

(al)Chemical

by mazaher & Jns

April 8th-16th, 2012

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This started as a proper drabble of 100 words.

Then it was brought to my attention that, despite the shortness of this bit, I had managed to fit in a blunder of Andersonian proportions.

Jns came to the rescue with correct chemistry.

The "badly planned experiment" has become a co-written, slightly longer story.

Here it is, beside its earlier, single-handed version: witness to the power of friendship.

Verses from Fabrizio De André's ballad *Un chimico*, on Edgar Lee Master's *Trainor the Druggist* in *Spoon River Anthology* (1915).

Listen here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ve-HSpYm3tQ>

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*Da chimico un giorno avevo il potere
di sposar gli elementi per farli reagire,
ma gli uomini mai mi riuscì di capire
perché si combinassero attraverso l'amore,
affidando ad un gioco la gioia e il dolore.*

*Ma guardate l'idrogeno tacere nel mare,
guardate l'ossigeno al suo fianco dormire:
soltanto una legge che io riesco a capire
ha potuto sposarli senza farli scoppiare,
soltanto una legge che io riesco a capire.*

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wrong chemistry, by mazaher

People are molecules, tying covalent links at the slightest excuse, then parting again as more promising free radicals pass by.

Like Mycroft, I kept my hydroxyl carefully shielded.

But then I bumped into John's singlet oxygen.

Nonmetallic, so reactive than it rarely appears as such; unobtrusively disguised instead in oxids and acids.

Toxic to anaerobic organisms, which it kills surely and swiftly.

Tasteless, odourless, hygienic.

-OH is the spirit of alcohols, the flash of sugars, the texture of biomembranes; the engineer of enzymes and macromolecules, the dangerous alchemist of neurotropic drugs.

Unstable, short-lived.

Unless it binds to +O without exploding.

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amended version, by Jns & mazaher:

people are molecules, bonding at the slightest hint of stability, then parting again as more promising attractions pass by.

like mycroft, I kept my hydroxide carefully shielded, addicted to lithium, sodium, cesium but then I bumped into John's proton nonmetallic, so reactive it rarely appears as such; unobtrusively disguised in acids and hydrides.

essential to all biochemistry, toxic out of balance, denatures enzymes, drives respiration, conducts electricity tasteless, odourless, hygienic -OH is the ambiguity of alkalis and alcohols, the border of ionic-covalent, organic and inorganic

in spirit of alcohols the flash of sugars, the texture of biomembranes, the engineer of enzymes and macromolecules, the dangerous alchemist of neurotropic drugs

in base of alkalis the neutraliser of acids, caustic and violently reactive, as harmless as soap and synthesis of explosives unstable, short-lived

unless it bind to H+ without exploding.