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Donald Patterson

Posted: 02 May 2023 17:36:55

A parable by *Kline Leopold Hedrös* ©2023

After being missing for over a century, Donald Patterson's frozen naked body was found sitting on a boulder overlooking a tranquil lake. His eyes were closed, he was leaning forward, his palms were on his knees, his legs were spread wide, a serene smile snaked over his face, and most disturbingly, his rather large frozen penis was erect and oddly bent. Finding anyone missing for so long is amazing, but that wasn't the problem. The boulder Donald sat on was cryogenically cooled water ice, the lake he was overlooking was filled with liquid Methane, and the beach it gently lapped against was on Saturn's largest moon, Titan. The problem was, and remains, human beings have never been to the outer planets. How did Donald end up naked and frozen solid on Titan?

It's a freak of history that Donald's discovery by the flying European Space Agency's Titan (ESA) *Aura* probe was publicly disclosed. If the designers of the ESA and Chinese Space Agency (CSA) Titan probes had anticipated finding a smiling naked man with a large bent erection on Titan, they would never have made their probe transmissions public. But nobody expected Donald and national civilian space agencies in the mid-21st century practiced *full analytic disclosure*.

Full analytic disclosure was a reaction to what historians have called *The Fake Age*. Starting in the mid-2020s with the advent of advanced public AIs, every bored teenager could create astonishingly realistic fake videos showing whatever their twisted little teenage minds could imagine. Bored teenager videos were bad enough, but soon others, people with grudges, opportunistic scammers, trolls just doing it for the LOLs,

bitter exes, big corporations, and government intelligence agencies also got into the high-quality fake business: the result: a world flooded with fake videos of celebrities, politicians, public intellectuals (please, no laughing), bitter ex-wives, aggressive transexuals, social media influencers, religious nitwits, and generic know-it-alls, all engaging in a full spectrum of depravities. New genres like Your-Girlfriend-Getting-Gang-Bang-Anal and The-President-Shitting-in-Actor-Mouths were so common that critics suggested they needed their own *Academy Awards* category.

The fakes culminated with the epic *Butter*. *Butter* started with two trans-Hollywood A-listers torturing and raping kidnapped toddlers under the “O” (for orgasm) of the Hollywood sign. The penetration close-ups were the most anatomically detailed fakes ever produced. They are still studied in video schools for their masterful attention to detail. After raping their last toddler, the trans-A-listers casually beheaded the poor tykes and threw their severed heads down the hill. Again, the “gore physics” was of the highest caliber. The amount of calculation required to accurately model — to forensic levels — the elastic deformation of toddler head tissue bouncing down a dirt hill was so great that many still suspect wealthy producers like the Saudi Royals, the CCP, or the NRA-funded *Butter*. After watching their last toddler’s head bounce, the trans-A-listers boarded a conveniently loitering military helicopter and flew straight to Sacramento. On arrival, they rappelled onto the Capitol Building dome and shot their way into the state legislature, where they machine-gunned and nerve-gassed prostrate begging state legislators. *Butter* ended with the National Guard storming the capitol building, but *Butter’s* trans-A-listers were prepared. In the final scene, they set off a small briefcase tactical “dirty nuke” that vaporized the capitol building, killed the attacking National Guardsmen, and left a large Cobalt 60-laced radioactive hole in downtown Sacramento. Cynics still consider *Butter* the greatest feel-good comedy of all time.

To nobody’s surprise, a world filled with fake bullshit was not a problem for many, but it was a problem for *science*. Science answered with full analytic disclosure. It was no longer sufficient to publish papers that referred to lame “meta-studies,” obscure behind-a-paywall papers, or publicly inaccessible source data. In *The Fake Age*, every step in the research process had to be fully disclosed, cryptographically hashed, and redundantly stored on public blockchains. Once research data appeared on a public chain, it could never be revised, deleted, or altered without triggering loud alarms. And just storing data wasn’t enough. All the software tools, ad-hoc programs, working notes, and so forth also had to be put on chains where anyone could inspect and use them. There was bitter pushback from academics as the doctrine of full analytic disclosure took over. Many complained that if they had to divulge their

hard-won experimental data, third parties might scoop them. Poor babies! Others whined that exposing all the steps involved in producing papers would undermine *Ten-Million-Author-Papers*' credibility. Everyone knew that, of the dozens of author names appearing on group papers, only a few, sometimes very junior researchers, did the work. Full analytic disclosure clarified this, and the brownie point collectors didn't like it. Again, poor babies!

Despite the pushback, academics caved because most of them were publicly funded, and the public was no longer buying their crap. Any "paper" that didn't meet the highest standards of full analytic disclosure was immediately dismissed as "fake research." Also, citing "fake papers" had a huge negative impact on one's reputation, so it wasn't long before full analytic disclosure was widely practiced. It was certainly established practice when ESA and CSA designed and built their flying Titan probes. Both agencies took extraordinary steps to guarantee the authenticity of their Titan transmissions and to disclose every single bit sent from Titan instantly.

All their hard work resulted in the biggest April Fool's reveal in history. On April 1st, 2056, the first images of Donald Patterson hit the nets. Still reeling from *The Fake Age*, the public didn't believe Donald was real. Most thought he was another high-quality fake, and the April 1st date did not help. As more and more data came in, it was clear that something extraordinary had been found on Titan, but the low-attention-span public quickly moved on. No amount of rational fully disclosed technical arguments about the integrity of transmission protocols would change their minds. *The Fake Age* was also known as *The Stupid Age*, but aren't all human ages stupid?

The two groups that accepted Donald, conspiratorial imbeciles, and hard scientists, loathed each other. Conspiratorial imbeciles cranked up their insanity and suggested Donald had been abducted by alien werewolves that "posed" his body on Titan after running a standard alien anal probe panel. That's why Donald was sitting — to conceal the alien anal probe in his ass. There were dozens of "competing" conspiratorial imbecile "theories," but no matter how insane, contrived, ludicrous, incoherent, illiterate, innumerate, or batshit silly, Donald's mere existence out-crazy-ed them all. "The universe *really* is queerer than we can imagine."

And that bothered hard scientists. Donald was a giant middle finger to the established canon. People, especially technical people, love to prattle on about how wonderful it is to rethink everything, but when forced into a situation where you must do it, the joy evaporates, and dread settles in. The scientific community wisely kept their mouths shut about Donald. When pressed for comment, they predictably called for

“more research.” When have researchers ever called for less research?

When Donald Patterson was found, he didn’t have a name. At first, he was called the “Titan Ice Man,” and that is still the word-police-approved name, but the public quickly settled on “Ice Dong” (#IceDong) and took pleasure in using “Ice Dong” in defiance of the word police. At first, everyone wondered if Ice Dong was a statue, an alien, or some freak natural formation. Conceding Ice Dong’s humanity was too big an ask, so in good — “when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth” — fashion, the hypotheses were tested.

The easiest option to rule out was the suggestion that Ice Dong was a freak natural formation. If Ice Dong looked *a bit* like a human body, like some squash plants occasionally do, then most would have been delighted to accept this explanation: a natural formation didn’t require a complete rethink of human knowledge. Unfortunately, the *Aura* probe was able to take extremely high-resolution microscopic images of Donald’s entire corpse. The detail was amazing: hair with follicles, twisted eyebrows, nostril and pubic hairs, ear wax, tiny skin scars, toe and fingernail cuticles, scrotum blood vessels, moles, suntan lines, and mysteriously, a ring shadow on his left ring finger, like Donald wore a wedding ring that was no longer there. That all this detail condensed out of the Titan atmosphere was more improbable than finding a smiling frozen corpse overlooking a tranquil Titan Methane Lake.

The close-up examination that ruled out a natural formation also nixed the statue suggestion. If Ice Dong was a statue, the “artist” that made him could carve microscopic details. It made more sense to assume Ice Dong was a body. But the question remained: what type of body was Ice Dong an alien? At this point in the investigation, this was the preferred option. And, in another accident of history, the *Aura* probe carried an instrument capable of basic genome sequencing: the ATCOMU (Advanced Titan Complex Organic Molecule Unit) device. When *Aura* was designed, a protracted struggle between two groups of researchers about the ATCOMU device made the news. One group objected to sending a sequencing device to Titan because nobody expected to find anything like DNA on Titan. They wanted to send another instrument that coincidentally better suited their research program. It was a typical “bitter because the stakes are so low” academic squabble. In the end, ATCOMU was sent to Titan because the instrument was highly versatile. Genome sequencing was only one of many things it could do.

ATCOMU’s sequencing abilities were quickly used on Ice Dong. The *Aura* probe gently drilled into Ice Dong’s ankle and extracted enough cryogenically frozen flesh and bone for analysis. *Aura* took a few hours to run a standard genome sequence

and another hour and twenty minutes to transmit the results to Earth. Still, within minutes of hitting the nets, four DNA ancestry databases reported that Ice Dong had living relatives in the western US, Alberta, Canada, Indiana, and Scotland. The best match was with a fifty-year-old woman, Denise Nielson, living in Elko, Nevada.

When contacted by reporters and government officials, Denise said her mother's maiden name was Noreen Patterson and that Noreen had lived into her late nineties and was buried in the Elko cemetery. The authorities quickly exhumed Noreen's body without Denise's permission and ran a series of genetic tests that showed Noreen was the biological daughter of Ice Dong, or as he was now known, Donald Patterson. Within days of identifying Donald, his Indiana relatives unearthed an old 1920s portrait of Donald and his older brother Richard. Donald was only seventeen years old in the picture, but his serene smile in the old print matched the familiar image from Titan. Armed with a name and family connections, it didn't take long to recover all the surviving information about Donald Patterson.

As a child, he fell off the roof of his parent's second-story house and broke his left leg. It was a bad break that healed improperly. It left his left leg shorter than the right, and he limped from then on. In 1923, Donald and his wife Elsa eloped. The couple left Ohio for California and, on the way, briefly lived in Amargosa, Nevada, where Donald got a job in the Borax mines. By all accounts, they were a happy couple, but Donald disappeared on the evening of November 11, 1923. He was last seen walking into the desert near Corkhill Hall, later known as the Amargosa Opera House, by some fellow Borax miners. They reported he was limping more than usual but took the time to wave hello. It was the last time anyone saw or heard of him. Six months later, Elsa gave birth to Noreen. Noreen never met her father but, according to her daughter Denise, grew up hearing stories about her dad going missing in the desert.

As these details emerged, opinions about Donald hardened. When has more information ever changed anyone's opinions? People who thought he was a fake loudly repeated their views. Donald was like Christmas every day for conspiracy cranks (they are not theorists). He had obviously been abducted by aliens in the Nevada desert, stripped naked, anally probed, and posed on Titan as some kind of joke. The mere fact that authorities were not "checking" for alien anal probes in his ass was proof. Quasi-rational "Donald Deniers" harbored one final hope. Maybe ESA and Western countries secretly perpetuated an elaborate fraud to stop other nations from exploring Titan. Donald was a modern form of white neo-space imperialism. If vast mysteries were sitting on Titan, perhaps everyone would stay away. This would allow Western imperialists to colonize Titan and exclude people of color. It was a tiresome, unimaginative, endlessly repeated complaint.

This objection was dashed by the Chinese Space Agency 巨龙蜻蜓 (Titan Dragonfly) probe that reached Donald's location six weeks after his discovery by ESA's *Aura*. The CSA probe independently verified Donald's presence, and, working in conjunction with the ESA probe, the two spacecraft were able to mimic the functions of an X-ray CAT scan. It was an impressive display of improvised software. The scan results showed the expected human skeleton; even the poorly healed left leg break was visible; sadly, no alien anal probes were found in Donald's ass. Donald was real.

It has been a decade since Donald's discovery, and still, no explanation exists for him. The public stopped caring about Donald a few months after his discovery, but behind the scenes, governments quietly shelved plans for more Titan exploration. Maybe it's a good idea not to provoke whatever froze him on Titan. The very people claiming Donald was an imperialist fraud were the loudest proponents of staying off Titan, so Donald was left alone.

Donald Patterson is still sitting on a boulder of cryogenic ice; his eyes are closed, he's leaning forward, his palms are on his knees, his legs are spread wide, his large erect bent penis is frozen in place, and a serene smile snakes over his face as he overlooks a tranquil liquid Methane Lake on Saturn's largest moon Titan. And still, like the greater cosmos around him, there is no explaining Donald Patterson.