

# A Short Digression

*In which the Duke and the Doctor discuss the duelling of Grand Viziers and the uses of fish.*

The doctor turned toward the Countess for askance.

"Milady?"

To which the Duke politely coughed in way of interruption..

"Actually, I believe it's Her Excellency (and of course, I am His Grace)."

To which he continued to ponder in his way, vocally mentioning the thoughts he dwelt on :-

"I couldn't find a reference to how one should address a Grand Vizier - but it probably involves being on you knees and begging for your life...."

"Begging you pardon, your excellency, and thanking his grace for his indulgence.", The Doctor turned once more toward Duke Peter, " I believe the correct form of address for a Grand Vizier is "Toby" - at least it was last time I was in the Orient. (We were at Oxford together, you see.)"

The Duke harumphed his displeasure, "What a coincidence, him being named after the Devil! Obviously you met him before I had the displeasure of dueling him to the death with a frozen haddock.." "Good Lord, sir!", exclaimed Dr. van B\_, "That is no mean feat, given that he had been trained by warriors of the fish-duelling tribes of the Amazon, whose mastery of all forms of piscean combat is unmatched by any in the known world!".

"'Twas not entirely difficult. I had, of course, recently seduced the queen of the Amazons and received the pre-eminant training in piscean combat (amongst other things) as well.", the Duke looked abashedly away briefly.

"As I did manage to keep my fish fresh and frozen with my invention of the steam-powered gas cooling box, it came down to the superiority of the weapon itself. Whilst I had my frozen haddock, he was forced to use the local equivalent of a suprised looking catfish which decayed throughout the duel. The Orient has not, as yet appreciated the value of frozen fish, but prefer the fresh (and dare I say) uncooked version. Damn foreigners."

Nodding his head, the doctor himself turned his thoughts to recollection.

"This reminds me of a strange tribe I came across in my travels. As you know I was in the service of a Spanish sea captain, whose exploits are known to all and sundry. However, having become separated from the bulk of the fleet, and, indeed, my ship, I was pulled from the ocean by a short and rather scruffy chap who asked politely, in a dialect of certain Pacific tribes, if I would care to be eaten. When I explained rather indignantly that I did not, he sadly told me that it was the custom of their tribe to only eat fish who consented to it. However, not being familiar with the language of the sea, and not wishing to eat a fish that was not so disposed, the tribe had all but died from starvation. Happy to oblige, I taught him enough of that tongue to determine whether or not a fish wished to be eaten, and enough poor piscean poetry to ensure an affirmative answer."

"But I digress."

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