

Hey Smart Scoopers

Hope you had a great week!

This time, we've scooped up five stories that take you from the case on Big techs, to a surprising cloud of lithium drifting in our skies, and into a mystery straight out of a classic adventure. You'll also get a double scoop of the Musketeer mystery, plus a brain teaser at the end to keep your gears turning. Here are your fresh picks for the week:

Scoop 1: The case against big techs: The problem of endless scroll

Scoop 2: Lithium plume in our atmosphere: Space travel polluting sky

Scoop 3: The fourth Musketeer's mystery: Have Scientists Found d'Artagnan?(I)

Scoop 4: The fourth Musketeer's mystery: Have Scientists Found d'Artagnan?(II)

Scoop 5: Puzzle of the Week: Decode Lambie's lock

Dig in and enjoy!

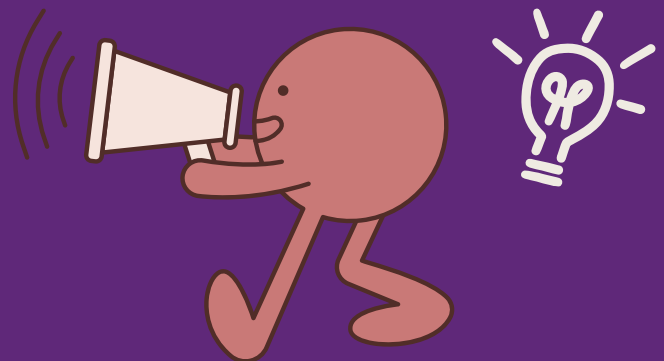
Happy Reading,
The SmartScoop Team

Our mascot, Blurt
will follow us
along the way.

Blurt /blurt/

noun:

A loud, round, super-curious character who just can't keep a fact in.



THE PROBLEM OF ENDLESS SCROLL



A U.S. jury has ruled that Meta and Google can be held responsible for designing social media features that encourage excessive use, especially among young people. The court found that tools like endless scrolling and autoplay may keep users hooked longer than intended. The companies have been ordered to pay millions in damages. This case could lead to stricter rules and could change how social media apps are built.

You've probably been there: you pick up your phone to watch "just one video," and suddenly it's been an hour. Turns out, that might not be entirely your fault. And a court in California just agreed.

This week, social media giants Meta (the company behind Instagram and Facebook) and Google were held legally responsible for deliberately designing addictive products that caused harm to a young woman's mental health.

It's the first ruling of its kind, and it's a really big deal!



What was the case about?

A young woman at the centre of the case argued that the addictive nature of social media led to her developing anxiety, depression, and body dysmorphia (a condition where someone becomes very distressed about how they look). The court agreed with her, awarding \$3 million in damages.

This ruling opens up social media companies to penalties across thousands of other pending civil claims filed across the US. In other words, many more people could now sue these companies using this case as a template.

And it wasn't alone. Just a day earlier, on March 24, a court in New Mexico ruled that Meta failed to protect children from exploitation on its platforms, ordering the company to pay \$375 million.



What is "addictive design"?

Think about the endless scroll on Instagram (it literally never ends), autoplay on YouTube, or notification badges that make you feel like you have to check the app. These features are intentionally built to keep you using the app as long as possible because the more time you spend on them, the more ads they can show you, and the more money they make.



What do the companies say?




Both Meta and Google plan to appeal the rulings meaning they're going to try to get the decisions overturned in a higher court. So the legal fight is far from over.

Courts are starting to hold Big Tech accountable for the way their apps are built not just what's posted on them. Whether these rulings stick after the appeals, and whether they lead to real changes in how your favourite apps work, is something to watch closely.



SPACE TRAVEL POLLUTING OUR SKY



Scientists discovered a cloud of lithium metal high in Earth's atmosphere and traced it back to a returning SpaceX rocket that burned up on re-entry. Using powerful lasers, they confirmed for the first time that space debris can leave a clear chemical "footprint" in the sky. The lithium levels were about 10 times higher than normal, raising concerns about pollution in a part of the atmosphere that protects Earth. As more rockets are launched, scientists warn this kind of pollution could increase and may affect the ozone layer and climate in the future.

The Discovery

Last month, scientists from Germany published a study in which scientists say space junk returning to the Earth is introducing metal pollution to the pristine upper atmosphere as it burns up on re-entry. Using a special instrument called a lidar (Light Detection and Ranging): basically a super-powered laser that can detect specific chemicals floating in the air. Scientists spotted a massive cloud of lithium floating about 96 kilometres above Earth. That's way, way up almost at the edge of space. The lithium levels were about 10 times higher than normal. The cloud stretched for miles and was observed for 27 minutes.




So where did all lithium come from?

The researchers traced the cloud back to the spot where the Falcon 9 had crashed through the atmosphere, and computer models confirmed that high-altitude winds had carried the lithium plume from the west coast of Ireland all the way to Germany over the course of 20 hours.

This is the first time ever that scientists have tracked a pollution cloud in the upper atmosphere all the way back to a single, specific piece of space debris.

An Escalating Problem


Right now, there are around 14,000 satellites orbiting Earth, and that number is growing fast. Every single one of them will eventually fall back and burn up. By 2030, scientists estimate that several tonnes of spacecraft material will burn up in the upper atmosphere every single day.



The part of the atmosphere where all this is happening (roughly 80 to 120 kilometres up) is one of the least-studied regions on Earth. It's too high for weather balloons, too low for satellites to fly through, and too extreme for aircraft. So we're still learning a lot about it.

The big worry? Metals like aluminium and lithium could interact with the ozone layer, the part of our atmosphere that protects us from the Sun's harmful ultraviolet rays. Scientists aren't sure yet exactly how bad the damage could be, because this is still a very new area of research.

The other bigger challenge is convincing governments and space companies to take the issue seriously. Right now, there are no international rules about how much pollution rockets are allowed to leave in the upper atmosphere, and very few ways to monitor it.



Space exploration is amazing, but rockets don't just disappear when their job is done. Every one that falls back to Earth leaves a chemical footprint behind and for the first time, we can see it. That's both a warning and a starting point for figuring out what to do about it.

HAVE SCIENTISTS FOUND D'ARTAGNAN?

Imagine a story so famous that people are still chasing its heroes... 350 years later.

That's exactly what's happening right now!

Scientists think they may have found the long-lost bones of the "fourth musketeer": a real-life hero who inspired one of the most famous adventure stories "**The Three Musketeers**".



First, Who Are The Three Musketeers?

If you haven't read the book or seen a movie version yet, here's the quick version: The Three Musketeers is a famous adventure novel written by French author Alexandre Dumas back in 1844. It follows a young, sword-fighting hero named **d'Artagnan** who travels to Paris and befriends three royal soldiers: **Athos, Porthos, and Aramis**.

They serve the king of France and live by the famous motto:
"All for one, and one for all!"

But the story of Three Musketeers is not entirely made up....

The Real People Behind the Characters:

Dumas based his characters on actual French soldiers who served King Louis XIV. The real d'Artagnan was a man named Charles de Batz de Castelmor d'Artagnan (try saying that five times fast). He was a minor noble, meaning he came from a low-ranking aristocratic family and worked his way up to become captain of the King's Musketeers. Think of it as being the head of the royal bodyguard unit. A very dangerous, very cool job.

He served the king faithfully for years. Then, in June 1673, during a military siege of a city called Maastricht (in what is now the Netherlands), d'Artagnan was killed, reportedly by a musket shot to the neck. He was buried somewhere near where he fell, and for over 350 years, no one knew exactly where.

Until now...maybe.



The Big Discovery

Archaeologists may have found the remains of d'Artagnan buried beneath a church in the Netherlands specifically beneath St Peter and Paul Church in Wolder, Maastricht.

So how did they find it? Surprisingly, it wasn't through a grand, planned excavation. The church floor had shifted due to ground subsidence, cracking some of the tiles, and it was repair workers who first discovered the bones. A lucky accident!

Archaeologist Wim Dijkman, who has been searching for d'Artagnan's final resting place for 28 years, carefully unearthed the remains bone by bone. The skull was unfortunately badly damaged, but the rest of the skeleton was in remarkable condition.



HAVE SCIENTISTS FOUND D'ARTAGNAN?



The Clues That Point to D'Artagnan

The body was buried under the altar, in a place of honour on consecrated (holy) ground.

A French coin from 1660 was found in the tomb.

A bullet was found at chest level, exactly consistent with how historical records describe d'Artagnan's death.

The church sits close to the site where the French army camped during the siege, and historians believe top-ranking soldiers killed in battle were typically buried at the nearest church.

How Will The Scientists Know for Sure?

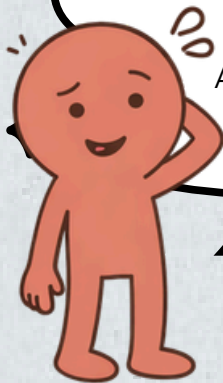
This is where modern science steps in. DNA was extracted from the skeleton's jawbone and is being compared with DNA from descendants of d'Artagnan's father, who donated their genetic material to help identify the remains.

Basically, scientists are doing a family DNA match. If the bones share genetic markers with d'Artagnan's known relatives, it's almost certainly him.

Dijkman said he is anxiously waiting for official confirmation, which should arrive within a few weeks. "We want to be absolutely sure that it is d'Artagnan," he said.

This discovery is like history and fiction shaking hands!

A real person inspired a fictional hero
That hero becomes famous worldwide
And now, centuries later, we might have
found his actual remains



** DNA tests are now being done to confirm if it truly belongs to the legendary "fourth musketeer."
DNA results are expected in the coming weeks.*

DECODE LAMBIE'S LOCK

What is the three-digit combination for Lambie's bike?
Use these clues to help to figure it out!

9 8 2
One number is correct and
in the correct position.

6 5 4
Two numbers are correct
but placed incorrectly.

4 1 6
One number is correct but
placed incorrectly.

7 8 5
One number is correct but
placed incorrectly.

7 3 8
No numbers are correct.

3 4 9
One number is correct and
in the correct position.



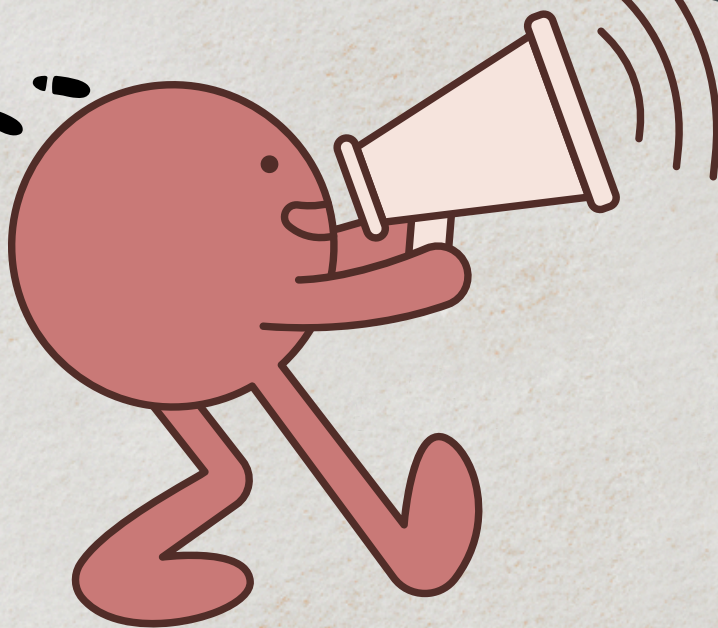
SOLUTION

The code is 542

Smart
Scoop

Blurt's
Did you know...?

Despite all the sword fights, real musketeers were named after their main weapon: the "musket" (a type of gun). So technically, they were more like elite gun soldiers than just sword fighters.



That's all for this week folks! Until next time, keep your brain gears turning!

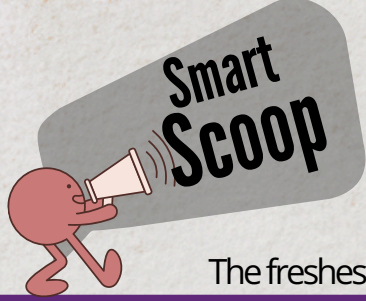


Got some feedback or want to share something with us?

Write to us here:

smartscoopteam@gmail.com

We'd love to hear from you! Mostly Blurt tbh..



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