate each other?

To determine this, they sat down and tried to get on a gameshow together. Eventually, they succeeded and got scheduled for the primetime. There was so much gossip that it clogged up the pipes and air was at a premium. The newspapers buzzed so quickly that they could be used as saws to cut down rainforests to make more buzzing newspapers. All the humans of the world found or stole a TV to watch the capital-b big event.

Mike fiddled with a fake moustache before discarding it. Groggle had forethought and skills and brought a pan of freshly baked cookies to the show. Juniper advocated strongly and passionately for killing all the humans. Groggle, Mike, and Juniper eventually reached a compromise. They were family after all. They would enslave the humans and watch them as a part of an Independent Study project.

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It took years of enslavement of the humans for God to intervene, but when he or she or they did, he or she or they did so by sending his or her or their best and brightest: a young man known as the sperm that was soon merge with an egg to become Jesus Christ.

Jesus was an up-and-coming fellow from day one. He built nice chairs and would probably sell you a car without cheating you out of your money. The problem with Jesus was

that he tried to do this all alone. He started getting harassed by middle schoolers and at that point God just gave up and passed the world along to Hades.

The Earth split apart along its fault lines and humans mourned the loss of their ability to justify their pride.

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The only survivors were outcasts, fringe members of society, the gullible ones—the ones told to go jump off a cliff but who landed in outer space instead. Gravity—often the life of the party and a great mutual friend—brought people together.

They Fringe Humans held bridge club meetings together. Bughouse (the chess variant) and team solitaire were common activities, too. Model train sets were a priority as they also brought people together thus they became the official currency of the Fringe Humans.

“If songs can bring people together, why can’t we?”

“Yeah, we’re better than songs!”

Conversations like that populated the hallways of Fringe Human settlements.

These Fringe Humans learned and taught, they craved a perpetuating existence and in doing so they craved each other. Phrased more precisely: in reaction to division, they developed multiplication.

Fringe Humans started experimenting with religion again. And inside the test tubes were microscopic communities filled with deacons, preachers, monks, rabbis, imams, fitness instructors, and no more than a handful of Popes. They Fringe Humans knew what had happened in the past and developed strict lab procedures to make sure that religions mixed nicely and neatly and could always be controlled. They threw the religions they developed into a syrup,

plugged that into a carbonation machine and gave it to children to sell for twenty-five cents worth of cabooses on the corners of sidewalks.

Of course, harder than the actual science was the communication of it. Fortunately, everybody dated (and thus reproduced with) good listeners, so talking about research results was a pleasure. At some point the humans died out and so the Fringe Humans just started calling themselves human again.

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When Groggle, Mike, and Juniper got to the humans who used to be Fringe Humans who used to be humans they ended up just all chilling, having drinks such as hot chocolate together. Then one side betrayed the other and cried out ‘predestined’, or in the newly appropriated language, ‘|||||||’.

A Conversation Between Friends

Burger: This one I thought of during Intro Probability: *How many flips should it take to for you to realize your coin is one-sided?*

June: I don't get it.

Burger: When's the last time you've seen my relationship status change?

June: Oh. Dark. Edgy. I like it. My turn.

The Quips, Worries, and Other Thoughts of Amberger 'Burger' Tseng

I look at my coffee to give June some time to think. *Think about your coffee*, I tell myself. No, that's wasted time. I ask myself what really matters to me, under the assumption that that might make interesting conversation....

A Guided Tour Through My Mind (by Juniper 'June' Brooks)

Structured conversations are a mixed bag. Conversation are beautiful—an unbound medium, composed by a group, a dance of ideas. Forcing a mold onto them destroys something....

Etc. etc. etc.

**This is just a proof of concept for the formatting of the story.
It would continue from this point.**