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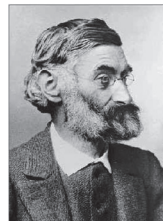
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Dear Abbe

Dear Abbe,

I am not normally a paranoid person, but once I learned that some dinoflagellates have ocelloids or “eyes,” I began to worry that they have been secretly spying on me rather than me observing them. I’ve become afraid to access my computer or any device in the lab for fear that they are actually NSA-modified organisms (NMOs).

Paranoid in Pierre

Dear Abbe,

I have been having very odd problems with my algae cultures lately. Everything is fine, and then suddenly the cells disappear, leaving only a few odd-looking cells swimming around. More puzzling, these cells seem to emit light. What could be happening?

Puzzled in Pomona

Dear Paranoid and Puzzled,

I don’t normally answer two questions at once, but since I’m brilliant and full of Schnapps, why not? These two seemingly separate phenomena are related. You may perhaps have seen the recent news item about scientists learning to install lasers in cells. * Well, like always, science is late to the party. Dinoflagellates evolved this millions of years ago. They not only see their prey, they have death rays to hunt them. Just be careful when you study them. If you see a big, spherical cell with a circular depression, you have found a *Nexaster vaderi* and should immediately flee—it’s a trap!

*<http://news.sciencemag.org/biology/2015/07/scientists-arm-cells-tiny-lasers>

Dear Abbe,

We noticed a while back that there was an advertisement on the MSA listserv for a “Microscopy Jock.” I do not know what a “jock” is. Could you provide an explanation of what they are looking for?

Confused in Crimea

Dear Confused,

I was unclear as well on what they are looking for. I asked a friend in the States about the term “jock.” His response (amid some snickering) dove into a lexicographical liturgy of meanings. The term can be derived from a “jockstrap,” an anatomical support undergarment. I suspect that the seekers are not interested in this type of support for their microscopes, although some of the newer design concepts seem a bit ballsy. It can also refer to those who wear such supports, male athletes, and this might be needed if a lot of manhandling is required to use the contraption. The term can also be applied to horse riders and *Überkanonen*, which seems more likely to me. Thus, a person devoted and excelling at a particular skill, which would not apply to me as I am quite proficient in numerous disciplines—chief among my “jock” activities being drinking, napping, questionable advice, and accosting miscreants.

If you need help interpreting terms on the MSA listserv, I suggest making your request directly to Herr Abbe’s assistant at jpshield@uga.edu.