

Yogurt Tastes Very Good©

**By
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It's not everyday that yogurt talks to you, but let's start at the beginning.

Hi Sylvia: "I 'm terribly sorry, but I have to postpone our movie date tonight. Gotta catch up."

Sylvia: "Harry this is the second time you have stood me up. What the hell is so important about making yogurt that you would pass me up for?"

H: "Sylvia, please. You know my research on yogurt is important, If I can find a culture that fights Clostridia..."

S. "Harry spare me the lecture. I've heard it so many times. . Harry, you make yogurt that tastes good. You are not going to win the Nobel Prize for yogurt making. Oh, never mind." Hangs up.

Sylvia, 28, attractive, a lawyer, had a right to be miffed. When she had met Harry at a friend's house, she was taken with his ability to make the best of a bad deal. He wanted to be a super programmer, but had settled for doing data at a yogurt company. They liked each other. Several weeks ago, Harry was offered the job he wanted, but it would mean leaving Sylvia; he turned it down because of her. So, she had expected that she would move in and they would be a couple. Instead, all of a sudden, this nonsense of doing advanced research came up and he was too busy. Sylvia was certain that in no way was Harry trying to avoid her or break up. But, Harry was a different person these days and Sylvia wondered if it was time to go back to "normal" dating. Well, she would give it another month.

Harry heard the click on the receiver and hung up too. Actually, Sylvia was right, why would he pass up a date with Sylvia for another night of research on neural functioning? Geez, he had some nerve trying to understand all about how nerves function! He really didn't know why this obsession – every possible hour had been involved with reading about nerves, how they worked, the chemistry and all. What was even stranger... he sort of understood most of it. He enjoyed reading about the science of microbiota, the good bacteria in the gut; at least that had to do with his job!

Harry looked around the Healthier Foods laboratory, where he had worked the past two years. It was lined with government certificates of approval or grade A for the yogurt and similar products that HF manufactured. There were awards and prizes.

Harry sighed. He had studied computer science. His first two years here had been unhappy because he wanted to be a programmer, but he didn't get hired by any major companies – not without that Stanford or Berkeley PhD. He did get hired by Mr. Grayson, the owner of Healthier Foods to work on their programming. He did such a good job, that the owner wanted to keep him around to do the programming and fix his own personal computer problems. He was put in charge of the laboratory where milk and yogurt products were tested for purity, and composition.

The manager, Tom Sizemore grumbled that Harry was not a “milk man” and not suitable for laboratory analysis. Harry had proved him wrong; his work was excellent.

Then Sizemore grumbled that HP was not a place for Frankenstein experiments that Harry was doing. Harry even offered to pay Mr. Grayson for the materials he used in his good bacteria research, but Mr. Grayson told him to go ahead. “After all,” he said, “doctors now recommend yogurt for treatment when the good bacteria are killed off by the antibiotic. So, actually your research may help sales here, or, who knows, help mankind.”

Besides, he needed Harry for his own personal computer work.

Once Harry settled in, he enjoyed his salary, dated Sylvia, and life seemed okay. Then he got really interested in the science of bacteria. The good kind that helped its' host vs the bad kind that harmed it. The science of what the gut bacteria was actually doing fascinated him, and it was associated with his developing new kinds of yogurt products.

The only thorn was Sizemore, the general manager. He watched Harry like a hawk, carefully reviewed Harry's records, timetables, and expenses. Once Harry did make a typing error and put down 6 instead of 2 by mistake. The commotion that Sizemore raised, you would have thought Harry had stolen the family jewels.

When Harry did receive the programming job he wished for from Microsoft, it was a at a time when Sylvia was discussing moving in with him. So, he stayed in the laboratory.

In his free time, he experimented with developing cultures that would defend against various gut infections. Sylvia, an attorney, teased him about his ambition to win the Nobel Prize. She joked, “Once you get the Nobel Prize, then all the women will want you to father their children and I will be out in the cold.”

He joked back, “No Sylvia, when I am with you, you generate all the heat anyone could wish for.”

THE Contact

Harry was working late, on his own time, on one of his experiments. When he heard the message, he froze, turned cold. His heart raced. He was hearing voices! Was he crazy?

Harry you are receiving a message. Please. You are not going crazy. You are fine, nothing is wrong with you.

Harry sat down. He was going crazy. Some distant cousin had been hospitalized in the nut ward.

“Harry please. Go to the microscope. Look at the yogurt batch with the 40x magnification. I need to prove to you that you are fine, you are not insane.”

Harry looked around, too terrified to move. He was alone. Would he faint? Was this a form of ringing in the ears he had heard about? Why now? He wasn't depressed. He had a wonderful girlfriend. He made a good salary. No, he was not depressed.

“Harry, if you will look in the 40x microscope you will understand what is happening and be reassured that you are just fine.”

Stiff armed, Harry went to the microscope, more frightened than ever. He knew that the guys who heard voices were nuts, and the ones who obeyed those voices were even nuttier, but he went anyway. The microscope was used routinely to examine yogurt mixes for impurities. Best of all he could record his visuals. Maybe that would help!

In the viewer he saw printed out, “Harry Fielding, we are a new form of life. Take a picture so you can study it later.” Harry did so. The printing changed rapidly.
Harry you know that yogurt organisms are alive. Picture snap.

We are a new form of organism, like a new mutated bacteria. Snap

We are part of the good bacteria that you created seeking a means of combating Clostridia. Snap
Despite his fear and apprehension Harry kept reading.

Remember when you were busy doing your income taxes in the lab on April 14? You realized you had neglected the culture's temperature and had overheated the culture. You looked to see if you had killed the culture? Snap

Somehow there was a mutation. Somehow we, the mutated bacteria, were able to form a neural network. In essence we are actually a network, almost like a brain. You are sane. We are the reason you have been reading up on nerve function, so we can understand what we are. Snap

We know we are a new form of existence. We don't know if we will survive. Imagine us like a brain that is somehow enlarging. In some ways we have formed connections that are similar to your own brain. Snap

*Yes, when we are swallowed we can protect ourselves from digestion. Yes, we can enter the nerve system “ **Harry did not snap. Now he was aware that his hands were shaking, like that time after the six hour fraternity drinking binge.***

Harry please. This is so much to take in at one time. Please go to sleep. When you wake up you can view your microscope pictures. Then you will realize this is very real. When you wake up tomorrow we can talk some more and answer your questions. Harry you created us, You were seeking a means of fighting serious disease. You have succeeded.

Before he could question how they could communicate with each other, he became sleepy, returned the batch to the yogurt “resting area,” and headed for the couch in his office, closed his eyes and fell asleep.

Day Two

When Harry awoke from the comfortable old couch, he had forgotten the previous night's horror. His first thought was of making up with Sylvia whom he had stood up last night. He grabbed some cold cereal, and started the coffee. Then, his coworker Phillip showed up with a fresh batch of yogurt samples for inspection.

Phillip:” Should I toss out yesterday's mess? “

Harry stopped. Last night flooded back. He felt the blood drain from his face; his stomach ached. His shouted, “No, don't touch it!” was so near hysteria that Phillip nearly dropped his container.

Phillip: “Whoa, bad night? See you slept here. Did you and Sylvia...”

Harold, “No, no. Just something I need to check out. Just leave the stuff and I can do it in a minute.

Phil: “Okay. I need to go to Bradley's. They sent us the wrong glassware, and I need to make sure we get the right size.”

H: “Yeah, sure. I’ll finish up here.” He gently nudged Phil out the door then closed it.

Harry couldn’t think rationally. Had he spoken to yogurt yesterday? Had he created a new life form? He lurched and held on to the counter as he struggled to make it to the file cabinets to look at the photographs from last night. If they were there he was sort of sane. If there were no records, he was 100% nuts.

Almost on cue, Sizemore showed up to see him holding on to his desk. He scowled, shook his head, and rushed off to tell Grayson that Harry was drunk and sleeping on the job.

Harry was able to get to the files by holding on to the counter. He stared at the recordings. It was all there: From “Hello Harold - to - you are sane.” He rushed to the microscope viewer and read:

“Good morning Harold. Hope you had a good night’s sleep?”

Harry: Aloud, “Yes I did. “After a pause, “What do we do now?”

We hope to survive so we can help you find cures for disease. To insure our survival, would you get us into production, maybe make a new product, so that we get mass produced? The more of us there is, the better our chance of survival.

Harry: “Right.” Over the next weeks Harry cultured the new growth, he named it Apollo, and convinced Sizemore and Grayson to market this product. Surprisingly, Sizemore agreed, the day after he tasted it.

Strangely, once the workers tasted Apollo, they were eager to get more and to encourage others to try it. Even Sizemore insisted on taking some home to his family and friends.

Harry prepared to “speak” to Apollo with the Microscope in place. “Well, I have you in large production. What is the next step? Conquer disease?”

“Right. Let’s seek a way to conquer human disease. From what you have been reading, it looks like you should get this new bacteria named and patented. You wouldn’t mind ending up with a lot of money, would you? How about the name Bacterium fielding? Then you can just call me B.F. “

Harry froze, unable to move. How did Apollo know about patents and ownership? There was only one way: they could read his mind. The only way was the way he had been told; B.F. was in his entire nervous system. Was he a prisoner? What about free will? He read the wording being produced on the sample by changes in colors making words:

Harry we are the good bacteria. We are only seeking to help you find a solution to man's illnesses. You created us. We are in your nervous system in order to speed up the process. By reading through your eyes, we become more effective. But at all times, you tell us what you want us to do. But if we make this a two-way partnership we can accomplish our goals much faster; heal man's illnesses and get you your Nobel Prize.

Harry people sometimes look down on you because you lack the Stanford PhD. When you provide the means of fighting Clostridia disease, you will reap the honors you deserve“

What was weird, was that never in a million years had he ever thought seriously about his winning the Nobel Prize. Unconsciously, he must have had an emotional surge when Sylvia said, “You’re not going to win the Nobel” and Apollo must have picked up on it.

Harry sprang into action. He knew that his BF species could be patented. That patent could be worth billions. No, he must never tell others about his means of communicating with Apollo. He could understand the objection of having BF enter the person's brain. Now he had the means of not only curing intestinal infections but also reducing obesity with bacteria that digested incoming high caloric foods, and increasing immunity to disease. Besides, what did it matter? These were the good bacteria. The more he investigated, the more amazed he became that bacteria could produce dopamine, GABA, and other chemicals known to affect human emotion.

Then he thought plainly and clearly: Am I in control or are you controlling me? He read clearly as the words formed:

Harry you are the creator. You created us. Our only goal is to serve you. I assure you that you are in control. After all, with a flick of your finger, we would no longer exist, if that is what you wish. Yes, we do want to help you solve many ills of your fellow man, that is the purpose you have created us for.

Harry Thought: Here are the steps I must do:

- 1. Preserve Apollo. He had done this by spreading the culture to several incubators.**
- 1. Hide the fact that he can communicate with Apollo**
- 2. Cash in on his creation.**
- 3. Run the clinical studies so that Apollo can be sold as a drug at a high price.**

First Harry erased the records. Then he carefully placed the BF culture to grow on several other repositories. Then he rushed through today's product checklists. As soon as his assistant Phil returned, he excused himself for the day. He went home to think through his plan.

How to profit here? How to make sure this invention wasn't stolen?

He was an employee of Healthier Foods. If he "discovered" an improved yogurt, that wasn't his to profit on. Fortunately HF was privately owned.

If he could buy HF? But he didn't have that kind of money. Next day he peered into the microscope:

Harry, I have a suggestion, Please. Have Mr. Phillip Grayson taste your new flavor. I think a suitable plan will develop, I promise you.

When Grayson tasted the B.F. culture he said it was delicious. He needed to think about how to market it.

Two weeks later, Mr Grayson brought Harold into his office. There was an attorney, Gene Gold, in the office, as well as a notary and Mister Sizemore. Grayson smiled. "Harry I have decided to retire to Hawaii and enjoy the life there. I've worked enough. I'm going to turn ownership of HF to you in return for a 20% payment to me and my family out of profits. My attorney Mr. Gold has worked out all the details. You are also to take good care of our current employees. How is that for rewarding an outstanding employee?"

Harry Sizemore did not look happy; he was struggling to try to object, but somehow could not. His face reddened at his efforts to raise his hand to object; but he couldn't.

Mr. Gold: "Mr. Grayson I again strongly object. At least let me call in a sales agent and he can tell you how much money you can get on a straight sale. Yogurt is hot right now. One agent I spoke to said five million plus a percentage of sales, but was sure that a bidding war..."

Grayson: "I told you, I don't want a bidding war. I want Healthier Foods to be in the capable hands of ..."

Phone rang. When Grayson didn't pick it up, Mr. Gold did.

Gold: "Here, I have your son Patrick on the phone. He is flying in from New York. He wants to talk to you."

Grayson smiled, "Fine. I can talk to him after we sign the papers." He refused the phone and started signing papers. Gold glared at Harry.

Gold on phone: "Yes I pleaded with your mother too, but she is also fixed on the retirement.

Gold listened. “I know they always hated Hawaii. It’s like both of them have come up with this out of nowhere.”

Gold listened, then. “No, you’re too late. He has already signed. I’m so sorry. “

When Harry had finished signing all the papers he was jubilant. But that night he pondered; had Apollo simply ordered Grayson to do this? Grayson had tasted his yogurt. The Apollo was in his body and now they controlled his brain, much as they did his. But, shit, now he owned Healthier Foods and he would own patents. Besides, Apollo only wanted to help mankind. Tomorrow he would begin the patent process.

Sylvia called next day. “So Mr. Harry Fielding, now you are a big time executive and the OWNER of HF. The papers said he had turned over the plant to you because of your excellent work in developing better bacteria, the good bacteria. Hey, when do I get to sample some?”

“NO!” Harry screamed. “You are not to try it. Never. Ever!”

Sylvia, “What? Harry I don’t understand.”

H: “No, it’s just that all this is experimental and it will be some time before we know the final outcomes of these new breeds. Let’s wait until there is more experience...”

S. “Harry, it’s only yogurt!”

H: “Sylvia, let me make up to you these weeks I have neglected you. Let’s do the celebration tomorrow night.”

S: “Okay! Harry, but how on earth did you get Mr. Grayson to literally give you his company? I work for a law firm and this is all they talk about. All over town you are the number one topic, you’re almost as famous as the Kardashians. How did you get Grayson to do this?”

H: “Sylvia, I have developed a means of curing a disease for which there is no good therapy available today. My method can be used to help millions with all kinds of illnesses. It can even solve obesity and ...”

S: “Whoa, slow down Napoleon. I don’t mean anything to demean what you are doing. But just remember it does take years to put a new product on the market, FDA, etc. You need to consider how you are going to be able to finance all those years of clinical trials and

stuff. A new cure? You are looking at 100 million dollars minimum for FDA required clinical testing. But let's not talk about that now."

H: "You're right Sylvia. Look, you and I really need to celebrate my good fortune. How about a night on the town tomorrow night? I should be out from under by then."

S: "Uh uh. A night relaxing and recovering at my place is what the doctor ordered. But only if you bring those yogurt samples." She giggled.

H: "I can bring better than that. Sylvia: I love you."

S: "In that case, expect a good meal and, ahem, entertainment."

H: "See you at seven then. Love."

Later

Once the patent was secured, the company went into full production. Free samples were given out starting in California. Once the samples had been tasted, those people kept buying the Apollo Yogurt, they purchased this for their family and friends. Those friends did the same and soon sales doubled and then doubled again. With the income generated, soon free samples were available worldwide, including Russia and the areas at war.

Business meetings were fun, as they discussed sales in various countries. Gregory, of international sales, would announce their humble beginning in India, how he had introduced their BF culture into yogurt production, had partnered with other producers. Best, where people were too poor, "we established a charity would provide BF yogurt to the poor."

Nathan stood up to report. He smiled broadly. Our biggest resistance was in Israel, where the local producers crowed that this wasn't kosher. All laughed. So, I simply bought their largest producer, got them to make the product, and now it is the number one brand there. Mr. Fielding's method of giving free samples even worked in the Gaza strip: first they refused it because it was made in Israel, but now they "eat it up."

Frank, the Finance Director gave his report. At the end of his report he said, "Frankly I don't see any reason to spend money on advertising here and in most places. As soon as someone takes a taste, they bring the product home to their family. Then they invite friends and neighbors and they do the same." He shook his head in wonder. "Frankly I

have never heard of a product taking hold so rapidly. There must be more to this product than just good taste.”

Harry began using the growing income for the clinical research. With such brisk sales, there was no need to apply for research grants. Besides those would take too much time. Basically his scientists introduced a bad bacteria into the culture and soon the culture had developed means to overcome that one. Then they would go into full production and provide the new material to several universities for the clinical trials. Already, one university reported that 90% of their Clostridia patients were free of that infection. Harry went to the microscope to discuss why that 10% had failed to clear up.

Harry gradually became aware that newspapers were writing about peace treaties being formed in Syria, Libya and many African nations. He also noticed that whenever the newspapers reported a war raging, his marketing people would concentrate on rushing to get samples and sales to those areas.

Suddenly, with the drop in cost of armaments, money was now available for infrastructure, schools, and housing. Housing for the poor was being built all over the world with the money no longer being spent for the military.

There were jokes about the speed trap cities crying that no one speeded anymore, so they had lost their main source of income. Instead of detectives trying to solve current crimes, they now had time to solve old long simmering crimes. New technology was developing for that. Another article noted how some criminals were coming to the police and confessing to crimes that even the police had forgotten about.

When Sylvia argued with him about the need to get the yogurt to island nations that might not have it, Harry froze.

Harry: “Sylvia, did you taste the BF yogurt?”

Sylvia: “Of course I did. After all, that yogurt is named after you! Why shouldn’t I.”

Harry: “But I begged you not to.”

Sylvia: “Oh silly boy. What is my punishment? I know, I have to cook you your favorite Russian dish!”

Harry now knew that Sylvia was “taken.” No, not infected. But was she an independent spirit anymore? Did she have free will? Is this why she had put them both on a strict good diet, and good exercise program? And no more drinking binges?

What happened to his drinking buddies? Yes, his favorite bars all seemed to be closing up.

Harry spoke to his culture: “You have robbed people of free will.”

Culture. *“But Harry, we are only trying to help humans.”*

No, you are taking away free thinking and free ideas. I want it to stop. I demand that you leave me NOW!

He suddenly felt light as a feather, too light. He could hear, yet there was silence! He clutched the desk. He could hear the machinery, workers greeting and speaking, yet he had never felt such aloneness before. He was in a busy plant, with dozens of workers everywhere, yet he was lonely!

He had never felt such a sense of solitude, almost like poverty, of having nothing. He tried mentally talking to Apollo. Nothing was there. He rushed to the microscope. There he saw nothing, just a milky liquid, but no words formed. He whispered Apollo! Then louder. Then louder still as though screaming for a lost child. APOLLO!

The door opened and Phillip entered. Harry turned away so that Phillip wouldn't see his streaming tears.

Harry:” Sorry Phil I must have twisted my ankle.”

Phil: “Yeah, sounded like you were in pain. Need a bandage or pain pill?”

Harry: “No it's fine now. I better go home. Yeah it hurts.”

First, he very carefully placed the culture in the incubator. Then he went to that busy Statler Hotel.

There appeared to be some sort of convention and the lobby was crowded. The bar was crowded as well. He squeezed into a stool between two men. Because of the crowd, he was shoulder to shoulder with the man in the gray suit.

He almost panicked waiting for the bar tender who was quite busy. Finally - finally he came and asked, “what'll you have.” He was aware he was sweating.

The gray suit nodded to him and said, “Hi ya doin.?” Harry only nodded. Though the man

had greeted him, Harry felt a sense of utter solitude. The man asked, “Ya here for the convention?”

Harry heard, but didn’t hear. He shook his head and muttered “Uh no.”

Grey suit offered, “I’m Bill Ashcroft, from Philadelphia. My company is the Ashcroft Automatic window shutters. What is your company?”

Whatever Harry muttered was inaudible, as others approached Mr. Greysuit and soon all were speaking loudly. Harry felt more alone.

A pretty woman approached and nestled against Harry. “Care to buy a girl a drink?”

Harry muttered an excuse and offered the woman his seat and went to the crowded lobby.

Go home? What if he felt lonely when he was in Sylvia’s arms? What if being home reminded him of being lonely?

He knew if he felt alone when he was with Sylvia, that would be too much to bear.

He asked for a room. When the desk clerk explained that the hotel was full, she offered to find him a room at a motel.

Harry: “I’ll take any room. She started to apologize that there was only a suite for 750, but Harry interrupted here with a panicky, “I’ll take it. I’ll take that.” If he remained here, there was still the hope that he could feel different with Sylvia.

The noise from the lobby, the hall, the next-door convention would normally have bothered Harry. But he heard nothing. In the elaborate suite, he felt alone but at least he wasn’t home where he would be too aware of being without something that had been a part of him for many months. He mused, Is this how people feel when they have lost an eye or a hand? He lay in bed trying to pay attention to the television. Sleep would not come.

At one AM his phone rang. The desk politely asked him to please turn down the volume of his television set; he was keeping next door from sleeping!

Finally by two AM he couldn’t stand that feeling any longer. He rushed back to the HP plant. He barely greeting Gus, the guard, as he rushed past him to the lab. He heard Gus saying, Yes, Mrs. Fielding, he just came in and is in a hurry to get to the lab.”

His hand fumbled as he tried to fit his key into the lock. Once in the room, he

rushed to the incubator, removed the Apollo culture and swallowed it. He carefully returned what remained, adding fresh milk to the dish. He then collapsed on the couch and fell asleep. He was asleep when Gus silently entered to check on him, decided not to wake him, quietly closed lights and door, and tip-toed back to the phone to report to Sylvia.

The next morning, he no longer felt alone. He resumed his regular routine of checking health news, noted the Typhus outbreak in India, learned that it was a bacteria, and ordered his staff to obtain samples.

He needed to research the nature of the epidemic and work out with Apollo the best way to prepare Apollo to meet this scourge.

Weeks later, when he received a copy of charges from the Statler Hotel he barely recalled that night at all; he only worried that Sylvia might see the bill and wonder if he had been with another woman!

Occasionally the thought occurred of escaping again from Apollo. He knew that all he had to do was take Keflex or Cipro, and Apollo would be gone. He was content in knowing this. So he didn't worry.

He continued to enjoy his wealth, his ever-expanding empire, and the obvious benefits of his amazing invention.

A wise man had posted, "What good is wealth if not used to benefit mankind." He was content knowing that his wealth particularly benefitted humanity.

Perhaps Harry might have been concerned that Bacterium fielding had developed resistance to almost all antibiotics. That the patent offices all over the world were reducing staff or shutting down because there were few new applications for new devices or ideas or products.

That airports were shrinking, and there were few orders for new airplanes; after all, despite their safety records, there was still a chance of humans being killed while flying, so not flying saved lives. Not driving also saved lives.

Harry was sort of aware of these changes, but was content knowing that all this was for the good of mankind.

Harry realized that relaxing and just thinking happy thoughts did make him feel good. It was nice to relax, think about his success, his wealth, his wife Sylvia, his beautiful family. As his body was flooded by the chemistry of happiness and feeling good, he did feel really well. He decided there was plenty of time to think about free

will; first he would go home, tend to his beautiful new garden and then he would make love to his wonderful passionate wife.

Apollo was right, why worry?