

running for all he was worth, chased by a giant wasp! Well you can imagine how that went down with the nuns. Boodle didn't get custard for weeks.



Now, one of the more fiendish things that I discovered in that part of South America was *curare*. It is an arrow-tip poison made up by the locals from as many as 15 different ingredients. They use it for hunting prey.

Curare doesn't actually kill the animal: it is in fact simply a powerful muscle relaxant. (Unfortunately for the animal, its muscles become so relaxed it can no longer breathe and it asphyxiates. Later scientists proved that a curarised beast would actually stay alive if artificial respiration were used.) In fact curare has since found a use as an anaesthetic and a relaxant to make certain medical procedures easier.

Anyway, the locals had found that in small doses the effects of this relaxant drug could be quite pleasurable and a cult of recreational use developed.

Now at that time I had bumped into a fellow named Black, Dr Jonathon Black. He was an art historian who was supposed to be

doing research into pre-Columbian art relics—statues, bowls, ruined architecture, that sort of thing. In practice he seemed to spend most of his days in low bars quaffing *pisco*.

That is, he quaffed *pisco* until he discovered the *curare*-taking cult. He became a keen abuser of the drug, gradually having to increase the dose he took to get the same effect. In fact I believe the only reason he gave up on the drug was because his body had become so accustomed to it that no dose, however big, had any effect on him at all: this was a recognised problem among the *curare* takers and it was known that the effects are permanent.

So after that, old Blackie was strictly a whisky and soda man and has been ever since. Apart from his fixation with drain cleaner in San Francisco in the Seventies. And his ketamine phase.

I hear that he is now a successful academic, pillar of his community and all that, so his *curare* exploits have clearly not done him any harm. In fact I hear that his “past” is considered rather an attractive quality by ladies of certain tastes. I’ve even heard a rumour that the prodigious quantities of residual *curare* still sloshing around in his system have had an interesting effect on his performance in the