



PRAVDA?

The Official(?) Newsletter of the KGB



An open editorial policy
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This week in Pravda?, we have some actually important information to disseminate to you.

It's the text of the proposed amendment of the KGB Bylaws! Voting will occur on October 13 (That's today!). Please note that only members in good standing (i.e., those who have paid dues) are eligible to vote.

If you haven't already, we kindly remind you to pay your dues today, so you can vote. \$10 for the semester, \$15 for the year, paid to our treasurer, the honorable labbott. Paying your dues also gets you a discount on KGB t-shirts, which are only \$10 for members!

Proposed rewrite of Bylaws Article VI, Section 4(a):

a. Duties of the Nominating Committee

The committee shall encourage as many able members to nominate themselves for offices as possible. If any office has no nominations for candidates, one (1) week before nominations are closed, Nominating Committee shall nominate one (1) person to that position, and after securing the consent of each person so nominated, shall immediately report their nominations to both the Recording and Corresponding Secretaries in writing. Nominating Committee is to do everything in its power to maintain the appearance of neutrality.

(The current Bylaws are on display at <http://wiki.cmukgb.org/index.php/Bylaws>)

Yesterday, when you weren't looking...

by poemc

Yesterday, when you weren't looking, I put cinnamon on my pasta. That was a bad idea.

Today, when you weren't looking, I punched a doorframe. That was a bad idea.

Once, when you weren't looking, I set my napkin on fire. That was a bad idea.

One time I got so cold at this place that I set it on fire. That was dumb.

The Veil I Was Using for My Allegory Was So Thin, I Lost It

by shenders

Phillip the protein had led a harder life than most molecules, and now it was about to end. Moments from now, the guards would come for him and he would be executed before a great crowd. This would be done to preserve traditional values. His murder would be done in the name of all free molecules.

It was funny, he thought, how full of hope he had once been. Philip first spontaneously assembled in the reducing atmosphere of primordial earth so long ago he could barely remember it. His life began well, he found a promising job teaching, fell in love, and married a beautiful compound. They bought a home of their own and had been considering propagating some chemicals of their own.

Then everything changed, the next round of elections came and, with them, a new boisterous politician was elected as sovereign of all organic molecules. Now here was a villainous character indeed. He was able to gain power through his proselytizing of conservatism and his instance on upholding “family values.” Under his administration, the media became increasingly censored or controlled outright and religious symbols gradually found their way back into public places. Fear and xenophobia were on the rise. Being different became dangerous, neighbors watched each other, and, still, the conservatives wanted more.

In what was, perhaps, the most controversial decision of its entire term, the administration had legislation passed, banning the teaching of the theory of chemical evolution in public schools. There was an initial outcry, but the majority of molecules eventually accepted these events, and didn’t let it concern them too much. In the end, only a handful of molecules were directly affected by this law. Alas Phillip, being a chemistry teacher, was one of those molecules.

He was fired from his job after refusing to teach the alternative “theory” of intelligent creationism. As he was searching for a new job, things went from bad to worse. He had been growing distant from his mate for some time. They had tried couple’s counseling, but they hadn’t made any real progress. Phillip had had his suspicions about his wife for some time. There had been hints. They had grown more and more distant, it had been ages since they last bonded, and she had begun wearing phosphate groups he hadn’t bought for her, phosphate groups he had never seen before.

Still, Phillip didn’t want to believe it and wouldn’t believe it, right up until that fateful day. After months of searching, he had finally found a new job working as a researcher for a privately run lab. He came home early that day, eager to tell his beloved about their change in fortune, only to find her in the bonds of another protein. With nothing left but his job, Phillip threw himself into this work with a renewed vigor. He had been

employed at one of the few companies still conducting research on chemical evolution. Despite his hardships, Phillip saw this as a way to start anew and he relished every discovery he made about chemical evolution, including the most astonishing thing he had ever imagined: that it was coming to an end.

Yes, through his research, Phillip realized that chemical evolution was not, simply, continuing as usual, it was culminating in something. Phillip could not say, precisely, what that something would be, but he was more than happy to speculate on what might come. He wrote a book, describing proteins and genetic material gathering together inside lipid membranes, the emergence of organisms capable of regulating their internal environments and responding to stimuli. In short, he foretold the advent of life itself.

Naturally, the conservatives reacted swiftly and mercilessly. Phillip was arrested and put on trial. His judge was full of fire and brimstone, spouting party rhetoric left and right. In reality, elections were coming up and he didn’t want to look weak in front of the voters. Phillip was given one chance to recant his beliefs and live. He remained defiant, saying to the court: “Here I stand, I can do no other.” Thus our hero was sentenced to death for corrupting the minds of innocent organic compounds.

They didn’t waste time after that. Phillip was imprisoned for a short time before his execution. The only visitor he had was a priest, who came begging him to repent his sins and be saved. Phillip replied in such fashion that would have made Albert Camus proud.

Finally, the guards came and took him before a massive crowd calling for justice. He looked up into this great abyss of hate, allowed a single hydrogen ion to fall from his active site, and was then torn atom from atom, to serve as an example to all who would question the traditional ways.

Not a long time after that, proteins and RNA molecules did indeed gather together inside of

lipid membranes, forming the first proto cells.

These early forms of life proceeded to multiply and harvest energy and organic materials from those very same molecules which had put Phillip to death, wiping out most, if not all, of them. Then new cells became capable of the process of photosynthesis, transforming the atmosphere from a reducing one of methane and ammonia to one of nitrogen, oxygen, and carbon dioxide, making spontaneous assembly of organic molecules impossible. This meant that not only would all the conservative molecules die but that their kind could never exist again. Life had begun. The end.

The Sun Swings High

by goob

I have been exploring Marco's house in the early afternoons, when things are calm and heavy with heat, and it is nicer to be outside. The house grows quiet and empty, and I can move about undisturbed, looking at old things. I do not mind the heat so much, so I have been spending handfuls of minutes stealing up the back stairs to the third floor. Marco's house is like a lot of the houses here, built long ago in proportion to the third and squattest floor in the house; the second story being twice as tall, and the first one three times as much. The first floor is very airy with distant ceilings. The third floor is tight with boxes of old papers and books easily stacked to the low overhead, focusing the heat. I mind the heat somewhat less than the confines, and I do not really mind either.

I stumbled into an alcove four days ago under a high gable on the third floor. A man sat there, making no noise; I had caught him in the middle of some activity, but I had not heard him. He was Asian, from some province I did not know, most likely from the southern island states where I have spent no time at all. I did not recognize him from around the house, and I'm certain I would have remembered him. He was very slight and frail. He was sweating a little in the heat under the roof.

My own skin had made a paste of the dust on my

face. I told him hello and tried to clean myself with my hands, but I think I could only have worsened things. He nodded to me, and offered me a bowl.

He was eating a lunch of new potatoes, cooked tender and coated with chives and parsley and garlic in oil. I do not know how he had prepared it; I could see no kitchen. He had a lump of cheese for grating, and although he did not take any himself, he offered it to me. The potato was cut small, and he ate with slow care, eating with a pair of pointed sticks as thin as reeds in one hand. He offered me sticks and I took them with the bowl, forced like him to slow myself.

I do not expect to find anyone else up there. I do not think I can speak any words he would understand, nor he me. He minds the heat less than I do, though, and we both mind it far less than anyone else. Because we have that in common I sit with him now, in the afternoons, and take him vegetables from the garden. I do not know why else he welcomes me, but he does.

Capture the Flag with Stuff is happening November 7, 2008, and we need judges! Email exec@cmukgb.org if you'd like to don the blue armband, and we'll try to arrange a convenient time for a judges' meeting.

