



## Good tidings of great joy via email

Balakrishnan R Nair

Reading my emails in the lead-up to the Christmas season, I find myself asking, Has everyone got a generous big brother out there, or am I the lucky one? I have reason to believe that somebody is watching me and knows every tiny detail about my health and wealth.

Of the 60 or so emails I receive daily, only a few are from people who have no concern about my wellbeing. For example, there could be one from the *Medical Journal of Australia* asking me to review an article within 3 days. They could not care less if my wife is sick or my daughter has an exam. Then there is the last reminder from the College about my annual subscription fee. The bank manager emails me about my account, which is already overdrawn over the overdraft.

The rest of the emails are from well wishers and fellow human beings. For example, there is one from a friend who is the orphan of an African cocoa and gold magnate. His father told him on his deathbed about the 5.6 million American dollars and gold deposits in a US bank. Now that he has turned 21 he is able to get hold of the money, with my help. All I need to do is start an account in Australia. With the 10% my brother is promising me from this deal, my financial worries will be over. I could retire early and even go to Ivory Coast to have a holiday and meet him.

But things are not that simple. I have another friend in the Middle East who says he found my name through “top personnel in society and in aid groups”. He reassures me that the petroleum company he is working for is loaded. So he over-invoiced the company and has transferred 27.5 million dollars to a bank in the US. He would love to meet me in a neutral country like Spain to see how he can transfer the money to Australia. He will pay me 10% too.

I have decided to take the second option, as I would like to go to Spain. I have asked him to organise my flights. I could take my wife with me too.

An external auditor of a bank in Africa wants to have a partnership with me. He has found \$95 000 in an account and would love to transfer it to Australia. If I send him my account number, the money can be transferred the next working day and I will receive 40% of the amount. He will look after the legal and banking issues. I wish we had banks like that here!

Teaching and research are not well remunerated. My wife was keen for me to do some extra work. Fortunately, the following job offer came: “Requirements for work with us: age from 20 till 60 years, inhabitant of Australia, opportunity of Internet connection, opportunity to check email not less than 3 times a day, the bank account in Australia, the responsibility, accuracy and punctuality, knowledge of the basic purposes of household and office technical equipment”. It seems I have all the essential qualifications except

being punctual. They will offer me the job straight away if I send them my bank details so they can transfer my commission without delay. It looks like they mean business, and the appointment process is nothing like where I work! Maybe I will wait till I come back from Spain.

It's amazing how word gets around. How did they know that I have erectile dysfunction? I do hope my doctor (or wife again) has not doxed me in. It's hard to understand why a drug that is supposed to help with erectile dysfunction is called “soft” Viagra. Another email is about plain Viagra — ordering it is fast and secure. A third email offers me a discount on these tablets.

But I love the next email. It says if I try a certain drug I will forget all my failures in life. (Like the five attempts at the Fellowship?) Should I wait till I come back from Spain before ordering it? I am in a real fix. The cheaper version of the drug promises that all my dreams will come true and that I will win my game. I wonder if they know that I am not the sporty kind! It also promises to harmonise my feelings (whatever that means!). Even before I bought it I had an offer of refills.

And how did they know I don't have a PhD? A recent email reminds me that the only thing stopping me from getting a better job and better pay is not having a PhD. (No doubt my wife contacted them.) Apparently they found a loophole in the regulations, and if I send the money straight away, the PhD can be mine in 2 weeks. Moreover, no study is required, so I can go to Spain without any worries.

The only thing they have not found out about is my baldness. I am still waiting for that email with the quick remedy. Hope it's not a curly one!

All these emails have restored my faith in humanity. I am thankful to you, my brothers (and sisters), for thinking about me and for your desire to help me. All my Christmases have come at once! Merry Christmas to all my correspondents. I look forward to a prosperous, healthy, fulfilled and happy new year with your blessings.

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