

The Transformation

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He still remembered the ill treatment by his childhood friends—one of them was standing right in front of him. Like the saying goes, ‘every dog has his days’, it was the scientist’s day today. The couple was begging for a few bugs but they wouldn’t get it so easily at least not from this troubled childhood friend.

IN a desolated, downtrodden, deserted laboratory in a far away land, a scientist with crumply fuzzy hair was jumping with joy. His years of hard-core research had finally paid off. With tears of joy rolling down his wrinkly cheeks, he was envisioning flashbacks down the memory lane when as a child he would dream about this day. The day he was longing for thirty odd years had finally arrived. He wanted to hug them, kiss them, but all he could do was weep in joy.

The memory was fresh in his mind, how he would turn red in anger and embarrassment when all his friends would lock him up in a little cage they had made with their half broken wickets in the backyard of their apartment building. He was treated as an untouchable. They would taunt him because of the head lice he was afflicted with.

One evening when he was teased and locked up in the same creepy little cage, an idea popped up in his tiny mind. His biology teacher had spoken about transgenic organisms the same day. And so the thought struck him. Could he transform the head lice into some sort of Super Bugs!

Since that day his only goal in life had been to realise that dream. He took great interest in genetics and pediculus organisms. And now that he had achieved success in the only goal of his life—turning head lice into super bugs—he could sigh in relief. But his work was not over yet. There was still a big problem to which a solution had to be found. He had his super bugs right in front of him but how was he to prove that to the cruel and stubborn world?

He had to market his super lice. And for that he needed enough proof that his super bugs did indeed work wonders. He had already tested the super bugs in his laboratory. The tests had been immensely successful. Now all he had to do was find out a way to roll out his product in the market. He couldn’t help but imagine the scenario after word about the super louse bug had spread far and wide.

He spread the bug in one town first. Then when results came pouring in he had solid proof to show to the rest of the world. Soon things started to fall on track and one thing led to the other smoothly. Finally, his job of marketing the super bug had achieved unprecedented success.

Head lice were now a revolution. Everyone wanted to be infested by it like crazy. It did wonders to the development of mankind too. The old fuzzy haired scientist had not only transformed head lice into super bugs but he had made different kinds of them. There were basically two types of super head lice bugs:

- a. *Scalp-smoothers*: Their primary aim was scalp health. Scalp became smooth and very productive, making it perfect for hair growth. The best part was that there would be no signs of dandruff.
- b. *Hairexhilarating*: Their target was hair. All aspects of hair, be it length, texture, amount, colour, basically the general health was enhanced in bounds. This was the favourite of girls and hair-obsessed boys.



With the little players in place all the scientist had to do was sit back, relax and watch the game being played. He never expected his project to be such a success. Youngsters carried their super head bugs as a fashion statement. It was like wearing worn and torn out jeans in the days past, looked weird but considered very cool. Every one trying so hard to keep those bugs on them, wearing caps so they don’t escape out, eating blood forming stuff just to nourish them, trying to sweeten their blood to attract more bugs and what not. It was crazy!

The head lice were considered the “in” thing. Not having them was considered an awful thing as opposed to the scenario a few years ago when people infested with head lice were ridiculed and considered filthy. Now, people were going all out to have their head infested with head lice.

Considerable care was even given to the head lice’s likes and dislikes. Head lice, for a fact, love clean and healthy heads, so everyone made sure their heads were clean and made a point not use stuff like olive oil or mayonnaise that suffocate the crawly creatures. People rarely combed their head worrying they might hurt the crawly bugs. Some time back people would be ashamed if they got nits and would try to hide them by wearing scarfs but now nits were proudly displayed.

Corporates also took advantage of the situation. Innumerable products targeting every little aspect of the lice’s life were out in the market. Salons came up with treatments that would make the head an ideal home for the super head lice. Advertisements displaying the products were everywhere,



on TV channels, newspapers, and even Internet. Special slogans were made such as-

*If you use this product,
They'll think you're looking for a renter
And make your head a day care centre.
You'll be asked to baby-sit
Their cherished offspring, nymph and nit.
Then having left their mark on you
They'll move to your sister Sue.*

*They'll come by dozens
And bring all their cousins.*

*Every hair is a slide
Where they can crawl down and hide.*

The scientist looked around and was amazed and immensely happy to see that kids were trading louse just like he would trade Pokemon toys with his friends during his childhood. There were communities and groups on networking sites and even schools for even specific kinds of super lice. Louse was now a sign of high status. He was glad that little girls no longer had to go through the excruciating pain of lice removal; no one had to put harsh chemicals on their head trying to get rid of the crawling creatures.

Of course, head lice had even been found on human mummies, they were also mentioned in the Bible. Long time ago, Aztecs collected their head lice in bags and offered them to their Emperor as a token of respect. Young women in North Siberia threw lice at men as a sign of affection as if to say 'My louse is thy louse'. But with time the outlook had changed and the louse came to be considered extremely unhygienic—the parents' worst nightmare. He remembered the humiliation his mother suffered, the agonising pain he suffered trying to remove the little harmless crawling creatures from his soft head. He also remembered the letters and phone calls his parents would receive from the school asking them to keep the kid off school premises until he was free from lice.

He was amazed how tampering a few letters in the genetic code of the head lice completely changed their fortunes forever—and his too.

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And then the incident he had been waiting for all these days finally came to pass. Since head lice had become much sought after products, the poor creatures were not able to reproduce in such high numbers. Shops selling them were soon running out of stock. People were running from shop to shop in search of the super bugs.

One such couple, after knocking at the doors of many shops, finally landed at the fuzzy-haired scientist's home. As he opened the door, the scientist was surprised to find his childhood friend with his wife, both wearing a harried look on their faces. The scientist was barely able to suppress a smirk at their pitiable situation.

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The scientist made his childhood friend remember the days when he along with his other cronies made him suffer such humiliation. He told him how he longed for friends then, how he wished that at least one single soul would sympathise with him, how painful it was for him to shave his head off so many times in an attempt to get rid of lice. The friend listened to him with downcast eyes.

After he had poured out all his pent up anger, he felt a great sense of relief. He now felt pity looking at the poor couple's faces. He went inside and brought a couple of his marvellous creations and handed it over to them. He watched happily as the ecstatic couple made their way back home, itching their super lice infested heads.

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