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Amazing Tribulations of a Draft Submitted to a Prestigious Journal

Dear colleagues,

I would like to share with you the tribulations of a text that was recently published in a prestigious journal. You already think it must have been an exceptional experience! I confirm! Here is the chronology of events, which speaks for itself. October 20, 2017: submission of our manuscript to the famous journal. October 24, 2017: rejection, but with an offer to transfer the article to another journal in the same group. Decision in 4 days; unbeatable! We are eager to accept this attractive offer!

On October 30, the problems began: our request for the discount to which we were entitled under the agreement between the University of one of the co-authors and the publisher was rejected because this agreement must exist with the institution of the corresponding author (me). Think about it: "only" about 1400 € (\$1500) to publish in this fabulous journal, instead of the very affordable regular price of about 1750 € (\$1900). How could we resist? We quickly respond that we want to change the correspondent in order to benefit from this fabulous discount. Then, suddenly, it seems that the staff (or computer code?) of the journal no longer understands English, because we never received a response to this request. However, we received repeated reminders (October 24, November 1) to complete online forms (the part where I had to agree to pay € 1,750 in publication costs). From November 3 to 6, without any help from the journal, we managed to edit the article so that my co-author appeared as a correspondent; we avoided withdrawing and resubmitting. Immediate confirmation by the publisher of the discount.

Was the worst past? No! On March 1, 2018, after 4 months, we get impatient and ask for an update of the status of the

manuscript. From the next day (March 2), response from the secretariat: reports are available. Great! We will have the decision very quickly, then, right? Unfortunately, on April 22, 2018, we have to contact the journal staff again. It was very useful because the decision was sent to us barely ... 4 weeks later, May 17! In addition, in line with the incredible speed of the evaluation process, we are given a whole month to revise the text!

On July 10, 2018, the revisions are done, after a short delay about which we feel very guilty... On September 24, 2018, we ask for news. We receive a reply on the same day: "Please accept my apologies for the delay to your manuscript. Given the nature and extent of the revisions requested, the Associate Editor decided to seek re-review by the original peer reviewers." It must be acknowledged that the revisions to our text were very...minor! Same exchanges (with the same reply from the secretariat) on November 1st. On December 10, 2018, in light of the apathy of the staff (or the computer code?) of the secretariat of the journal, we contact the Editor. Automatic system response on December 11, 2018. Reminders on January 9, 2019 and on February 13; we always get the same automatic responses. However, glimmer of hope: our reminder of February 18 triggers responses, probably stemming from a *Homo sapiens*. Even two *H. sapiens*! On February 20, we receive a long letter from the secretariat detailing the status of the manuscript, with a promise to act quickly. The outcome must be very close! But on March 14, we still send an "n"th reminder, followed by others on April 4, 8 and 24; answer on May 2: we are still asked to wait! On May 8, we get angry and ask for a decision by May 15, 2019, threatening to withdraw our draft and, more importantly, to request a refund of the amounts paid. The staff (or the code?) may be struggling with English, but they speak € (\$) very well! The article is finally accepted on May 13, 2019.

The production was fast, even if we were entitled to page proofs. However, the

production team did not see the big numbering problem in the in-text citations (numbering jumps from 16 to 26 in these citations, following reorganizations of the draft) and we had to send some corrections at least twice. Given the competence of all the staff we have dealt with from the start, we dare not ask for correction of this little citation numbering problem, which goes unnoticed in the two series of proofs. However, all is well which ends well; the article got a lot of attention very quickly. So, are you tempted to publish in this wonderful journal? If you want to know the journal name, just contact me.

Submitted by **Michel Laurin**

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