

## **Excerpt from O-Oh: Never Blame the Cake (Forthcoming)**

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### **A Great Discovery**

For a few months already Ajita had been busy running an extraordinary experimental laboratory test. It was early in the morning when he unlocked his lab door while he was still drinking coffee from a small cup. He walked in and was stunned at what he saw on his table. All the experimental tubes were broken into pieces. The chemical liquids and substances were mixed up and had spilled all over the place. His experiment was dripping onto the floor into small puddles.

As he was about to sit down at his lab table to examine what happened, he choked and spat his coffee onto the table.

It went right down onto a fat circular baby gecko that was asleep next to one of his tubes..

The fat gecko woke up frightened. What had happened to him? It looked up and saw a man in a white gown staring at him. The gecko ran and jumped off the table. Ajita immediately put down his coffee cup without looking. He turned around and ran after the gecko to catch it before it could run away.

He slid down onto the floor quickly and grasped the gecko in his palms. The gecko was struggling hard inside his hands. Ajita slowly stood up holding the gecko near his face. He then relaxed his hands a little bit to have a closer look at the peculiar gecko. “Walla! This is a great triumph!!! I will be famous!” he shouted. He was so happy as he laughed to himself carelessly.

The gecko shook on Ajita’s palms and was amazed at the human face that was so close to him. His instincts told him that he had been caught. He then left his moving tail behind and climbed off Ajita’s palms like a flash of light. He fell on the floor again and ran very fast out the lab door.

Ajita felt something jump from his hands while he was still holding his palms together. He stopped laughing. He caught a sight of a tiny little fur ball as it ran out the door. He did not know what that thing was. Looking at his palms again, he saw a moving gecko’s tail. He was shocked. Without thinking, he went out immediately to look for the gecko in the hallway carefully with his hands held together still. He looked at the ceiling, the walls and the floor. However, he could not see the gecko anywhere.

What was left in his hands was a moving hairy gecko’s tail. Yes, the gecko’s tail had tiny little fine hair on it!

Have you ever seen a gecko with hair?

This is not a typical genetic engineering story of a hairy fat gecky, nor is it a scientific story of a gecky robot. Can you guess what happen to this cute gecky? The creatures that are always around us and we don’t really like them or pay attention to them so much (except in scientific research.) Let’s move on to find out what’s happening.

Ajita was upset that he had just lost the result of his accidentally successful experiment. "It just ran away. How silly I am...Oh! No...What will I do?" Ajita mourned to himself. He went back to look on his lab table sadly.

Ajita saw the coffee had spilled and was mixed in the chemical liquid dripping onto his chair. The coffee cup was broken into pieces on the floor. Ajita also noticed that some chemical bottles were broken. Everything in the lab was in a big mess. The lab now stunk badly as the window was closed.

"What on earth happened here? No one had a key to this lab," Ajita said to himself.

Suddenly, he realized that the gecko's tail was still moving in his hands. He ran down the stairwells of the lab building and across to his boss' office building. He sped upstairs holding his hands together tightly.

When Ajita arrived at his supervisor's office door, he yelled out at the top of his lungs excitedly, "Kummit, come out quickly!!! I've got something to show you!"

"What?" Kummit yelled back furiously from his office before he pulled the door open. Ajita lifted his hands up and let go slowly. Kummit looked down in Ajita's palms that were still together and saw a moving hairy gecko's tail. He screamed, "What the heck is that?"

"I think...it's my new experimental result. I don't know... how to explain this to you. It happened...too quickly...What I want you to know is my new hair tonic experiment is very successful. This is the tail of a gecko that I found on my lab table. I caught the hairy gecko but it ran away and left his tail behind," Ajita slowly

explained to Kummit with a smile. He was still breathless from running upstairs.

“What? Are you insane? A gecko’s tail...?” Kummit said while he was looking carefully at the moving mutant thing. “Yes, it has tiny fine hair all over it,” Kummit murmured.

“Think about it, Kummit. A gecko could grow its own hair within a night! Then, you can imagine how much of this new hair tonic we can sell! But, we have to catch the gecko that has hair all over his body to find out what the chemical ingredients were in the lab test last night,” Ajita said urgently.

“What? You don’t know what you put in the new hair tonic? And we have to catch a bloody gecko to find out before we can manufacture the new product?” Kummit asked in grumpy voice. He was getting really frustrated.

“I’m so sorry. It’s beyond me! I’m afraid that I can’t find out what I put in the new tonic last night. If you would let me have an assistant, I would have had someone looking after the lab when I went back home last night. It wouldn’t end up in a big mess like this! What I know is I found a hairy gecko and a lot of the chemical liquids were mixed up on the lab table because all the experimental tubes were broken. Some chemical bottles were also broken so it’s even harder to trace how much of each ingredient was in the new hair tonic? How could I know something would break them?” Ajita said assertively.

“Alright! I’ll hire an assistant. I promise you’ll get one,” Kummit said annoyingly. “Why don’t you use some of your brains now. You must find out what the ingredients in the new hair tonic are from the bloody gecky’s tail that you hold,” Kummit demanded.

“Oh! Yes! I’ll do it right now,” Ajita answered sarcastically. He then turned away and walked back to his lab holding the gecko’s tail carefully in his cupped hands.

Suddenly, something occurred to Kummit. He shouted after Ajita, “Did you really test your new hair tonic on a gecko?”

“Of course not! All my experiment followed our company’s rules that were against animal testing,” replied Ajita turning his face to Kummit. “As I said. I don’t have a clue!”

Kummit walked back in his office scratching his head with both hands as he still held the gecko’s tail and swore to himself, “What the heck!...What will I do then? Huh! Who cares....It’s just a gecko.”

In the lab, Ajita put the gecko’s tail in a bottle and placed the bottle away in one of the cupboards. Then he called the janitors to clean up the lab. He went out joyfully for some brunch in the cafeteria.

At once, the janitors came and opened the lab windows to let some fresh air in, as the lab smelled so bad from all the chemical substances. The cleaning took a few hours. It was now getting late in the morning.

Ajita went back to the lab. He started to plan his experiment step by step by writing his idea down in a notebook. Then he put rubber gloves on to protect his hands from the chemical substances and took the gecko’s tail out of the bottle. He put it down on a thick piece of experimental glass.

After that, he set up a glass lab jug which he held by his fingers above a lab burner. He poured some chemical liquid into the

glass and mixed in some chemical powders slowly with a glass stick. He lit the burner with a lighter and went out to make a quick cup of coffee. It was by now a windy early evening.

When Ajita came back, he saw the gecko's tail was in flames. He was shocked and ran to put out the flame with his coffee. The flame was put out just in time but Ajita lost the gecko's tail. He screamed, "What have I done!! What a day!! I lost it again." Ajita knew that he had been careless leaving the window open as the wind had blown the gecko's tail into the flame of the burner. Or so he guessed.

Ajita was frustrated and almost in tears. He knew he would get torn into pieces by Kummit when he reported this to him. He started walking and thinking hard to come up with an excuse. Time flew so quick as it was dark. Ajita had not had his dinner yet. So he changed his mind and decided to go back home. He closed all the lab windows, locked the door and drove out of the company compound.

As soon as Ajita arrived home, his mother greeted him and told him about his young daughter's first day of grade three. However, Anamika, Ajita's daughter, was already asleep. Ajita did not say much. His mother sensed that her son was having a hard day. She left him alone and prepared dinner for him.

## **The Gecko's Tale**

The hairy circular gecko went back to his home where he was now hunting for small insects. He was still right outside the lab window. There were two lights that automatically turned on when it was dark. The gecko usually came out late at night to hunt for food.

Now he was resting on the wall trying to recall what happened to him last night.

The memory came back to him slowly. He remembered that he was hunting. But there were only a few insects to catch last night. Then he saw a man in the room who was eating a cup cake at the table. A big piece of cake dropped on the table near a glass tube. The piece of cake looked so delicious although the gecko could not guess what kind it was. When the guy left the room and turned off all the lights, he slid into the room. He climbed quickly on to the table and gobbled that piece of cake. Unfortunately, the piece of cake did not touch the sides of his tummy. He was still hungry.

While he was walking around the table, he smelled something yummy from the glass tubes that were held by the stand holders. The tubes were in a half-circle. He looked up and wondered whether there was more food in each tube. He climbed up from the bottom of a stand holder and clung on top to look down in one of the tubes.

The liquid in the tube was too deep for him to get. So he jumped onto another stand holder. His front paws got hold of another stand holder top but his back paws were struggling in the air. At last, he fell down on the table. His fall made the two stand holders fall with him. In seconds, all the tubes went clashing onto each other like dominos before they broke into pieces. He was shocked and numb like a rock. All the liquid inside the tube had poured over him. It stung so much on his skin. He was in pain. After this point, he could not remember much.

The gecko tried to get away from the chemical liquid. Before he passed out, he hit a few tiny fragile bottles containing different kinds of chemical powder and substances on the lab table. They were broken now too. He stumbled on dizzily.

He climbed down and clung on the window to catch insects. He caught one and ate it. As soon as he tasted it, he spat it out. 'What a revolting taste that insect was,' the gecko thought. He caught another one immediately, and ate it. Again, he did not like the taste of the insect anymore.

He wondered what was wrong with him. He was so confused that he didn't even notice that he was now speaking in human language to himself.

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Ajita went back to his lab after he had eaten the dinner his mother had cooked for him. He wanted to be alone to think logically. He unlocked the door, turned on the lights and air-conditioner in the lab. Then, he sat down at the table. His eyes were looking out the window. He noticed something on the glass and walked over to have a closer look.

"It's the bloody gecko!!!" Ajita screamed. He stood still and observed it.

The gecko did not know that Ajita had come back and had seen him. He was still wondering to himself on the glass window. The gecko was so used to being outside the lab window when Ajita was busy working at night.

The gecko felt something weird inside him. Two lumps were pushing out off his head slowly, giving him a terrible headache. And he also felt that his back legs were swollen up and growing bigger. His tummy was feeling uncomfortable. Everything was now making him feel so sick. He just clung there without moving.



Ajita was shivering as he saw the gecko was growing two ears, changing his body shape and back legs.

The gecko looked like a cute little circular hairy monster! Of course, he was still fat.

Ajita opened the window and reached his hand out to catch the gecko before it could run away again. The gecko heard the window open and saw a hand moving toward him. His instincts directed him to climb down to the ground quickly. Ajita missed the gecko. The gecko's camouflage changed his skin and fur color. He hid himself in a flowery bush outside the laboratory building.

The gecko knew he had to leave his home. He had to move to a safer place away from there, to a place where there was plenty of cake to eat. He was now craving cakes, not insects anymore.

## New Plans

Ajita was really angry at himself. He had lost another big chance to find out what the new hair tonic ingredients were. He tried to calm himself down so he could think of a plan to capture the gecko.

"Wouldn't that rot your socks! Twice it's gone!" Ajita cursed to himself.

He sat down at the table and wrote down a plan of what to report to his boss in the morning. He came up with the idea of capturing the gecko alive. To do this, his company Aqua-ace had to advertise for someone to capture the peculiar gecko monster. Reward money would be given to the person who captured it. He had to give a strong reason to Kummit for spending money on

regional television and newspaper advertisements. So the ads would also be pre-launch advertising for the new hair tonic.

“Yes! This will do,” Ajita said to himself, “Oh! Well, well, well...Let’s see what’s next.”

Ajita then planned the advertising production. He drew a picture of the gecko monster to give others an idea of what it looked like. Then the advertising production company would make an animated two dimensional cartoon ad.

After catching the gecko, the second stage of the plan was to do an intensive gecko monster road-show around the country and release press advertising at the same time. People would come and see how effective the new hair tonic was. This stage would enhance the television ad. The consumers would be so eagerly waiting for the hair tonic to come out.

“Brilliant! What a perfect comprehensive plan!” Ajita said to himself happily.

However, the hard part of this plan was to tell the truth to Kummit that he was too careless in leaving the lab window open. He hoped that Kummit would go along with his new marketing plan anyway.

Ajita went back home to sleep. He woke up in the morning to have breakfast with Anamika and his mother. Ajita was a single parent. Ajita’s wife had passed away when Anamika was only three years old. It had been a while since he had spent time with his family. He was relaxed as all the mess that happened yesterday gave him an excuse to be with them. He looked on the bright side.

“How was school yesterday? I heard that you were having a lot of fun. Did you start reading new text books yet?” said Ajita in a good mood.

“Yes, it was fun. I liked the new art teacher. She’s cool. She told us a lot of her funny experiences traveling around the country. I read the first chapters of some texts already... How come you can have breaky with us today? Usually you are too busy,” said Anamika.

“Well, I will have more time to be with you and grandma. I don’t have much work to do at the moment,” said Ajita as he was drinking his coffee.

“I thought you were having a lot of trouble yesterday,” Ajita’s mother said. She was buttering a slice of toast for Anamika.

“Yes, I was mum. But I think it will be okay now. Don’t worry, I have a solution for all the troubles,” said Ajita raising his voice. Everyone laughed.

Ajita and Anamika got in the car together after breakfast. Today Ajita would drop Anamika off at school and spend some time with her before her class began. He liked to watch Anamika playing with her friends. The carefree world of children made him envy their happiness.

When Ajita arrived at Aqua-ace, he went straight to Kummit’s office. He told Kummit about the burned gecko’s tail and proposed his new marketing plan while explaining that there was no reason for worrying about the past. They had to move on.

“Alright, alright, I know it was an accident,” said Kummit in a bored tone of voice. “Just do whatever you have to do. Give me

the budget and I'll sign it. I'm trying to do my work." Kummit seemed to understand Ajita's plan very well.

Kummit always spent a lot of money on building his company's and product's brand image. Although, he did not care much about a good human resource such as Ajita, nor the innovation of new things, Kummit was still very good at doing business. Probably, Kummit could see a lot of profit awaited in the near future.

Ajita was surprised. He was expecting an earbashing from his boss and a fight when Kummit disagreed with the plan. He knew that Kummit was always strict about spending money. He had never had any assistant in all the years he had worked in the company. That was why he was overworked and did not spend enough time with Anamika.

"Certainly, I'll do it now," said Ajita as he walked out of Kummit's office.

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Resting in the bush garden which was between the lab building and Kummit's office building, the gecko still did not know that he had transformed into a mini gecko monster. He walked out to the main road to find a bakery shop. He walked on two feet but he was not conscious of it. He was puzzling about which way to go and turn. The gecko had lived only at the lab building.

It was hot but there was a nice breeze. The gecko monster was really starving now. The breeze brought some nice smells on it. The gecko monster put his head up in the air to sniff. He followed the smell energetically. 'I might get some cakes!' he thought.

The gecko monster saw a young fat boy walking in front of him carrying a big paper package in his hand. He quickly climbed up the boy's trousers and jumped from the boy's back onto the paper package's top. He clawed in easily.

"Wow!! A lot of cakes here! Many kind of cakes too!" the gecko monster said while he clung on the top of the paper package. He then jumped on top of a piece of cake and started eating it. After a few mouthfuls, he jumped onto another piece of cake and ate some of it. He did this to all the pieces of cake in the package.

The gecko monster said to himself, "For heaven's sake! I never knew that cakes tasted a million times better than insects."

The fat boy arrived home and put the cake package down on the dining table. He opened it and took out a piece of chocolate cake. He was shocked when he was about to put the chocolate cake in his mouth. He saw a tiny monster sitting on top of the cake he held. The monster was munching away greedily.

"What the heck is this!" said the fat boy in a scared voice.

The gecko looked up and saw the fat boy's face. He begged, "Please don't eat me."

"I'm not going to eat you. I want to eat my cake. What kind of an animal are you?" the fat boy asked.

"I'm a gecko," the gecko monster replied shortly and stood up. He swallowed a handful of cream from his palm.

"You're joking! I've seen many geckos in my life. None of them look like you. Look at you! You are standing on two feet! And

you are stealing my cake,” said the fat boy moodily. He then looked into the opened cake package to take a piece of lemon tart out.

The gecko monster turned back and said happily, “Surprise! All of them are really delicious. You really have good taste.” The gecko gave a compliment to the fat boy to conceal his greed.

“What have you done to my cakes? You weirdo! How dare you destroy all my cakes without any shame?” the fat boy shouted at the gecko monster.

“Well, I didn’t mean to do it. But I was starving. I haven’t had any food for almost two days. Please be merciful,” begged the gecko monster holding his hands together and blinking his eyes pitifully.

“Alright, I forgive you. I’ll eat whatever is left over,” the fat boy said while he put the cakes down on the dining table. He sat down and started eating. The fat boy ignored the gecko monster who continued to eat the chocolate cake. He did not find it strange that a gecko could speak, let alone speak English.

The gecko monster interrupted their cake gobbling. “You are very kind to me..... Can I stay with you? I have nowhere to go.. I cannot go back home anymore...A man in a white gown wants to catch me. He was always after me... I had to run away” said the gecko monster with his mouth full of chocolate cake.

The fat boy paused and turned to the gecko monster. “Yes, you can stay with me. But I have to tell you that my parents and I will go away on my dad’s business trip tomorrow. We will be in a foreign country for three months. And my dad warns me that this other country may not have a lot of delicious cakes like where we are now,” the fat boy replied as he looked into the gecko monster’s eyes.

"I'll be with you wherever you are. I'm now an officially homeless gecko," announced the gecko monster.

"What's your name?" the fat boy asked. He took out a lemonade bottle from the fridge and poured two glasses.

"I don't have a name," the gecko said innocently, "Thank you for your warm hospitality."

"You're welcome. My name is Jinna," said the fat boy thoughtfully. His eyes were looking in the air for a few minutes, and said, "Ha! How about 'O-oh'?"

"Okedoke! My name is O-oh," said the gecko monster happily as he jumped up and down.

"I think it is a good name. I've heard bigger geckoes always making this cute noise when they talked to each other. I talked to them once. They answered me too," said Jinna as he made some toast for his new monster friend.

"Cheers," both of them said at the same time, as they clinked their glasses together.