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Portrait of a Student

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Portrait of a Student

He was just an ordinary looking fellow. Tall, tanned, with a sprinkling of a beard and one ear that lopped just a little. His name—well, it doesn't matter. It's enough to say that it was the opening of school and he was a Freshman Vet. Even the fact that his father was a Vet wasn't much out of the ordinary, for it was the same with a lot of the other fellows too.

The strange buildings, the strange people and even the strange smells of the Chem Lab didn't bother him much. He'd been to junior college up home. In fact, everything was pretty simple and life at Iowa State was going to be a snap. And then came Anatomy.

The fog descended and Septimus became the father of all evil. When they asked him for his signature as collateral for a dried old bone he felt insulted. There didn't seem to be anything valuable about a bone—and he certainly wouldn't want it anyway. But when he had to draw them and label all the little bumps and grooves—well, he knew his Dad couldn't name the bumps either—maybe not even the bones. And his Dad was a darned good Vet.

Next he was sold a clinic suit and a dissecting set. Ah! Now we're going to do something! They did. They spent the next three days taking a square foot of skin off the neck of a formalin-perfumed horse. In the Histology lecture he took dictation on the "Characteristics of Protoplasm." Again he wondered if Dad knew anything about this—or if he cared.

Time went by and one day he was tapped on the shoulder and asked to step out to the "palpator."

"Where would you take the pulse?" That was easy—he'd done that for Dad lots of times. But then the next question hit him. "If both the carotid arteries were cut off would there be any blood supply to the teeth?" He didn't see what difference it would make—except in his grade.

Time for the final exam came and he was to appear at 10:47 a.m. He got there at ten o'clock and even though it was against the college rules he and the rest of the bunch couldn't resist smoking a little—just to calm their nerves. The victim preceding him came out of the office door. "What did he ask you?" Not so much. Our freshman friend walked in and his dyspneic symptoms became aggravated and his salivary glands rebelled and began secreting cotton instead of saliva. "Bound the rima glottididis." He tried to think but everything seemed rather blank. Oh, yes. That's the term applied to the cavity of the pelvis. And he told the professor so. The Doctor stopped twiddling his thumbs and raised up out of his chair a little. "The rima glottididis is in the larynx, I believe."

The blues descended on the freshman and he wondered how he could stand to take Anatomy over again. But somehow, he didn't have to take it again. What do I care about the grade—it certainly doesn't mean much when I get out in practice. If Dad crabs I'll ask him what the darned rima is—he won't know either. This Anatomy seems pretty far away from veterinary medicine.

Four years passed and the ordinary freshman had become an ordinary senior—tall, tanned and with a beard that needed a little trimming. The buildings weren't strange, and the Chem Lab's smell were almost forgotten about. He stopped in front of a group of freshmen. They were arguing about the merits of Anatomy.

He took his pipe out of his mouth and waved it at the frosh. "Better study that stuff, fellows. It's good stuff and you'll need it."

The Veterinary Student