

# 18.7.1

by  
Matthew Burkholder

*A teacher walks into a classroom burdened by several large books obscuring his view, there is one student in the class sitting a few rows back. The teacher walks to his desk without looking up and turns to the chalkboard.*

**Professor:** Hello class, welcome to Advanced Protocol in Section Language Eighteen Point Seven Point One. *(He writes this in large letters on the board as he speaks.)* I'm your teacher Professor Myrold. *(He also writes this in large letters, then turns to face his class. He stands in silence for a moment looking at his student.)* Hello.

**Student:** *(The student stands beside his desk and speaks with an accent.)* Good morning Professor Myrold. *(Student sits.)*

**Professor:** I'm sorry?

**Student:** *(He stands.)* Good morning Professor...

**Professor:** Yes, yes, I heard you. Where is the rest of the class?

**Student:** *(The student looks around him.)* I am unsure. *(He sits.)*

*(Professor goes to the door and steps outside and looks both ways, looks at the sign by the door, it is the right room.)*

**Professor:** Where is my class?

**Student:** *(stands)* Good morning.

**Professor:** Are you trying to tell me that you are to be my sole student for twelve weeks?

**Student:** I believe that is to be the case.

**Professor:** Well, this won't do, this won't do at all. I was assured that I would have a class of twenty. You are most definitely not twenty people.

**Student:** No, I am not.

**Professor:** I mean you no disrespect of course.

**Student:** No, it is my fault to be sure.

**Professor:** I'm not saying it's your fault son, I'm saying I was

expecting a much larger class. I'm sorry, what is your name?

**Student:** Yousef Malik Jasibisalifah-Kahn Arman Sebastiano Daie.

**Professor:** I see. All of that?

**Student:** Yes, most definitely. You have no idea.

**Professor:** No, I don't suppose I do. Is there something a little shorter that I might call you by?

**Student:** You may call me Joe.

**Professor:** Joe. Wonderful. Let me tell you something "Joe,"...

**Student:** I have heard great things about your work in Section Language Eighteen Point Seven Point One and am most honored and humbled to be in your presence.

**Professor:** Oh?

**Student:** Oh yes. In my country I began studying your work at the age of fifteen.

**Professor:** At fifteen?

**Student:** It was only when I had surpassed my own scholars there that I was allowed to leave for studies abroad in hopes that one day I may actually learn from one so knowledgeable in Section Language Eighteen Point Seven Point One as you are. Thank you very much. *(He sits)*

**Professor:** I'm flattered, Joe. But really, I can't be expected to teach a class of one.

**Student:** *(remains seated this time)* Is one who is as enthusiastic as I worse than a class of twenty that do not feel as strongly that Section Language Eighteen Point Seven Point One is the way of the future, as I know you do. Page four, Section Language Eighteen Point Seven Point One and You, Volume eight.

**Professor:** You know your textbooks, I'll give you that.

**Student:** Thank you Professor Myrold.

**Professor:** Well, I suppose it wouldn't hurt to test your knowledge a little.

*(He flips through one of his volumes until he comes to a formula that satisfies him.)*

**Professor:** Could you decode this formula for me?

*(The Professor sets the book before Joe and points at the formula then walks away. Joe raises his hand almost immediately. The Professor turns and sees Joe with his hand up.)*

**Professor:** Joe...

**Student:** *(He stands)* Twenty three point three one four two nine.  
*(and sits)*

**Professor:** Correct.

**Student:** I am quite aware of that.

**Professor:** And modest. Can you also decode the next one for me.  
*(Joe raises his hand)*

**Professor:** It isn't necessary for you to raise your hand.

**Student:** Oh but it is Sir.

**Professor:** If you wish. The answer?

**Student:** *(stands)* Seven hundred and sixty nine thousand two hundred and forty one point three seven seven double 0 two nine five five five five. *(Sits)*

**Professor:** You left off the last five but other than that, very good.

**Student:** I thought the last five could be considered superfluous based on your writings on pages three thousand forty through three thousand one hundred and ten in Section Language Eighteen Point Seven Point One and You, Volume two.

**Professor:** You thought that did you?

**Student:** Was I mistaken?

**Professor:** Well, it was awfully presumptuous.

**Student:** I am most humbled Professor. I shall prostrate myself this evening.

**Professor:** Well, I don't see where that's necessary.

**Student:** Oh, but it is. When I made an error like that in my home country...

**Professor:** You are no longer in your home country, you are in the United States now, you don't need to ... to prostrate yourself

when you make an error in my class.

**Student:** Many thanks.

**Professor:** You're welcome. Many times.

**Student:** Oh, very good Professor. I was not expecting you to be not only so knowledgeable about Section Language Eighteen Point Seven Point One but also to have a sense of humor.

**Professor:** You may find I have a great number of hidden talents.

**Student:** I can only dream that I do Professor.

**Professor:** Yes. Well, you seem to have a good grasp on some of the basics, but now we'll see if you can grasp some of the more complex principles... this is, after all, Advanced Protocol not kindergarten.

**Student:** I am ready.

**Professor:** Now we are aware that in a string of simple letters there are indeed several inherent numbers that we must analyze, you see in... you see, you ... you aren't writing this down.

**Student:** Oh, no. Should I?

**Professor:** Well, I would recommend it. It may be on the examination at the end of the term.

**Student:** Examination?

**Professor:** That is the way things usually work.

**Student:** Great flaming Allah! I had no idea!

**Professor:** What do you mean you had no idea? How could I evaluate all my students without an examination? I can't remember how everyone does on a day to day basis.

**Student:** This comes as a great surprise to me Professor.

**Professor:** I'm sorry, but that is simply the way things must be.

**Student:** I do not know that I can take your class, I had no idea that it would be so difficult. Perhaps I am not prepared for this level of Protocol.

**Professor:** Now wait just one Goll Darn minute. Pardon my language, but when presented with a student as obviously intelligent and promising as yourself, I can't help but get rather passionate.

**Student:** Do you really think I have such potential?

**Professor:** Doggone it I know you do.

**Student:** I am honored.

**Professor:** You should be.

**Student:** I am.

**Professor:** You should.

**Student:** Thank you.

**Professor:** Good. So, shall we continue?

**Student:** If you feel so strongly how can I not? To disappoint you, I do not know that I could live with myself.

**Professor:** Nor do I. Now, let us continue, and please, take careful notes. I do not like to repeat myself.

**Student:** I will strive to do my best.

*The Professor stops, turns and looks at the Student for a moment.*

**Professor:** You do that. You do that.

*Lights fade for a moment. When they come back up Joe sits in his desk with a paper in front of him looking at the Professor who looks at either a large clock on the wall or his watch.*

**Professor:** Aaaaaaaannnnnnnnnnnd... time. All right class, if you could bring your tests forward.

*Joe looks around for a moment then picks up his paper and walks up to the Professor.*

**Student:** I hope I did all right Professor.

**Professor:** I'm certain you did. You are by far the best in the class, I'm certain you will graduate with honors.

**Student:** Oh, I can only dream that I would Professor.

**Professor:** Well, dreams must start somewhere son.

**Student:** Yes, most true. Do you think you might grade it now?

**Professor:** I wish I could, but then other students might ask the same and if I do one I have to do them all. You know how it is.

**Student:** But professor...

**Professor:** Rules are rules Joe. Rules are rules.

**Student:** I understand Professor.

*Joe walks sadly back to his desk and begins to collect his belongings.*

**Professor:** Joe?

**Student:** Yes Professor?

**Professor:** Rules are made to be broken, aren't they?

**Student:** All but the rules of Language Eighteen Point Seven Point One Professor.

**Professor:** Very true. Very true. Let's see how you did. I'm as anxious as a schoolgirl myself to see how you did. Have a seat.

**Student:** Yes Professor!

**Professor:** Well, let's see here. Ahem. Good. Good. Ah, interesting method. Innovative! Brilliant! Oh, this one is wrong. Wait, what's this? What is it you did here?

**Student:** Formula thirty?

**Professor:** Yes. Yes, what did you do? How did you...? Good Golly Joe. You've broken new ground here! I never dreamt it could be so good! You've actually taken a simple cross decahedron from the inverse delta gamma pi and turned it inside out to come up with a complex beta and turned it into a latent simple cross bilateral alphabet!

**Student:** I thought you might like it.

**Professor:** Like it! My word! *(He clutches his arm)* My... Oh ... Oh ... Oh ... *(He gasps for air)* Good work Joe. "A" minus.

*The Professor dies.*

**Student:** "A" minus. Thank you professor, I learned so much from you, you were the best Professor I ever had. I shall recommend you to all the students back home.

*The student goes up to the Professor, takes his hand and shakes it.*

**Student:** Thank you again for all you taught me.

*The Student exits leaving the Professor laying at his desk.*

*Lights fade.*