

The Green Code

by Manjil Saikia - Sunday, April 17, 2011

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5th June, 2005: With a copy of Dan Brown's Da Vinci Code under his arm and a bag full of paper work, Ricky Banerjee walked past the newly painted street-boards towards the community garden of *Ecstasy Heavens*-the apartment where he resided along with his elder sister. The thought of enjoying a book under the blissful shade of a *branchful* tree had always welcomed Ricky and as he prepared to settle down under his old, old tree, a saffron envelope slipped out of his pocket and he bent reluctantly to pick it up in fear of losing it amidst the breeze that read:

MERIT SCHOLARSHIP 2010-2011

RICKY BANERJEE

12th STANDARD

ST. XAVIERS' COLLEGE.

With an idea to spice up his reading with music, he poked his ear-holes with the headphones he had purchased from the I.T. fair the week before. The clock reminded him of his favourite music show on air and he clicked on to that frequency on his cell phone without becoming a victim of time, though insignificant.

“Welcome friendies and buddies to your noon-mesmerizing event on your most favourite frequency in space. Good noon everyone and prior to jumping to our listen-as-you-wish segment, here is, for you, “WIND OF CHANGE” by Scorpions; ease your spine and enjoy your Sun...d...a...y....d...a...y.....”

Suddenly the audibility reduced and dropped to zero radio-network on his phone. What feared Ricky then was the possibility of his earphones turning deaf on account of faults below the alloy-layered skin of the device. As he was pondering over the issue with serious concern, his phone vibrated on the grass that seemed to awaken the little colony of ants beside his bag a foot away, bringing him back to reality, reality that he was destined to be a part of, a reality that the world was unknowingly preparing to witness!

The 5.2 centimeters wide screen of his cell-phone showed the reception of an SMS from the service provider. He clicked to read but found some nonsense and meaningless characters teasing his eyes, and that too at moment when he was trying to recover from the recent *headphone-trauma*. He opted to delete it but lo! The SMS could not be removed. Distressed and angry, he switched off his phone and restarted only to find the same characters playing dirty tricks on his mind!

Losing the mind to read his thriller, he quickly packed his items and hastily moved towards his apartment. Reaching home, he switched on the television set to satisfy himself with some cricketing moments, but what struck him was more than that of astonishment. He had never really imagined of what appeared on

the screen and uttered to himself: “Holy idiot box!”

Those were the same characters that he had received on his phone via SMS a few minutes ago. He searched his bag quickly and with a pen and a small piece of paper with uneven boundary alongside it, he jotted down from the screen:

LIS.bEb (+->)

(+->) 46-20.

There was unbearable hue and cry outside and he stretched out his neck of the window to find the mob coming out to the streets, and the sight of most of them with TV remotes and mobile phones in their hands confirmed that everyone had been struck with the same problem of communication and entertainment-loss.

Ricky grabbed some packets of biscuits, two bottles of water and his torchlight and along with his bag on his back, he rushed to the street to get much knowledge about the screaming affairs outside. Amongst the many, there were Uncle Rathod, Professor Rhitwick and many eyebrow-raised faces and after much investigation, Ricky was assured that the problem was common and the cable provider had nothing to do with the incident. Suddenly, they heard planes flying over their heads, low on height, spreading red leaflets of information. Ricky grabbed one and read to himself:

“This is to notify everyone as an inhabitant of this state that there has been interference in satellite communication within the whole perimeter of this state and it is believed to be an alien interruption from outer space. The code displayed thereof on every electronic output device is a message that still remains a code as even now it has not been decoded. Experts are working on it and it is a request to all the inhabitants to stay indoors to avoid risks of mass damage. For assistance, contact at the nearest military camp. Urgent travels are to be made via roofed four-wheelers. Thanking You, Human Resource and State Affairs Ministry.”

Ricky returned home and once again threw his eyes over those mysterious characters that became a threat to his existence. “Let’s play a game”, murmured he, with a resolution to put an end to this because he knew, as his professor of mathematics had said that English codes are nothing but teasers of the minds. With that as the only source and candle of inspiration for himself, he started matching the characters and imagined what they would and should reveal. He noted down the characters on a notebook carefully and tried to bring out the formula that linked his future to those two lines of weird symbols. He tried to solve but ended up with a cross-mark on every note he attempted! Frustration over brimmed his heart’s pot and finally, he almost gave up and threw away the last piece of paper that composed his notebook.

The mind is beautiful but destiny is a luring actress. She, if pleased can turn a donkey into a god. Ricky had never expected what he discovered from one of the torn pieces of paper lying on the floor.

“Oh, my God. Oh, my God. This is it, sweet time!” He quickly dropped some fiber-flakes in a bowl of milk, gulped down like Hercules and rushed out immediately. In 5 minutes, he was at Professor Rhitwick’s house.

“Sir, it’s urgent. Please answer”, he knocked at the door with no patience.

The door-knob turned and out came a man with a middle-aged looks.

“Oh, surprise guest at doomsday!” He smiled and welcomed him home.

“What’s cooking, Ricky? You ought to be at home, son.”

“Sir, I’ve cracked the symbols. I need your further help; we need to rush immediately to the military base-camp now.”

“What...What? Are you okay, fella? This is not algebra, son. It’s a whole new language. Go back home and study. There are minds working on this.”

“No, no, Sir, this is important. Please, Sir, you are my only hope, the people’s hope.”

“Okay. Speak up.”

“Sir, firstly this is not a code. These are numbers. They have sent us a message, a sign of hostility or some kind of war-tale as in Independence Day. Sir-that Oscar fetched movie...”

“Okay, stop your movie-details and speak business.”

“This is the so-called *alien code*, Sir”, Ricky handed out the piece of paper,” and these are the numbers”, saying this, he turned the piece of paper upside down. He handed out another piece of paper that had the coded message that read:

LETTERS	UPSIDE DOWN INTERPRETATION
‘b’	9
‘E’	3
‘b’	9
‘S’	5
‘I’	1
‘L’	7

“My good mathematics!” sighed the professor, “And I really know what this reveals.”

“What? What is it, Sir?”

“Ricky, have you noticed the direction board newly put up on our street by the Metropolitan Development Authority?”

“Yes, Sir. Our has been designated as Street 903 East...” paused Ricky a while and his pupils enlarged as if he had been enlightened. “But, what about the other part, Sir?”

“It’s a house number, son. House no. 517 on Street number 939 East. The plus and the arrow denote direction, i.e., East, the four directions and the arrow suggesting that it is East. The 46-20 part must be linked to this place as in old castle-treasure games. Solved. You are a monster, Ricky. Let’s drive to the camp now. Grab the keys. They are on the tool beside you.”

The master-student duo reached the camp in no time and informed the Research and Development Department of Military Utility about everything decoded so far. There was still more to find out and so, for time had been of concern then, the professionals and security escorted the two to House no. 517, Street number 939 East. And it stood right in front of their eyes- a nursery of plants and flowers- *Heavens in Green*. Puzzled and doubtful of their solution to the message, both Ricky and the professor got engulfed by thoughts of uncertainty. However, suddenly Ricky screamed:

“Sir, here it is. Plant number 46-20”, and he pointed to the tumbler numbered 46-20.

Everyone reached the spot. “So, this is it, plant number 46-20 and that too lying at the easternmost corner of the nursery. Ricky, this was the second symbol in the second line denoting east again”, said the professor.

“But is this what we are for? A plant? A plant that has turned into a weed? Infected and dry?” Saying this Ricky watered the plant in hope of some further clues hidden amongst the weeds.

A minute after, when everyone was wondering the possibilities, a mobile phone rang and silence followed...silence that belonged to the creation of the earth. Ricky answered the call and his sister informed him that the communication fault had disappeared and everything was as fine as before.

The professor uttered:” This is the conclusion, friends. Humans never respect what form them- the green molecules. We never mind to turn our eyes to the dying plants, to the plants turning into weeds everyday, such as this 46-20, because we are not creators, so are we not caretakers. But, what we allow to ruin today is a curse for tomorrow, a curse for the significance of life in the universe. This is what they had tried to warn us of, because even if we do not attend to the green life, there are others outside the space to admire the beauty of this planet. They are not our enemies, no, not in any way but our real friends, our janitors. And once we have understood the significance of a green entity dying like a father without children, they have once again disappeared into the black and the blues above and we shall always remain grateful to them.”

Ricky returned home after having a tired Sunday. He was about to rest a while and relax himself before completing the assignments for the week to come. In came an SMS again:

51.45 (+^) 1.15(<-+).

466.350.213.

“Oh, no. Not again!” Ricky feared any other incident as it had been during the day. But, now at least he could search the web for assistance because he had confirmed that every communication was in correct operation that they should be.

Ricky remembered Prof. Rhitwick's interpretation of direction and accordingly, the first represented north and the last west. Launching the explorer, he searched for 51.45 North and 1.15 West to which returned the result OXFORD.

“Oxford?” Ricky shouted in surprise.

Once again, he tried to wreck his brain as hard as he could. He failed and fell asleep for the night. He woke up to find that it was already a Monday morning waiting to embrace him. With a thought of the previous night's message received on his phone, he collected the newspaper from the porch and began reading it. The headlines were full of his admiration. Pleased to extremes, he went for bath and then, like a joker drenched in waters, he flew out of the bathroom to his study-room as if he remembered something, and quickly opened a book- the OXFORD DICTIONARY. He jumped to page number 466 and found a number of words starting with the letter 'L'. Similarly, page number 350 and 213 belonged to the letters 'F' and 'E' respectively, but he could not relate them. Suddenly, another idea struck him and he finally got what the message had meant for him: LOVE FOR EARTH, by collecting the first word on each page number.

Filled with joy, he kept that secret to himself and understood that aliens are not always villains, they may be friends too and that, destiny is a queer concept!

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