1750

Fantasy Faction Monthly Writing Contest Anthology, November 2016

Various Authors

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# 1750

### Fantasy Faction Monthly Writing Contest Anthology, November 2016

Time Traveler by Jezzy-Art , who does book covers too if you need one and like her art.  
  
You or someone from our time is transported back to the year (start of the industrial revolution) with everything you/they know. There's no going back. What is your/their plan (for world domination)? What can or will go wrong?

*All content originally appeared on the Fantasy Faction Forums in the Monthly Writing Contest. You can see more information (and even participate in the forums!) on this particular contest by visiting the site.*  
<http://fantasy-faction.com/forum/1750-234/(nov-2016)-1750-submission-thread/>

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# Time's Arrow



'Damn Ellen, Paris is off the maps forever isn't it?'

'Looks like it. No more visits to the Louvre for our holidays.'

'Well, instead of visiting the museums, we'll get to visit the Glass Sea of Paris.'

'When radiations cool, in half a million years?'

'You know this is the work of Russia's Harbingers. It's gonna be fine for tourism in fifty years tops.'

'How can you tell it's the Russians behind that? The news don't know yet.'

'It's a safe bet. Of all our enemies, no one else has the missiles required to fuse stuff the way that news drone is showing. At least not enough for a crater the size of Paris.'

'Fair point, Bobby.'

My husband is smart even when he's drunk, or rather, he becomes sloppy a while after I'm too drunk to notice.

The news on TV have been drinking material for weeks now, but we try to contain both our drinking and TV time. Our little wine shelf is almost empty, and we need to keep the best for our last evening.

'I still can't believe it's all happening.'

'Yeah, feels like we'll realise we were watching the Sci-fi channel all along, doesn't it?'

Except there are no more fancy channels now.

I let myself slump against Bobby. The world swirls, like we're on a raft. Adrift and going down the drain. I feel his fingers plunge in my hair, his voice rumble out of his chest as he comments on the never ending horror show of the news. I need to sleep. We have so much work to do, and so little time to finish now.

----

In my dreams I'm twenty and Bobby thirty-five again, just old enough to feel scandalous, but smart enough to obsess me. We meet once more in the hall of my building at NASA. Our programs, about to join and merge like our lives and our love later would, is still about space exploration, and not yet about human survival.

But time has gone by, as time is wont to do.

The past only lives in my dreams.

----

One day I had offered to exit stasis first, and spend a few years setting up our new abode, developing relationships with our new neighbours–if there were any–just to even out our age gap.

He'd laughed at that, refused to be robbed of the privileges of a young wife.

"Besides," he'd said, "if the dinosaurs are back, I'd want to be there to defend you, tame them and learn to ride them..."

"If our stasis tanks last long enough for dinos to re-evolve, we could give ourselves a Nobel Prize of all sciences compounded."

Truth is, we don't know how they'll fare, or if they'll even take us through the war, as brief as it'll probably be. We've tested them before, short sleeps increasing to two full years in 2036-38. Our tanks have few changes from the original deep-pods we built for NASA. But a single glitch could mean death.

I plunge my hand in the depth of a panel, feeling my way up the thick cooling lines and slowly tugging coils of them out in the open. Ten years working on these machines and I still can't shake the feeling of disembowelling them when the cables flop in my lap.

A huntress in a lab-coat, oil a dark-blue blood under my nails.

I run my fingers along the length of the cables, inspecting every joint, looking for wear and pieces to replace. How many years before one of them ruptures, a tremor from our dying world snaps them out of place? The deep-stasis pods Bobby and I worked on at NASA were meant to last almost indefinitely, easily up to a century without physical check-up, but within ships which propel themselves smoothly, and won't risk getting bombed or running out of power.

'Bobby, which wires did you say you wanted me to look at? This is all fine.'

'Bundle B1A, Ellen. And maybe T4A too, if you have time.'

'I always have time for this. If you're worried, then so am I.'

'I'm sure it'll be fine. The installation is ready, the power systems have been running smoothly for years. The sleep should go as planned.' He cleans his hands in a rag. 'All the auxiliary systems are good, I'm done with my check list, and just in time.'

I make a face at my handsome, grubby looking husband.

'I wish we could go back in time, instead of freezing it.'

'We're not freezing time, only removing ourselves from it.'

'Nothing in physics keeps time from flowing back, I wish I had studied more... Invented something to turn the arrow of time.'

I picture the glass sea of Paris contracting, liquefying itself in a mass of living people, monuments and pastry shops, the missile collecting its fragments and taking flight, propelled only by the inexorability of time.

I imagine arguments being swallowed back, wine spit in glasses and gurgling up bottles. I imagine my ring sliding off my finger, Bobby's lips hot on mine for the first time again, and then unknown to me.

Time doesn't seem to ever be kind.

----

Many cities have joined Paris into oblivion before the TV went quiet, and we drink in their name, and the name of all the people snuffed out by the war. The wine is red, french, our best and last bottle. Bobby looks at me anxiously before opening it. He fears it might have turned to vinegar. But it hasn't, and we make the best of it, drinking and fucking like teenagers all night long.

When morning comes we leave our bedroom for the cellar, bleary eyed, down our bunker, to our new beds.

'Ellen, Ellen, I'm scared.' His hands are around my face, cupping it behind my ears, turning me in some sort of parabolic dish directed towards him, tuned to receive the warm radiations of his love. 'I'm so scared of losing you.'

I cover his hands with mine and tell him how since I love him more, I'm the most scared, and drink in the sight of his face crinkling in a lavish smile.

'I'll see you in a hundred years handsome, but it'll feel like ten minutes, like last time. And we'll be together again.'

I hate to see him like that in his tank. It feels like bending over a metal coffin. I kiss him deeply, listen to his speech slur as the drugs take over, his eyes, until last, never leaving mine.

My own tank is cold and clammy, and the slow chime of the console as the computer helps me launch the last protocols sounds like a soft electronic bedtime tune.

I listen to my breath, to my slowing heart, and the world goes dark.

----

Waking is horrible, no matter how long you've slept. I've been puking for a while, panting, coughing, and my head won't stop spinning. I'm halfway out of my tank, shivering in the cold air. There are voices speaking all around me, and a thick cover wraps my shoulders.

'Bobby?'

'Nej, sisa.'

'Huh?'

I look up into the face of a complete stranger. A woman, making cooing sounds at me. Around us are bright lights and more people wearing face masks.

'What the...'

Behind her shoulder, Bobby's tank is open. My mind trips to make sense of how *open* it is. Panels unscrewed, bowels dark and grey and missing. It's so wrong.

They're taking me away, I'm too weak to fight it. They're not slowing down, no matter how loud I cry.

----

A man settles in front of me, and props a little apparatus on his knees. It's a flat, metallic object, the size of a hand, without screens or special features. He taps it, speaks over it in his alien tongue, and the machine translates his words to English.

'My name is Martek, I am Fransken. How do you feel? Do you need medical attention? What is your name?'

I gape. Questions fight to come out first.

'I'm fine, my name is Ellen Vorden, I–'

The man smiles at me, and repeats my name.

'What year is this?'

'We're in 1750.'

'What?'

For a moment I think of the year 1750, however impossible Time Travel might be. But the man's smart black clothes, long braided hair and advanced technology don't look very industrial revolution.

'Ah, sorry' Martek flushes, 'in old English it is the year 2350.'

It takes me a long time to process that, to imagine how a hundred years sleep more than doubled itself. The best explanation...

'Where is Bobby?'

*No. No, why is he frowning?*

'The man in the other machine?'

'Yes.'

----

He left me a message, of the sort that could withstand time, carved and gouged into the stone floor.

Like an old pyramid treasure room, they unearthed our little bunker and found us, relics of the past. Me in my metal sarcophagi, Bobby a skeleton propped at my side.

From what I gathered, critical system failures made the computer launch his awakening eighty-eight years in our sleep. With irreplaceable broken parts in his stasis monitor, there was no going back to sleep for him. Outside data must have been terrible, because he chose to dismantle his tank to tinker and enhance mine.

At the bottom of his message are some universal scribbles, present over all the greatest buildings of mankind and whatever school desks might have survived the ages: a **B+E** in the middle of a heart, and under it 2030– and the looped symbol of eternity. Time folded back on itself.

Ah, Bobby, you tacky bastard, you old romantic. How do I live after you?

----

*Ellen love, I hope you make it and we won't go down in history as another stupid, star-crossed couple of scientists.*

I had no choice.

I watch you sleep. It's so hard to keep from waking you up.

I think of Time like you did sometimes, wishing for it to roll back. But it doesn't.

You'll have to let it flow too, when you wake up. I hope the world will be a better place then.

Until the universe cools and time ceases to matter, when past is present and we can be together again, you touring me around your labs, proud like a little peacock, so adorable, so brilliant – I'll be yours, always.

Bobby

# Conflict Of Interest

With the end of the world near , Biyu thought it was best to start breaking chains before she disappeared. She kicked things off with a grating passive-aggressive attitude and a lack of concern to anyone who stood near her after that until she drove them all away, like pesky mosquitoes at the sight of bug spray.

It was fine. She wanted them gone already. None of them had gone through what she had been through. They were all ignorant and she was happy to let them die while she lounged in ‘60s France, knowing she would be the lucky one; the one who got to run away when everything died.

She bit her lip at the thought of not absolutely knowing where she was going. And she didn't want her one-way ticket back in time to send her back by a month or a year. That was her only worry. Anywhere else, she could make the best of it, as long as it was far away from where she was now.

Mom called and the phone vibrated with such power that it shook on the table. She leapt up from her position on the sofa and sighed, switching the stupid thing off and stuffing it in her pocket. She adjusted the straps of her backpack and

Biyu got up from her couch and closed the window blinds. She really wasn't interested in seeing anyone’s face, because in a few weeks they would join the clutter of rotting flesh that would fill the earth. But it wasn’t her fault, she told herself. She didn't ask for this, but she knew it was going to happen and she had to get out while she still could.

It was too bad for the rest of them. She looked at the blue ticket, which laid in the palm of her hand and slowly curled it into a fist. The ticket burst into a blue light and shined out of the cracks in between her knuckles. The light transformed into streaks that crawled up her arm. She gasped, taking shallow breaths. The creatures lied when they said she wouldn’t feel a thing, but she fought through the pain, thinking of how close she was to a new life. A new beginning. With each blink, she felt her eyesight get blurrier until the world turned perfectly black.

\*

She found that color came back slowly but her ears popped and the ringing stopped. She could hear voices, almost familiar with the dialect she heard Mom speak. It wasn't quite the same though. She was definitely somewhere in Asia.

The words traded were fast and rushed and she looked up and saw the faces stare back at her. The woman had bags under her eyes and her child’s face looked red and puffy, probably had been crying.

The woman said something to her. Biyu cursed under her breath and thought about the words. It snapped into her brain. It was Chinese. Not her Mom’s though. It was more traditional. More native. She remembered from vacations and her grandmother. She took a bit off time adjusting to it and she cringed at how unnatural and awkward it sounded, but, nevertheless, it got the conversation going.

“Who are you?” The woman asked. Her voice seemed harsh, like she was ready to spit in her face.

“What year is this?” Biyu deflected the question. She wasn't ready for the conversation involving disbelief if she told the woman she was from the future.

“Thirteen Rab-byung, fourth year of the Iron-Horse,” the little girl said. Her mother glared at her and she hid behind the woman, occasionally peeking behind her.

“What’s your name?” The woman shot again and Biyu rubbed her temples, annoyed at the woman’s questions. Still, to not answer any of their questions would be disrespectful.

“Biyu Zhang.”

“Your Chinese is bad. You are a foreigner?”

“Yes!” She was tempted to say that she was a foreigner in a lot of other ways, but that was not the woman’s concern. Plus, it would lead to more questions she didn't feel like answering.

The woman switched to English so fast that it jolted Biyu. She was getting a little bit to the other language but it was still a huge relief on her part.

“It’s not a good time to be visiting Lhasa. You should be making your way to the Potala Palace.” The woman’s face looked especially drained when she said that, as her face lost all the little color it had left.

Biyu’s body froze up and she took a deep breath and smiled. Whatever the problem was, she could work through it. It couldn't be worse than being in the present, where she would have been preparing for death to strike her and the rest of the world.

“Why would I be going there?”

“Are you dense?!” The woman rose up, her nose flaring. “Ever since they murdered the regent, those Tibets have gone mad. They’re trying to kill all of us! Can you see what they are doing to us? I can't watch and I can let Chen see it either. I'm just praying. I'm praying everyday that it should stop. I have to leave my home because of my family and my safety, because I’m afraid.” The woman fell down to the floor and her chest sucked in and out as she shed down ugly tears. “I can't find peace.”

Biyu had felt that, the first time she discovered what was going to happen to earth. She remembered screaming when she heard and she pictured the moment after that when she was in her room, knocking down everything in her path, knowing she would be the only one who would survive. And even now, she wasn't surviving. She was just going back, avoiding the problem. She would still die like the rest of them, maybe not then, but eventually. But what could she do?

The child, whom she figured was Chen, reached for her mother, doing her best to console her. She forced herself to come to terms with her new reality and took a gulp, with it swallowing all her worries. She knew she had no other choice. There was no other option for her. Biyu had jumped and there was no soft mattress for her to land on, only rocks less sharp than the ones she saw before.

“I’m from the future,” she whispered, and they both looked up at her. She hated having to explain things, but she went through the motions, recounting the tales, reciting it just the way she had practiced it many times before. They listened to her, despite their problems, but she knew they may not have believed her. It could, to them, just as easily been some escapist tale to enchant them for a bit, but she said it anyway.

In her mind, she laughed, and wished she was Korean.

# Youthful Optimism

“Two minutes. It only took you two minutes to get us killed, Thomas!”

“I know, sir. But we’ll get out of this yet! You’ll see.”

Dr. Winston raised his wrists and shook the rusty shackles that bound him to the wall. “What did I tell you? All you had to do was follow my simple rules!”

“Be quiet in there! Or I’ll flog the both of ya!” screamed the jailer.

Thomas looked dejected and embarrassed. He’d been so caught up in the excitement of time travel that he couldn’t help himself in the marketplace. But there was a reason they had the rules in place. The iPhone never should have made it into the teleportation chamber, and the boy damn well knew it!

A day earlier they’d found themselves smack dab in the middle of the shit, piss and squalor that was London pre-Industrial Revolution living. Three things had gone wrong immediately.

First, they were in the wrong place and time. Dr. Winston himself had programmed the machine to send them back to Nepal in the Autumn of 534 BCE. His young apprentice, Thomas, had recently taken an interest in Buddhism and the lad wanted nothing more than to meet the Buddha himself. And while time travel wasn’t perfect, it sure as hell wasn’t this imperfect. He was almost two millennia and half a world off the mark.

Second, they were wearing the wrong garb. One of the most important rules of time travel was to ensure your clothing fit the time period. Attracting unwanted attention was dangerous, and they’d appeared out of nowhere wearing ascetic monk robes and sandals in the middle of a London winter. Dr. Winston was pretty sure his balls were still somewhere in his stomach from the cold, but that might have been for the best anyway. He remembered from his university days that the British often punished witchcraft with castration, and if they couldn’t find his berries they might just laugh and take pity on him.

Finally, as often happened with new time travellers, Thomas had arrived in 1750 London with time sickness and projectile vomited purple fluid all over the white, packed snow in the busy London marketplace. Dr. Winston was pretty sure the purple fluid was harmless stuff, for it tasted strangely like kiwis, and kiwis never killed anyone. But the liquid purple shocked the people of London and they crowded around. To make matters worse, his god damned iPhone slipped out of his robes and they became doubly interested. That’s when things really went wrong.

The young fool started taking “selfies” with the local populace, and the auto-flash went off and blinded them as he took it. Dr. Winston had tried to intervene, but the people mobbed Thomas and begged to know what it was. Initial guesses from the peasants and merchants varied, and at first many thought it was a lavish gift from the Indies, brought by way of the Silk Road. Eventually, the general consensus landed on it being a holy relic, gifted to the English by Pope Benedict XIV to be displayed in Westminster Abbey to commemorate the completion of her rising western towers. If he’d had a chance to speak, Dr. Winston would have professed to the masses that they were *all* correct, and that he and Thomas had great business to attend to and needed to make haste. But, of course, Thomas was excited, and when teenagers get excited they tend to make poor decisions.

Smiling, Thomas asked for space while Dr. Winston tried to scramble through the stinking peasants and end the madness. Instead, Thomas scrolled through his photos and brought up the selfies. He called an older gentleman over, and with eyes wet and lips trembling, the old boy hobbled over and looked down at the luminescent screen, expecting to see God.

He saw himself.

The old man dropped dead of a heart attack right where he’d stood, but not before uttering the one word that would seal their fate.

**“WITCH!!!”**

The people began to scream and stir, and a young woman ripped the iPhone out of Thomas’ nervous hands, looked down at the screen and above the excitement she yelled, “Fiend! The boy’s taken my soul! This demon has cursed me, cursed us all!”

All it took from that point were a few more people to look at the photo and they scooped him up, bound his hands with wet rags and dragged him off to the sheriff’s office. But not before he’d completed his final act of stupidity and started screaming at Dr. Winston to help him. Soon the mob had the both of them, and now here they were, chained to a wall and awaiting judgement.

“They’ll listen to reason. I’m sure of it, sir. Please don’t worry.”

“We’re in a time in which reason has little to do with it, Tom. These people still believe the earth is flat and that doctors can heal people by making them bleed and blow snot. Did you see the streets?”

“Filthy,” Thomas replied, wiggling his nose at the stench.

“Right! Steam power was invented here only a few decades ago, so all the piss and shit of London still runs down the streets like the River Seine instead of being pumped through a sewer system. We came fifty years too early, my boy. They’re still hanging people around these parts, and I’m not sure there’s a reasonable case we can make that will change that.”

“We’ll see,” Thomas replied confidently. He hadn’t given up hope, and Dr. Winston admired his young and foolish stupidity.

Hope sprung anew in Dr. Winston a few hours later when the jailer lumbered over to the door and inserted his key into the lock. But it didn’t last long, for apparently the evidence against them had been so robust that the trial had occurred without them even being present. A handwritten note was handed to both of them, proclaiming in bold lettering they were to be hanged that very day in the same marketplace they’d appeared a day earlier. At the bottom of each letter was a line in which, the jailer told them, they had to write their names for the official records. He then passed them an ink-dipped quill. Dr. Winston penned his name with a shaking hand.

So this is how it would all end. After a hundred or more trips through time and space and he was to die by hanging in a dingy London marketplace? He looked over at Thomas, so young and bright, and he felt a pang of guilt rack his entire body. What had he been thinking bringing such a young lad?

“What is it you wrote there?” Dr. Winston said, looking down at Thomas’ letter.

“Hmm?”

“It says Thomas Paine! Your last name is Truffle!” Thomas furrowed his brow in confusion, but before he could look back down at his writing the jailer snatched the papers away from them, threw them each a chunk of bread and returned to his jailer’s desk on the free side of the bars. Dr. Winston put his head in his hands and began to weep, enraged not only because he was about to hang from his neck, but because the sixteen year old boy genius was calm as glass and he was bawling like a babbling baby.

Hooded they walked down the streets of London, and the crowd jeered and threw rotten fruit and small rocks at them, reveling in the excitement of the execution.

As their hoods were removed and they were led up the stairs to the hanging block, Thomas whispered to Dr. Winston: “Give me your wrist.”

Dr. Winston looked down at his wrist and saw the faint glow of the implant beneath his skin. It was usually their way home, but the return time was permanently set to a week and they’d only been in London a few days. He wished now, more than ever, that he could reprogram the implant to activate whenever he’d pleased. But it was a safety precaution. A week was enough time to enjoy the past, but not enough time to completely destroy it. It also forced time travellers to use caution, for with a magic button to take them home whenever they pleased, who knew what kind of trouble people would get themselves in?

“Sir, your wrist!” Dumbfounded, Dr. Winston obeyed. Thomas offered his own wrist and then he was suddenly yanked away, but not before whispering something unheard into the implants as their dim lights connected through skin. Dr. Winston felt his wrist get unusually warm.

“What did you do?” Dr. Winston barked as they took their positions above the trap doors. He was so interested in Thomas that he almost forgot he was about to hang for witchcraft. That was until he felt the noose slip tight around his neck.

“You’ll be okay. Just give it a minute,” Thomas said, winking up at him. “It’s a failsafe. You didn’t read the manual did you, sir?”

“Manual? Manual?! I built the damned machine!” he snapped. But it was true; he hadn’t read the manual.

“I see. Well I won’t be coming with you, sir.”

“Wha –? Won’t be coming with me? Thomas, what have you done?”

“Stop this at once!” screamed a voice from the crowd, waving a piece of paper in the air. “If you dare pull the lever on that boy, I’ll have you gutted apple to button!”

“Who speaks? Name yourself!” the gallows priest bellowed, enraged by the interruption. The crowd went silent.

“My name is Benjamin Franklin. Thomas Paine is coming with me.”

Ben Franklin? The Ben Franklin? Dr. Winston was stunned into disbelief, but when he looked down at Thomas, there was a knowing there. He’d known Ben Franklin was coming for him. But how?

Had his youthful optimism been something more?

And then it clicked.

“Thomas Paine! The philosopher! The American revolutionary!” he exclaimed as Thomas was unbound and led down the steps. And then he felt the sharp pull.

Dr. Winston was sucked back through the nether, returned to his experimental lab in Dallas, Texas with a red rope line around his neck and tears in his eyes.

For the rest of his days he spent his waking hours in the libraries learning about Thomas Paine: political theorist, founding father of America, and the boy that nearly killed him in the slummy streets of 1750 London.

THE END

# There had to be a reason

Sam still wasn’t sure why she had been sent from 2016 to 1750, but there had to be a reason.

Her latest theory was that she needed to use her knowledge of twenty-first century science to influence the industrial revolution and educate people about climate change. At thirty-two years old, Sam was in her prime – educated, not yet completely cynical, and full of energy. Unfortunately, she was also confined to bed, hacking up blood.

She lay in a windowless room under a pile of scratchy wool blankets and on top of a colony of bed bugs. The pain of their bites was nothing compared to her despair at her suspicion that she had tuberculosis, it would kill her, and she had no way to get an antibiotic. Not for the first time, she wished that she hadn’t avoided the medical field like the plague.

So Sam shut herself in this room in the alchemist’s attic, refusing to allow anyone entry. She’d even shoved her desk in front of the door before she got too weak to move. Sam had tried to explain the concepts of bacteria and contagion, but nobody had understood. Still, she had included it in her papers, hoping that someone would find them and understand. Maybe those papers were all she needed to fulfill her purpose.

“Is that what you think?” Without thinking, Sam rolled over painfully to look at the door. Nobody was there.

Great. She was starting to hear things. She didn’t think that was a symptom of tuberculosis, but maybe it was. Or maybe she had something else. A virus? Could she still pull out of this? Should she be drinking more fluids? She still had a few glass bottles of boiled water.

“Even if you recover, you can’t make a difference.”

That voice really did not sound like it was in her head. And she didn’t like its attitude. Of course she could make a difference! Sam was from the twenty-first century and even her patchwork knowledge was better than what they had in 1750. She just had to find the right people to put the right pieces together to make everyone else’s lives better.

“Do you even know how history works?”

“What is going on?” She paid the price for speaking, body wracked by an extended coughing fit.

“Don’t talk. I can obviously read your mind. There’s not much going on in there when you’re coughing, and it’s not nearly as interesting as your thoughts are.”

Sam’s eyes shifted around the room. This was weird.

“So is that fact that you’re even here. An event like the one that brought you here has such a low probability, even I’m tempted to call it zero.”

Sam agreed.

“Name’s Plank. I’m a constant presence.”

Plank? Did that mean it was in the floor? The walls were poorly insulated brick, so that didn’t really make sense. Not that it made sense for it to be in the floor either. She was going mad.

“You don’t get my joke.” The voice was clearly disappointed. It sighed exaggeratedly. “Plank. Constant. Planck’s constant.”

*Six point six two six times ten to the minus thirty-four kilogram meters squared per second.* Her physicist’s mind recited the value instinctively, like a photon radiating from a black body.

“Yes, yes. I know what Planck’s constant is.” The voice sounded exasperated.

Sam had taken up reciting physical constants lately as a mantra so that she wouldn’t forget her scientific knowledge. She would need every scrap she could remember to influence the industrial revolution. So far, remembering had proved to be the easy part. The bigger problem was getting people to listen to her and to help her fill in the gaps between 1750 technology and particle accelerators.

“No, that’s not the problem. You’ll never be able to change the course of history.”

*Yes, I can.* Great. Now she was talking back to the voice.

“Of course you’re talking back to me. We’re having a conversation.”

Sam sighed, and subjected herself to another coughing fit. Her blood-splattered handkerchief was soaked.

“I told you not to do that.”

Sam glared at the disembodied voice. She hoped it could see.

“I can’t see, but I perceive the sentiment.”

*Good enough.*

“Did you know that your age matches the average life expectancy of a person in this time period? Dying at thirty-two was not an unusual occurrence.”

Was that supposed to make her feel better? No, don’t get angry. There’s a reason you’re here, and you’ll pull through.

“There you go again, believing that there’s a reason you’re here. Why do you think that?”

*Because everything happens for a reason. God does not play dice with the universe.* Sam loved quoting Einstein.

“He does not, that is true. If low probability events could occur frequently, then the concepts of Newtonian mechanics wouldn’t hold true. Only rarely do macro-scale events occur that violate Newtonian mechanics – so rarely that humans have never witnessed one.”

*But they do occur?* Sam was so enraptured by this concept that she forgot to think of the voice as crazy. Sam was already trying to think of experiments where she could test this idea.

“Yes, they do. And it is my job to make sure they never change anything on the macro-scale.”

*Huh?*

“Like you said, God does not play dice with the universe.”

*So there is a reason I’m here?* Hope welled in Sam’s chest. *I’m going to get better? Or if I don’t, someone will read my papers?*

“No. Remember, it’s my job to make sure that low probability events don’t change anything on the macro-scale.”

Confusion overwhelmed any attempt for Sam to create a coherent response.

“You humans are so limited in your thinking. You probably thought we were talking about physics.”

Sam stared.

“You seem confused. Let me explain. We were talking about history. You tunneled from your time to another point in the historical timeline. It was a very low probability event, and it is my job to make sure that your presence here does not change the overall timeline of history.”

Sam’s nerdiness prevailed in her thinking. Did time really work that way? Could you really tunnel to different points in the space-time continuum? For her to have done that, so many individual particles would have had to tunnel at the exact same moment in time. That was so improbable as to be impossible.

“Yes, that’s what I said.”

But it had happened! There had to be a reason for all of those statistical anomalies to occur at the exact same time! There had to be!

In Sam’s excitement, her breathing grew heavier and triggered another coughing fit. When she recovered, the voice was speaking again.

“There does not have to be a reason. Just because a number approaches zero does not mean that it is zero. But I have to ensure that these kinds of events don’t impact the macro-scale.”

*Why? Concepts like those expressed through Newtonian mechanics are just a model; they can be adapted, just like we adapted our notions of physics once quantum mechanics was discovered. They don’t necessarily accurately represent reality; they just represent the current state of human thinking regarding reality.*

Sam’s brain was firing on all neurons now. She kept thinking. *Hey, you, the voice, you don’t even fit into any of the models of human thinking of my time. Though,* she added as a wry aside, *you might fit the models of human thinking of this time.*

“This has gone too far.”

Sam started coughing again, expelling globules of liquid from her body. It started gently, rose to wracking violence, wheezing and trembling, and then tapered again. She had drowned in her own fluids.

\*

Plank hated having to manipulate events that directly, but it was a highly probable outcome anyway. All Plank had to do was accelerate the timeline of Sam’s death.

It had one last task to accomplish before leaving. Having a lit kerosene lamp fall onto the stack of Sam’s papers was another highly probable event in 1750. Plank stayed long enough to make sure the papers were consumed.

It didn’t know why it had been given the task of ensuring that extremely low probability occurrences didn’t impact events on the scale of human civilization, but it didn’t question God either.

Everything happened for a reason.

# To Dominate The World

“Kaaaap” the lookout’s shout came as the man woke up in his cot.

Later he was standing on the poopdeck of the “Nuive Brabanter” as she was towed into the harbour. Even if it was his first time to die Kaap and the small primitive harbour town, he hoped to find the thing he was looking for in its narrow streets.

He was looking for loyalty. He understood that loyalty was the hard to find in this day and age, and he would have to be inventive to find it. But it was the first step in in his plan to dominate the world or at least a small part of it.

The plan was to first get a core of loyal men, there probably would be destitute men from different ships or desperate men from the rest of the world arriving to Die Kaap. Perhaps he could go to India to get some boys he could train in language and in war.

He wasn’t in a hurry, better to do it right the first time because there would not be a second chance. He wanted at least a full battalion of fighting men and support wagons and dependants of an equal number when he marched north. He remembered from the history books that Jameson had marched north with six hundred men, so he thought if he doubled that he would make it, even though he did not have any machine guns.

To dominate the world or create a nation would cost money and there was only one place that was unclaimed and full of money, he knew. That was the area north of the Cape of Good Hope and the great diamond mine at the place that would be Kimberly and its neighbouring areas of gold deposits.

He assumed that his enterprise would come into conflict with the natives, the Shonas, the Zulus or even the Matabeles. He could not remember which tribes inhabited the area where he wanted to go, but that was for later. His thoughts were interrupted by the Captain.

“Mynheer, Ve haf arrifed” the Captains English was poor but the man’s Dutch was worse, much worse. “Thank you Captain Wilders. I want keep my bags on your ship while I look for a tavern”. The Captain frowned, “ Off courze mynheer, Vee fill leaf in too days morning tide” Wilders gave the man a short bow and walked back down midships shouting orders to facilitate the unloading. The man was aware of the Captains discomfort with having a Supercargo from outside the Dutch East India Company aboard. But he left the ship soon after the conversation to find a tavern and ultimately… loyal men.

The man wore clothes that marked him as a Dutchman and a rich one at that. A beautiful wide black leather belt held his weapons, a cutlass, two pistols and an old seax knife. His brown pantaloons were tucked into a pair of knee high boots. He was very pleased with his appearance but every step increased his nervousness about his plans. He realised he did not have the comfortable swagger of the sailors that mostly filled the streets and made him stand out, uncomfortably so.

There were others in the narrow streets of course, supercilious merchants, tanned farmers, the occasional drunk sitting in the gutter, domestic and imported whores advertising their goods. He tried to look as he belonged so he would not be bothered by anyone. He kept looking for a tavern and men he could recruit.

Finally he saw a sign that he interpreted as tavern. It was as he had pictured in his mind, dark, and smelling of unwashed bodies and spilled spirits. He looked for an unoccupied table, found one and sat down. As casually as he could he looked around the bar, he saw plenty of men eligible to the category; down on their look but none gave him an impression of being loyal. He was not really sure of what to look for.

But now here I am stranded in time so I’d better do what I came south for, nothing ventured nothing gained, he thought. As his mind was made up for the hundredth time, he felt instantaneous doubt again. Maybe I should go back home to England and become a rich and well known physician, he smiled, Ironic… everything Mom wanted for me but I got stuck in the wrong time, his thought continued.

During his moment of self-doubt, an obvious sailor entered and sauntered up to the counter. “Pint o’ Grog” he said as he looked around the room. His eyes lingered on the Man, turned to the barman.

“Ver dat?” He spoke in the common sailor tongue, a mix of Dutch, German and English. The barman shrugged “Nein Kenst” his laconic answer was about what the sailor expected. There is money to be made here, he thought. He walked up to the table.

“Kann I Zitten?” he asked and saw how the man started as he looked up at him. “Of…of course” the man stuttered. As the old sea dog sat down he saw how the man put calmer and braver face on. “Oh you’re English, good good,” George smiled, “too many of these bloody Dutch bastards here anyway,” he nodded at the other tables. “Yes, yes you’re right there are many foreign bastards here” The man tried to form an opinon of the sailor opposite him while agreeing with him.

Was he here to take his money? That was the man’s first thought. The other thought was, can he be trusted?

“I’m George” the seaman said, “Just came in with the Unicorn” he nodded towards the docks.” I needed a grog before we start to unload.” George spoke casually, but kept his eyes on the man to see his reactions to his outrageous statement. He did not see any normal reaction. So this man is completely ignorant of ships and trading despite his clothing, his thoughts continued.

“So why are you in die Kaap sir?” He added the sir just to keep the stranger calm. The man just looked back at George.

Can I trust him? You have to trust someone, you stupid git! But this man has nothing to lose if he tries to rob and or kill me and I haven’t seen any authorities since I stepped of the ship. The man’s inner dialogue kept on going, trust… or not to trust that was literally the million pound question. How can I reach the Kimberly area without trust?

He decided and felt the usual doubt immediately but kept on going, “I’m here because I know where there is a mountain of gold and diamonds are buried and I’m looking for men to help me and share in the riches” his decision was made. Now he could only watch the reactions of the other man.

He’s a real noddy this one, George thought. Gold and diamonds… what kind of idiot does he take me for? But as he looked back at the clearly deranged man, he only saw a sincere face. George hesitated when he was about to stand up.

“So you mean to tell me that you… and you alone, knows where there’s gold and precious stones buried? Is that what you’re telling me mate?” The man nodded, still in his wide-eyed honesty.

“So you know where some pirate or others buried a treasure?” “Oh no, It isn’t buried by someone. It’s in the ground, we have to dig a mine to get to it.” Again the sincere face.

George, who had robbed and swindled countless victims in most of the harbours he had visited, had never met anyone like this man. His sincerity got to George, he tried to drown it in his cynicism but obvious positive feelings about the story kept surfacing.

George found himself asking the obvious question. “So where is it?” The sincere man tilted his head. “It’s up north, beyond die Tafelberg and north of the next mountains, but there is a lot.” He smiled. ”A lot,” he added and kept smiling.

The man was not a fool even if George might have thought so. But in the spirit of the moment he had decided that he was going to trust this sailor.

You have to trust someone, he thought. He saw how the sailor tried to disguise it, but George believed him now. The eyes gave him away. The younger man realised that it was not as hard as he had feared to read present day men.

Perhaps I can do this, he thought, perhaps I can dominate the world or perhaps I’ll go back to London and become a physician like mother wants me to…. up there in the future.

# Patent Pending

"All rise!" The bailiff's shout announced the arrival of Judge Miller, ruler of Delaware's small court.

Bill Demidov stood among people wearing everything from moth-eaten suits to threadbare rags. The judge, a short man in a long powdered wig, entered and sat. Bill swallowed his nervousness.

It wasn't every day you filed a patent application that changed your life.

To his left, a woman in soot-stained clothes coughed into a handkerchief. Behind him, Bill sensed workers from the factories and canneries eying his fine clothes and judging him. Thinking him soft.

He was not soft. All these people had to deal with was other immigrants and low wages. They had never labored under a hot sun on an island farming camp.

"Be seated!" the bailiff boomed, and Bill sat with the others in a massive creaking of seats.

The courtroom was drafty, the windows frosted. To Bill, the very idea of "cold" was bizarre--in his time, the tiny islands remaining on Earth no longer experienced "cold"--but he knew he didn't like it. Cold was annoying. It chewed on your skin and made your insides hurt.

If all went right today, he would never return to the cramped working islands of 2182. People presented claims as Bill toyed with his pocketwatch that wasn't a pocketwatch. The reason he was here.

Two tenants accused each other of stealing firewood. One man accused another of misrepresenting the age of a packhorse who dropped dead. A woman in fine clothes claimed another stole her prize hunting dog. Through it all, Judge Miller listened, questioned, and dispensed justice.

Before the judge got to his case, Bill heard the double doors at the back of the courtroom creak open. He turned with many others to evaluate the newcomer. Who was coming into the courtroom late?

It was a tall, thin man with gold-rimmed glasses and a fancy suit. He eyed those in the room like one would eye a paddock of growcows, then sat on the edge of a bench. Probably some rich man's lawyer.

"Bill Garrison!" The bailiff's voice boomed. "Approach the bench!"

Bill stood. This was the day he finalized his patent application, the single most important event in his sad life. He couldn't screw this up, could he? The patent was reviewed and approved. This was a formality.

Bill approached the bench clutching his own small suitcase. All he had to do was present the paperwork and get the judge to approve it, and then he would have his patent. He would finally be rich.

"You have your paperwork in order?" Miller asked.

"Yes, your honor," Bill said, reaching for his briefcase.

"Ah, uh, excuse me." The man with the gold-rimmed glasses stood. "May I approach?"

"Why?" Miller sounded bored.

"My client, a Mister Franklin of Philadelphia, wishes to contest the patent filed by Bill Garrison."

Bill's heart sank. How was this possible? How had Franklin even learned he was here?

"Approach," Miller said. "This might actually be interesting."

"Your honor," Bill started, but Miller raised a hand to shush him.

"Your name," Miller demanded.

"Thomas File, sir."

"Why are you in my court today, Mister File?"

"It is my contention," File said, narrowing his eyes behind his thick lenses, "that Bill Garrison, a former employee of Mister Franklin's, stole Mister Franklin's work."

"Now hold on!" Bill said, as that was ludicrous. "I never worked for Benjamin Franklin." Two years in this muddy backward time was more than enough. "I've never even met him. Whatever this man claims--"

"Mister Franklin has been researching his pointed lightning rod conductor for more than four years," File said, "and I have correspondence dating back to 1746. You first filed your patent in 1748, did you not?"

"Still filed before you," Bill said, his stubborn streak kicking in. "If anyone stole anything, he stole my idea." That was almost true.

File opened his briefcase. "Your honor, here is a diagram Mister Franklin drew for his invention. Note the date and details."

The bailiff passed the document to Miller, who squinted and frowned. "What is this, a weathervane?"

"It's a lightning rod!" Bill said, because he couldn't let this frustrating little man steal his idea--or rather, his idea to steal this idea. "It protects buildings from lightning by channeling it to the ground, instead!"

"If you would kindly compare Mister Franklin's diagram to that provided by Mister Garrison," File said.

"What?" Bill frowned at him.

"You will find them identical," File said.

For the first time, Bill smiled. This man was just making things up! The lightning rod design was his own--he had drawn it based on designs on the worker tents--which meant File had no case.

"That's completely untrue." Bill opened his briefcase and produced his diagrams. "If you'll review my design, your honor, you'll clearly see … that …"

Bill stared at the papers. The papers that weren't his papers. These were Benjamin Franklin's originals.

What were they doing in his briefcase?

The bailiff plucked the papers from his hands before Bill could do anything more than gawk.

"Now wait a minute," Bill said, but Miller was already comparing. "Your honor, those aren't mine!"

"That's obvious," Miller said, shaking his head. "Next time you steal your boss's idea, Mister Garrison, you might consider blotting out the initials."

"But I didn't--"

"Your patent claim is denied." Miller hammered his gavel. "Mister File, are you bringing charges?"

"No, your honor," File said.

"You sure?" Miller looked dubious. "Didn't he steal your client's design?"

"In my client's opinion, justice has been served." File closed his briefcase and bowed his head.

"Very well," Miller said. He glanced at his bailiff. "Next case!"

Bill hurried after File, who was already leaving. He caught up with the man outside the courtroom, grabbing his arm. "How did you do that?"

File pulled his arm away. "Do what, Mister Garrison?"

"How did you sneak those papers into my briefcase?"

Gradually, File's flat face curved into a satisfied smile. "You really should be more careful with your things, Mister *Demidov*." He produced a silver pocketwatch that wasn't a pocketwatch. A pocketwatch just like Bill's.

Bill gasped as the man used his real name. "You're from…" He lowered his voice. "The future?"

"Did you really think you could steal from one of the most well-known personalities of the 1700s?"

"He stole the lightning rod design from my ancestor!" Bill said, standing up straight. "Akinfiy Demidov designed the lightning rod years before Franklin filed his patent!"

"You can't change the timeline because Benjamin Franklin beat your ancestor to court."

"But he stole the design first!" Garrison said. "Who sent you?"

"Who do you think sent me?"

"No one knows how to build time machines! I only developed the design two years ago!"

"And your first action, having invented time travel, was to try to conduct patent fraud?"

Bill grimaced. "It was a first step! Did you steal my design?"

"Your design," File said, "was uncovered in 2294, over one hundred years after you mysteriously escaped from your island work camp." File opened a pocketwatch with luminous numbers and dials that looked much nicer than Bill's own, primitive time machine. "We have, of course, made improvements."

"But how?" Bill demanded. "I only left two years ago!"

"You must understand, Mister Garrison, that once time travel was invented, the concept of "years" became irrelevant. Once we could defend the timestream, we would *always* defend the timestream."

"What do you mean, defend the timestream?"

"Two-hundred forty years after you invented your device, President Ivanapolos founded the Bureau of Time Management to stop plots just like yours. Our experts believe tampering with the established timeline is simply too dangerous."

"People know I designed a time machine?" Perhaps his fortune could be made in the future, not the past. "I'm famous?" Bill felt hope again.

"Your name is now taught in all orbital universities. You are known across the solar system, Mister Demidov, as the inventor of time travel."

Bill couldn't believe it. "Am I rich in the future?" Could this all be true?

"No, Mister Demidov." File clicked his pocketwatch. "You are in jail."

Bill blinked. "Huh?"

"Timestream tampering is punishable by life in prison," File said, and that's when the world dissolved.

When it returned, Bill's word was a small cell with a soft-looking bed, a tiny window overlooking a blue planet covered in water, and a single metal toilet. Bill's pocketwatch was gone. So was Mister File.

"Wait a minute!" Bill shouted. "You can't do this to me! I'm the inventor of time travel!"

Vents hissed as gas filled the room, and then Bill didn't feel upset. He felt happy. His little white cell was the best little white cell in the world.

He settled on his bed, took a deep breath, and closed his eyes. He dreamed of warm skies and open seas. For the first time since he'd been born, he was content.

He forgot all about his time machine.

THE END

# When I Went Back to 1750, A Villanelle

When I went back to 1750

It was never my intention to stay

And look at all the trouble it caused me

I sought to see the rise of industry

The changes it wrought on that long-gone day

When I went back to 1750

But then a priest saw my technology

He mistook me for an angel gone stray

And look at all the trouble it caused me

I had a feeling they would murder me

Seeing me as a devil, do did they

When I went back to 1750

Never gave a chance for diplomacy

They raised up pitchforks made for turning hay

And look at all the trouble it caused me

I'd missed the door of opportunity

I reached for home, but they chased me away

And so I stayed in 1750

And look at all the trouble it caused me

# The Witches Bottle

"Good luck and Godspeed, Peregrine." Chung said as he strapped the glass lid down on the machine. He then pushed a sequence of numbers on the keypad. "Hope you find the key to that grimoire."

Peregrine checked the tablet strapped to her forearm. 10...9...8... the countdown had begun. A red light flashed an urgent message on the terminal on the opposite wall. Chung walked over and checked the message. He turned on his heel and threw his hand up. His mouth opened. That was all Peregrine saw. She was tumbled back in time.

1750, August, Virginia Colony

The mid-afternoon sun drew long shadows on the log cabins porch. Peregrines stomach churned for several moments before calming. She shot a quick message back to Chung, checking the mission status. She noticed the porch railing covered in morning glory vines, new growth over years of old growth. Lodged in the spaces, tangled in the vines were round bottom glass jars with something inside. Peregrine wasn't sure what.

A single word, GO, flashed on the tablet.

Peregrine stepped inside through the open door. Thank you August heat. An herbal smoky scent filled the house. She took in the room. She noticed an ajar door and along the same wall a red brick fireplace. There were a couple of chairs, a table and desk that filled the floor space. The ceiling was packed with herb bundles in various states of dryness. Round orange disk flowers caught her eye, Tansy, her favorite flower because they reminded her of little suns. She looked but did not find the grimoire or anything that might help.

She slipped through the door to the smaller room. Lilura Cord, writer of the grimoire, slept on the bed. Peregrine bent down to study her face. A slight jagged scar curved around her mouth. She wondered its cause. She looked up to her eyes and jumped back. Lilura's dark eyes looked up at her. Peregrine shifted herself to the side and held her breath. Lilura's eyes did not follow her. Double-checking that Lilura was unable to see or hear her, Peregrine waved and clapped her hands in front of Lilura with no reaction.

Peregrine walked around the bed. A wash stand stood in the corner but she was interested in the chest of drawers. Some cloth poked out of a partially open drawer, a few books laid on top but not the grimoire.

Lilura stood before the wash stand and brushed her hair. Peregrine felt a bit trapped in the corner. She climbed over the corner of the bed to avoid bumping into her. She looked back toward Lilura and their eyes meet in the mirror. Sweat broke out across Peregrines forehead. She moved and again Lilura's eyes did not follow her. She chided herself but still felt like Lilura may have noticed her. She left the room.

A moment later Lilura came out she held a basket and went to the fireplace. She lifted a brick and pulled the grimoire out of its hiding spot. She slipped it into the basket along with a few of the herbs and a glass bottle.

The bleating of goats drew her attention. Lilura peeked out the door to see what they were on about. She set the basket down just outside the door and came back inside. She grabbed the broom that hung over the door on her way back to the bedroom.

Peregrine started to follow but saw that she was quietly chanting and sweeping the room. Peregrine watched her. The closer she came the more she felt a slight push with each sweep. She wondered what the goats were bleating at, she turned and walked out the door.

A small girl in an apron stood near the goats. She would reach into her pocket and toss a blackberry to each of the goats and then one for herself. She talked to them as well but Peregrine could not make out what was said.

"Edi, get over here." Lilura called from the porch. Edi tossed the last of the berries away from herself. The goats went after them. When she reached Lilura they sat together on the porch steps. "What goodies have you brought me today?

Edi pulled a bundle from a different pocket. Peregrine moved closer to see. Edi placed the bundle on her lap and unwrapped it. There were several chunks of quartz and a walnut-size blue stone.

Peregrine tried to use the tablet to record a picture of them sitting together but the screen glitched.

Lilura reached over and picked up the blue stone. "Amazonite. A very happy coincidence. This will do nicely for something I need to take care of." Lilura said grinning at Edi. "You have a knack of knowing what I need." She took the cloth and rewrapped the stones.

Peregrine noticed the tablet screen cleared and got her shot of them on the porch together. While Lilura questioned Edi about her family, Peregrine searched the properties of amazonite. It was used to help with feelings of loneliness, to dispel negative energy and aggravation, and to protect from electromagnetic pollution. It was also a lucky stone. Peregrine wondered what Lilura planned to use it for.

"Mom's cough is the worst of it. She hacks and hacks." Edi said.

"Come with me, let's see what we can find." Lilura said and stood. They went up into the woods, Peregrine followed. They stopped at a bunch of white-flowered plants. "We know this will help a cough." Lilura said, and indicated the plants. "Look closely, notice anything that may be a clue for something else this plant could treat?"

Edi got down and examined the flowers, leaves and stem. "The leaves seem to wrap around the stem a bit. Almost like they are protecting it." She tilted her head, "It reminds me of a cast. Could it help with setting a bone?" Edi asked.

Lilura chuckled. She gave Edi a little squeeze. "That's it exactly, it's even called boneset. Now, lets collect a few leaves from each plant. "

Peregrine searched boneset. It would help a bone recover by increasing blood flow to the fibrous membrane covering the surface of bones. It was also used to protect people from ghost sickness, an illness thought to have been brought on by extended contact with the dead.

They worked quietly for a bit. "Make a strong tea for your mother three times a day. Make sure she drinks it all down. I need to finish up my chores so we'll have to go our separate ways."

Edi gave Lilura a quick hug and set off. Lilura made her way back down toward the house. Peregrine followed. Every now and again Lilura would stop to pick a leaf or two of this or that. When they made it back to the yard, Lilura tended the animals and worked on other never-ending chores of a homestead. Peregrine used the time and explored the area.

Peregrine sat on a stump and watched the sun set, the sky was afire with orange, reds and purples. The sound of footsteps on the porch drew her attention, Lilura headed into the house. Peregrine took one last look at the sky and followed. Just as she was to step through the door she felt a resistance that stopped her. At almost the same time Lilura came back out the door. A satisfied look on her face as she walked past her.

Peregrine stopped for a second. She tried to reach into the house and was unable. She spun around to see LiLura closing a salt circle. Peregrine ran to leap off the porch but slammed into an invisible wall. What the hell. She felt along the circle. Several times. It was sturdy without any give.

Lilura swayed at the bottom of the steps. She chanted holding a carved bone in her hand. Laid out on the step was a rounded bottom glass bottle and the wrapped bundle Edi had given her. Peregrine brought the tablet up and sent an urgent message to Chung and then one to herself GO BACK. The tablet glitched and went dark. Peregrine remembered the flashing GO message.

She saw that Lilura had wrapped the amazonite on the bone. Lilura brought it to her lips and leaned forward till the end was just inside the circle. Lilura sucked on the other end. Peregrine swatted at the bone thing but it caught her. The suction pulled her into it. She fought and kicked but to no avail. She had been wrenched into the bone. Her world was still for a moment. Then a big gush of breath pushed her out of the bone and into the waiting glass bottle.

"Stop following me." Lilura said, and placed the inescapable round bottom bottle down.

Lilura put a mix of herbs in her mouth and chewed, while she unwound the amazonite from the bone. She took the wad of herbs from her mouth and used it with the amazonite to cap the bottle. She sealed Peregrine inside. She walked over to the morning glory vine and wrapped the bottle tight. She made sure to wedge it into a secure spot.

Peregrine laid down the tears flowed as she realized what was in the other bottles.

# Wrong Turn

Geek instructions can’t recall,

Something something science…

Natives getting restless now,

Go Go self-reliance!

What year Mister Franklin sir,

Seventeen and Fifty?!

Have you caught your lightning yet sir?

Flag’s still British, pity.

Your key will work, I’m quite sure,

You’ll survive and then some.

Statesman, Printer, Publisher,

Almanacs quite handsome.

This my fancy wagon’s wheel,

Needs your lightning badly,

Though from empty farmer’s field

It cannot move, sadly.

Where it goes I must not say.

Trust me no place better.

Rule of fools again gains sway,

You’re best here unfettered.

# Fey Intervention

Screw magic, he wished he was home. Or at least had clothes to push back the chill.

“Send me back, now,” Marcus shouted. He struggled to conceal his nudity, but his companion showed little care for the sight of a naked human.

“I have told you, I can not,” the strange fey creature to bring Marcus through time replied, its a voice sounded of a chorus speaking as one.

“Then at least give me some clothes. Who kidnaps people while they're showering anyways, through time at that.”

Markus had a hard time pinning down its features as they continued to shift from moment to moment as they had for the past hour. Sometimes subtle, like the color of its eyes, other times its whole body would shift. One moment it was a tiny crone whose wrinkles carved deep canyons across its face, the next a young boy with large, shining eyes.

“I did not pick you, the spell did. It was just fulfilling my needs. I did not realize it could pull one through time.” If it heard his request for clothing it ignored him.

“And those needs are?”

“To save magic, to save my world and my people. It is dying out as you humans spread, tearing up the land. While it's been slow, I have seen visions. Of a world where your kind rape and pillage the land without care as my people die out.” It stared as if to pierce his soul as it shifted to a young woman whose long hair trailed like a wedding veil. “I can tell by your silence this is true. You must help stop it.”

Marcus knew the future it spoke of, he lived in it everyday till it pulled him away. But what could he do. He was a no-name in 1750. He had no history, no power here. California and his hometown didn't exist yet, nor did his nation. He wasn't even sure he was on the same continent, it ignored him when he asked. All he knew was the trees which surrounded their clearing were changing and a crisp wind pushed against his skin.

Then there was the future to consider. He'd read enough stories about time-travel to know he could make things worse for the future, even wipe himself from existence. It would certain change the life he had back in his own time. A life he wanted to get back to and wouldn't risk.

“I can't, my family, they wouldn't exist if I did.”

“You can not return to them so why does this trivial point matter.”

“It certainly matters to me. If they don't exist I certainly won't and I'd rather avoid a paradox.”

“A what? Never mind, it does not matter. You need to do this. Only you can, it's why the spell chose you. You must know how or it would have picked another.”

“Well then your spell's was wrong. Even if I never see them again I won't mess up my family's future. My mom's only just found happiness again.”

“What is the happiness of one against the many. You are being selfish.”

“And what about you. You kidnapped me to save your people at the cost of my own. You care little for my life, just that it'll help your's continues.”

“You will help or there will be consequences.”

“Like there haven't already been some. I told you I can't,” Marcus said as he held his ground, “I won't. So do your worst, unless you'd rather I freeze to death? Save you the trouble.”

“Fine, but you underestimate me. If you are of no use to me than no help you shall receive. I cast you down to the land of your people so treasured. But with you I send a gift. A curse of babbling truth, yet none shall hold your words as such.”

Marcus felt his throat tighten, like it sought to crush his throat from across the clearing. His vision darkened, the last sight to behold its cruel smile.

“Good-bye, foolish mortal. I do hope you enjoy your new life.”

Screw magic.

# TIM TRIPPER, LOST IN TIME!

***Chapter 1: The Chronomotor***

Tim Tripper, boy genius, unrolled a thick electrical cable and began the final wiring of the Chronomotor. "Did you finish sewing the harness on Mr. Nibbles, Dad?" he asked. He tossed the empty spool toward a trash bin, but it bounced away and settled at the bottom of the short flight of garage steps.

Dr. Tripper glanced up from his work. "Make sure you clean up, Timmy. You know how Mother feels about messes." He made the last stitch, tied off the metallic thread, and held up Mr. Nibbles the hamster for inspection. The little fellow was outfitted in a special suit made from space-age aluminum foil to keep the time rays from turning him into something resembling a TV dinner. At least Tim hoped so. But that was what experiments were for.

"Now, I need a little peace, Timmy," said Dr. Tripper. "I have papers to grade." Tim's father was a history professor at State U., and a world-renowned expert on the history of the American colonies.

Tim worked intently for fifteen more minutes. He found a problem with the timing belt, which had arrived from Sears & Roebuck the day beofre. Tim pulled it back out and gave it a good oiling, then tossed the oil can into a wheel barrow he'd commandeered as a portable tool chest. He connected the phase stabilizer to the rotating pendulum with a solid, satisfying click.

After a year of planning and months of tinkering, the time machine was finally ready.

The Chronomotor filled the Tripper's garage from one end to the other, leaving just enough room for his dad's desk on one side and his mother's telescope on the other, plus a jumble of his earlier inventions jammed into the back: the glue gun from first grade, still attached to Mrs. Barr's chair; the flying bicycle from third grade, which the Russkies shot down over Moscow; the radio-controlled baseball he'd used to beat a team of bullies from the next town over. There was a pail of disappearing paint somewhere back there too, but he could never seem to find it.

Tim retrieved the hamster and put him in a small cage. "What do you think they'll make of Mr. Nibbles back in the year 1750, Dad?"

"Hmm?" mumbled Professor Tripper from between two towers of exam papers. He was lost in concentration, deep in what Mrs. Tripper called his Dark Hole.

Tim spun the airlock of the Chronomotor, and entered the capsule. (It had taken a lot of convincing for the Navy to give him a spare submarine hatch, but it had been worth it.) He placed the cage with Mr. Nibbles onto the small floor, and turned to the control panel. He set the echostat to "round trip" - between "one-way" and "repeat/random" - and the return timer for one hour. Carefully, he turned three large dials to the year "1750", the month "July", and the day "4". He planned to save 1776 for his own trip back in time. Finally, he set the starter switch so that the Chronomotor would set off as soon as the airlock door was closed.

The garage door opened, and Mrs. Tripper looked in on her husband and son. "Dinner's ready, boys," she said. "Oh, is the machine ready?"

She came down the short set of stairs, and her foot slipped on the empty cable spool. With a sharp cry, she lost her balance and fell onto the side of the wheel barrow, which shot across the room, smacking into the airlock door and slamming it closed with a fateful boom.

The Chronomotor rumbled, and the countdown display flared to knife. A deep thrum coursed across the floor of the capsule, running up Tim's legs into his whole body.

-10- He spun back to the control panel to

-9- cut off the power, but

-8- he realized he hadn't built the controls to allow inflight changes

-7- It was too late. Or maybe it wasn't.

-6- Mrs. Tripper pounded on the capsule door, yelling "Timmy?!"

-5- Tim pried off the control panel

-4- The world twisted. If he just

-3- but what if he made a mistake? Try this!

-2- No! The echostat sparked and the dial spun.

-1- Tim heard his mother scream his name.

The universe fell away.

***Chapter 2: The Echo Effect***

CRASH!

The Chronomotor slammed to a stop, shaking and sparking. Black fumes seeped out from joints and broken welds, rising up the walls. Tim shook his head, pushed up onto his knees, then snatched his palms up from the metal floor, which was growing burning hot. "OK, Tripper," he said to himself, taking a ragged breath. He stole a quick look at the time controls. The echostat was fried, but it looked jammed hard over to the "random" setting. He'd need time to figure out what that might mean. He grabbed the hamster cage, and spun the lock of the capsule, nearly falling out through the door. He scrubbed tears from his eyes and looked around at a 1750 he never expected.

1750: England ruled the American colonies, which were just beginning to feel the yoke pressing on their hard-working shoulders. Red Indians prowled the forests. George Washington was only eighteen. Where the Tripper house stood in present day, Tim's father said there lived a yeoman farmer with his wife and three sons, a quiet colonial farm not too close to anywhere, perfect for an explorer from the future.

But now Tim stood in a wide cobblestone square surrounded by handsome brick buildings that would have been at home in any small town of the future. A crowd of people lined a broad avenue that stretched into the distance and ended at a huge white house atop a green hill.

"Um. Hello?" said Tim, raising the hand that wasn't holding the hamster cage.

The crowd burst into cheers of "Huzzah! Huzzah!" and waved American flags that shouldn't have been around for another twenty-six years. A band struck up Yankee Doodle. Tim stared about in amazement, and noticed for the first time a banner pulled across the street announcing "Welcome Tim Tripper".

While the crowd cheered, an old man stepped forward and held out his hand. "Welcome, son. Welcome," he said.

"Pardon me, sir?" Tim said.

"I know, I know. You have many questions. I did too, but we get over it."

The man looked very familiar, but Tim couldn't think where he'd met him before. "My name is Timothy Tripper." The man smiled and nodded. "May I ask your name, sir?" said Tim.

"Oh sure, son. You can ask. But patience was never one of our strong points, was it?" The man turned to the crowd, which was still cheering and applauding and raised his voice. "Thank you, thank you, citizens of Tripperton! Your civic mindedness is a model for us all!" He poked Tim. "Wave again, son. They're here just for you."

Tim raised his hand and waved again. The crowd went wild. The old man took his arm and lead him up the wide avenue, between the lines of people. "Keep waving, keep waving," laughed the man. They left the brass band behind, but they were still the center of attention. Men and women bowed as they passed. Among all the commotion, Tim heard calls of "Happy Founder's Day" and "Number 100!"

A loud buzzing sound filled the sky above, drowning out the cheers. Tim watched astonished as a huge blimp, five hundred feet from tip to tail, glided past, propelled by a huge propellar. He turned to the old man. "Why, that's..!" he started.

"Yes, your design for the Hindenburg 2. It took us years, but we finally got a prototype working in 1747. You're seeing the U.S.S. Ticonderoga." The old man gazed after the skyship for a moment, then started walking again.

Tim thought furiously. His design! Remembering what the controls had looked like in the Chronomotor as it filled with smoke, he did the math in his head. It was a good thing he'd studied with the boffins at the Pentagon over the summer. He worked up a theory, tested it in his mind, and finally whistled in amazement. "How many of us are there?" he asked.

The old man chuckled. "Come, Tim, come. You can do better than that. Last year's Tim was just a little faster."

Tim ran more calculations. He created a range of possible input values for X, based on the degree of off-skew that the echo dial could have achieved. Then he remembered what the people on the crowd had been cheering, and whistled again. "One hundred? One hundred of us?"

"One hundred, yes, now that you've arrived. That's what happens when the echostat is jammed to random. The First Tim arrived in the year 1650. Things weren't nearly as organized then, as you can imagine." They'd reached the end of the street, and the white house stood high on the hill above them, the long lawn reaching up to it's broad, pillared front. A robot was clipping the yard. "Here we are. The White House."

"That seems a little unpatriotic, doesn't it, sir?"

"Oh well, you'll get used to how different things are. Now let's go up. The rest of the Tims are waiting to meet you."

Tim stopped the older Tim. "I'd very much like to meet them, sir. And I may just have some news they'll find interesting."

"Oh?" Tim looked at Tim with an indulgent smile. "You know we all say that."

Tim reddened, but he plunged on. "That may be. But the equation doesn't balance."

"Oh?" This time he sounded a little more interested.

"Each of us is from a different dimension, a different time line, right?"

"Yes, of course." They started up the walk way to the wide doors of the house.

"Well," said Tim, "There's one hundred Tim Trippers that have come through, but we're only from the positive universes. The negative universes are next." Tim saw the beautiful math coming together in his mind.

"Negative universes."

"Well --" Tim blushed deep red.

"Spit it out, son."

"I think there's more of coming, and the next one will be a girl."

The old man stared at him for a moment before cracking a broad smile. "Let's go in and tell them. They're going to love this." Tim had to rush to keep up.

THE END?

# Time Travelling Rule 67: Never forget the Colon. (Side Note: Fire = Bad)

“Professor Tanwell? I have a query.”

Tanwell looked up from his control board. “Yes? What is it, Phillip?”

“Well, the thing is… I know you’re supposed to be the expert on the nature of time-travel physics...” Phillip nervously scratched the back of his head, “...and you’re the one who built this time machine and knows every inch of it down to the nuts and bolts, but… well... I can't help but question one tiny thing.”

Tanwell raised an eyebrow. “Go on.”

“...Are you absolutely *certain* that bit’s supposed to be on fire?”

Tanwell calmly looked at his young assistant. He then looked at the small inferno that was currently enveloping the secondary generator. He then looked back to Phillip. “Would you believe me if I said yes?”

“Um… I don’t think I would, sir.”

“Well, would you believe me if I said I had more important things to deal with right now?”

"‘Not burning horribly to death in a fire’ feels like a pretty important issue, Professor.”

Tanwell took off his glasses and began carefully polishing one of the lenses. “Phillip, do you know what happens when an experimental time machine with two passengers explodes mid-travel due to massive console failure?”

“Not really, sir.”

Tanwell smiled gently. “That’s nice. Because NEITHER DO FUCKING I! NOW STOP DISTRACTING ME WHILE I’M FIXING THE CENTRAL CONSOLE!”

As if to punctuate his words, the console beneath him spat out a stream of sparks as the circuity inside began to melt. Tanwell hissed in pain and frustration before ripping the panel off and continuing his desperate work.

“So... Should I put out the fire while you’re working or-?”

Tanwell’s eyes nearly bulged out of his skull. “You need me to *ask* you to do that?!”

“I didn't think you'd want me touching anything. You get scary when you're angry.”

“...Phillip, if we don’t die in the next 10 minutes, I am going to take immense pleasure in bashing your head in with a fire extinguisher.”

"See, that's exactly the sort of thing I'm talking about." Phillip paused. “Although, how exactly would you measure ’the next 10 minutes’? Considering the whole 'time travel thing, 'the next 10 minutes' might be several decades in the future or-

“NOT THE FREAKING TIME, PHILLIP!"

“But if you think about it, the ‘freaking time’ is exactly what we’re already discussi-“ Phillip ducked to avoid the spanner thrown at his head. “Got it. Extinguish fire first. Terminology debate later. Where are the fire extinguishers?"

“Don’t have any.” Tanwell grunted.

“What? How come?”

“Because six months ago, I thought I could save money and reduce weight by not including them.” Tanwell scowled to himself. “Hence why our second trip, assuming we survive this one, will be to visit me of six months ago so I can slap some goddamn sense into him.”

“Okay. That said, if we don’t have any fire extinguishers, how would you have bashed my head in with one?”

“I WOULD IMPROVISE!”

“Fair enough.” Phillip said, taking off his coat and using to ineffectually beat at the flames. “So where are we going for our first trip, anyway?”

“Weren’t you listening at the brief?”

“Nah, I was playing Angry Birds on my phone. Figured it’d be more fun if it was a surprise. My current guess is the JFK Assasination. Everyone goes for that one.”

Tanwell wiped his brow. “God, what did I do to end up with an assistant this useless?”

“Well, you let my dad’s company sponsor your time machine and he threatened to withdraw funding unless I came along so-“

“IT WAS A RHETORICAL QUESTION, PHILLIP.”

Suddenly, the time machine shook violently and the engines let out a high-pitched shriek before growing still. Both men froze, as if afraid even the slightest movement would set something off.

“Was… it supposed to do that?”

“Oh I don’t know. Is the secondary generator supposed to be on fire?”

“…Maybe? You never gave me a clear answer on that.”

Tanwell muttered obscenities to himself as he checked the viewing screen. Then his eyes widened. “Holy crap. We made it. We arrived right on target. Safe and in one piece.”

The secondary console chose that moment to explode violently in a shower of sparks.

“…mostly.”

“That’s great!” Phillip clapped his hands. “We did it!”

Tanwell looked to be in mild shock as he repeated the words. “We did it. We’re the first people to travel through time…”

“Technically.” Phillip chimed in.

“…Technically?” Tanwell gave him a questioning look.

“Well, when it comes to travelling through time being the ‘first’ is kinda debatable considering all someone would need to do would be to travel back further in time and then-“

“You know what?” Tanwell said. “I’m in such a good mood, I’m not even going to hit you for that.” He chuckled. “Now we need to hurry outside and make sure we-“

“Ooh! Ooh! Wait!” Phillip interrupted, dashing to the door. “I changed my mind! Don’t tell me where we are yet. I want to go out there and guess.”

Tanwell snorted. “Well, if you want. I doubt you’ll be that impressed. After all, it’s only-“

“Oh wow!” Phillip said, peering out of the narrow doorway. From outside, the quiet murmur of busy streets could be heard. “We really went back quite far, didn’t we? What is this, late Renaissance period?”

“Hah. Funny.” Tanwell snorted, tapping in a few rudimentary shutdown procedures into the time machine’s frazzled computers. “If our destination disappoints you, you don't need to be sarcastic about it.”

Phillip gave him a confused look. “What do you mean by that? Why would I be sarcastic?”

“Well, obviously because-“

The loud whinny of a horse sounded nearby. Tanwell froze.

“Um… Professor? Are you okay?”

Slowly and uncertainly, Tanwell walked towards Phillip and the exit. As he stepped outside, his eyes widened.

“What the-?” His face had turned a horrible shade of white. "What is this?!"

"Are...Are we not supposed to be here?"

“No! Where the hell are we?!”

“Don’t you mean *when* the hell are-?”

“NOT THE TIME, PHILLIP!”

“Jeez, no need to be so jumpy.” Phillip said. He peered outside and gestured to a young street boy passing by.

“Hey kid! What day is it today?

“Today?” The young urchin called. “Why ‘tis Christmas day today, good sir!”

“Ah, no wait, sorry.” Phillip shook his head. “I meant what year is it today?”

“Oh.” The child’s shoulders dropped. “It’s 1750, mate.”

“Cheers.” Phillip said. He turned back to Tanwell who had somehow become even whiter. “So we’re in 1750 then. Everything seems nice and normal.”

“You… you… normal?!” Tanwell seemed almost ready to explode. “You think all this is normal?!”

“Well… now you mention it,” Phillip said, “it did seem a bit early for that kid to be making an A Christmas Carol reference. I’m fairly sure that doesn’t come out until the Victorian era.”

“Not that!” Tanwell shouted. “We’re in 1750!”

Phillip blinked. “Yeah. Wasn’t that what you were aiming for?”

“I was aiming for 17:50pm!”

“……...huh.”

“We were only supposed to go back in time by 10 minutes!” Tanwell explained. “That way things would be nice and safe. No risk of paradox or butterfly effects or any kind of temporal mess! We weren’t supposed to end up in 1750! Who knows what damage we could do here?!”

“Well, it’s not so bad.” Phillip said. “All we have to do is take the time machine and go straight back to our own time.”

Tanwell looked like he was about to protest. Then he took a deep breath and let out a sigh. “…Actually, you’re right. As long as nothing happens we should be able to return before-“

FWOOSH!

“…Phillip?”

“Yup?”

“What was that Fwoosh? I’m too afraid to look back.”

Phillip turned his head back to look into the time machine. “Huh. You know that secondary generator fire?”

“Uh huh.”

“It seems to have spread a little.”

“Define ‘a little’.”

“‘Oh God, oh God, Everything’s on fire?’”

“…”

“…”

“…We can handle this.”

“Apparently I was wrong.” Phillip said, watching at the burnt-out husk that was once their time machine. “We can not handle this.”

“How are you so calm?!” Tanwell snapped. “That was our only way home! Now we’re stuck here in 1750 with no way to repair the time machine or return back!”

“True.” Phillip admitted. “But I don’t think things are that bad if you really think about it.”

Tanwell’s eye twitched. “Oh?”

“Think about it.” Phillip said. “This is 1750. We are travellers from the future with great knowledge of technology. We could single-handedly kickstart the Industrial Revolution by ourselves. Why I bet we could invent cars, laptops, indoor plumbing, all sorts of modern things. We could be practically Gods!”

Tanwell was silent for a moment. “Tell me, Phillip. Do you know how to build a car?”

“No.”

“Do you know how to build a laptop?”

“No.”

“Do you know how indoor plumbing works?”

“...I’m beginning to see a potential flaw in this plan.”

“Is there anything from modern times you actually know how to make?”

“Um… I know how to make a fire?”

“I’m fairly certain fire has already been invented here.”

“I know how to make a *big* fire?”

“Just as I thought then.” Tanwell buried his face in his hands. “We are screwed.”

“Come on, Professor!” Phillip protested. “There must be something *you* can make!”

Tanwell thought a moment. “Actually… now that I think about it, while I don’t directly know how to make a lot of useful objects, I do have enough general knowledge that I might be able to figure things out from scratch…"

The Professor put his hand to his head and leaped to his feet.

"Yes… Yes, that could work! In fact, I have the perfect idea of what we could invent first…”

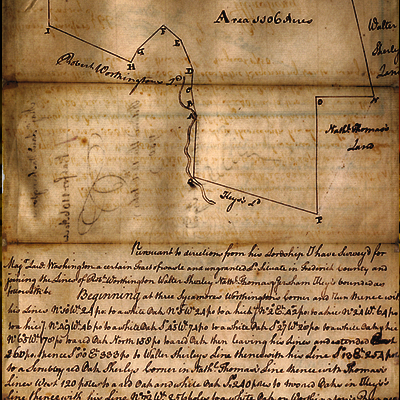
Jackson, the town blacksmith, peered suspiciously at the two oddly dressed newcomers. Then he looked back at the blueprints he had been given. “So what exactly do you want me to forge this for?”

“It’s part of a new design I have created.” The eldest, Tanwell, said cheerfully. “An invention that will revolutionise the world!”

Jackson raised an eyebrow. “And what is the name of this invention of yours?”

“I call it… The Fire Extinguisher!”

# Long Live the King



So I wept.

Bent over the bed, I set a palm to her head and checked.

The heat.

The warmth.

I swept her hair as she slept.

And I wept.

My child, once wild, would soon be exiled.

My wife.

My life.

Survival on a knife.

I’m reviled because a liar had lied.

*Why?*

A joke?

To misquote, and evoke dejection in an election?

To promote regression?

Even these deplorables should abhor the infection of preordained war with objection.

The scorching of decorum.

Of morals.

Forlorn in our world soon torn by extortion.



I scorned the unavoidable fear we will afford this orange villain.

Should I give in and call the demon stored within?

Spinning the risk so it merits the win?

*I must commit to my sin.*

With toxic hemlock and chalk, I stalked my livestock.

I led a sow to the shed and dropped the lock.

Inside, the tied-up swine squealed and whined while I drew the nine lines.

Nimble, each symbol intertwined, and it was time.

Lop, knock, shock.

Hurt, blurt, squirt.

Blood flooded the muddy floor and tore wide a portal in the dirt.

So, morose of heart, I embarked to spirit-curse an oligarch.



But fire discharged, with a roar from the stygian door, and curled a harsh arc.

Carving in the dark, I must have missed a mark.

My mistake created an earthquake.

Shaking the hate I sought to slake.

The light.

A fight.

My oversight.

Where the smoke had cleared, I feared the spell had veered.

My barn, my Virginia farm, it all had disappeared.



Shocked, I walked and sought to concoct a plot to salvage my shot.

I had tried to avoid people destroyed.

Instead, I allowed them to drown when I toyed with the void.

Approaching a town, I looked around, raised a brow, and wondered where I was now.

I scowled at the outfits, the houses, the oak and iron hand-plough.

*Where?*

No.

*When.* That was my concern.

Now, with my return untenable, I ensured the world would burn.

Because of my slip.

My one-way trip.

Fingers in a fist, it would soon be fixed.

I may not reappear in my year, but I could still inflict a shift.

An idea of extremes.

A sacrifice to weaken these dreams, but once complete, it would justify the means.

The darkest of deeds, yet the starkest of needs.



I spotted the man as he scanned the farmland, instruments, ink, and surveys strapped to a stand.

Crossing the promised land, I smiled and offered a hand.

He took hold and I slipped the sow-blade from inside my coat.

I drove it deep in his throat.

He groped and I held a hand over his open mouth and nose, “Shhhh . . .”

Lowering with a groan, he dropped his notes.

Blood rose, coating our clothes.

While George bled, to myself, I said, “Long live the King. Democracy is dead.”

And yet, I wept.

# Pride and Prejudice



It’s a truth universally acknowledged, that one useless man is a shame, two is a law firm, and three or more is a Congress.

Donald Trump was worth three or more Congresses.

“Can’t work iron, bake, tutor or treat the horses. My seven-year old shoots and writes better than you. Is there anything you can do, Ronald?”

“It’s *Donald*! And I can… please, I just need a job!”

The cowboy sighed. “Wait here. I’ll be right back.”

Trump collapsed on a chair. How things had come to this? One moment he was president, the next he was in some dusty old town. He even thought he was kidnapped and thrown in Mexico, a very scary thought for him.

He slept the past four days in the streets, received food out of charity and almost got thrown in an asylum for claiming he was the president of the United States. He had no phone and his suit - from a Trump collection, of course - was ruined.

He only remembered entering a car from the Pentagon.

“Donald, want this job?” asked the cowboy with a shovel in his hand.

“Yes!” Trump was sixty-eight, but he needed food.

“And take off the wig. It may help with the ladies, but it’ll only make you sweat a lot more while working the fields.”

“It’s not a wig! It’s mine!”

The cowboy stared in disbelief . Flustered, Trump started working, wondering how things could get any worse.

“Faster, old man!” A whip cracked nearby and Trump jumped. “I’m García Fernandez, the overseer. If you don’t pull your weight, you’ll have problems with me. Understood, *hombre*?”

Trump wanted to cry.

\*

Hillary Clinton, exhausted, served another round of beer.

After four days carefully listening, asking around and thinking, she found out this was colonial America. She only remembered a bright blue flash and nothing else. At least she wasn’t bothered like the other young barmaids.

“Hey,” said one drunken young man, “I like the older ones.”

Hillary shoved him away, wondering how things could get any worse.

The saloon’s doors opened and someone shouted “*You*!”

She saw Donald Trump.

“I can’t believe it…”

“Hillary… this town is too small for both of us!”

Suddenly she had an idea. “Come with me,” and brought him outside “You and your wig look terrible.”

“You look great too, like you put your head inside the toilet and flushed.”

“Ok, let’s stop. We need to work together. We are in 1750.”

“What?”

“That’s true. I checked.”

“Still, why should we work together?”

“I’m a *barmaid* now. Imagine how I feel seeing and hearing what happens in there.”

“Well, it’s a medieval saloon, not Trump Tower’s restaurant. Besides, I’m working for a Mexican for minimum wage. How do you think *I* feel?”

“Medieval? It’s the eighteenth century, you fool.”

“You said it’s 1750.”

“Yes…?”

“Seventeen fifty. Se-ven-teen. So it’s the seventeenth century. Medieval. Nah-ah, don’t say anything. I’m the billionaire here, numbers are *my* specialty.”

Hillary took a deep breath. “You’re right. But do you want our good life back or to go back to your Mexican boss?”

Trump shivered. “What do you propose?”

“America’s Independence is coming. We start the revolution now and become loved leaders again.”

“Is it possible?”

“Yes, do what you do best and incite everyone against England!”

\*

Hillary worked hard for two weeks, spreading rumors and sending malicious mail to various towns, specially about George Washington. People flocked to see Trump’s speech. If all went south, it would be on him.

“England is oppressing us. We’ll fight and defeat them. Do we want to remain oppressed?” asked Trump.

The crowd yelled “*No*!”.

“Do you know what Europe say about us? That we are stupid, that we always choose between two candidates for President, but from fifty for stuff like Miss America, that we don’t know the capitals of other countries… I don’t think we are stupid, do you?”

“NO!”

“That’s right! Personally, I believe that Europe is the stupidest country in the world!”

A large cheer erupted from the crowd and even celebratory gunshots.

“We have nothing in common with England. I mean, they play football with their feet! After we kick those tea lovers out of here, I’ll build a big and beautiful *wall* on the Pacific to prevent them from ever returning! The best part? I’m gonna make their queen pay for it!”

Another cheer.

“Then we have Democracy and a Congress, right?” asked someone.

Hillary was clear: they needed to rule absolute.

“Well, not exactly,” Trump said.

The crowd shouted against Trump.

“Look, we’re all professional cowboys, farmers and stuff, right? We’re good at what we do and hate when we’re tricked, right?”

Cowboys were loading their guns.

“So let’s think about this rationally! If a con is the opposite of a pro, then a congress is surely the opposite of progress. Look at what happened with Rome and Athens!”

Dumbfound silence. Hillary almost left, but heard the crowd talking among themselves.

“That actually makes sense.”

“Maybe we should consider that policy.”

“What’s an “Athens”?”

Trump seized the opportunity and shouted: “Let’s make America big!”

The crowd chanted his name.

\*

Trump was Supreme General of the Revolution. He didn’t see Hillary much after that. Now they were sailing to fight England.

He found Hillary reading a book. The title was *The Prince*. Trump never pictured her as a fan of romantic fairy tales.

“Hi.”

Hillary quickly hid the book.

“I was just… meditating on our next step,” she said flushed. Trump almost grinned, wondering at what cheesy part she was.

“You’re actually a very intelligent woman.”

“I’ll admit you have a way with people. You’re pretty… good.”

He flustered, eyes wide open, heart racing, feelings of the past weeks. But was her blush really genuine? She was Hillary Clinton, after all.

“Hillary…”

“Donald…”

At that moment the clouds hid the sun and darkness fell, a tiny ray of sunlight circling around them like in a Broadway stage; a gentle zephyr breathing, a small rainbow above them as their lips slowly approached…

“General Trump!” They pulled away like thieves caught stealing.

“Admiral…”

“Sorry, General. We’ve received a message to divert our course north to avoid a collision. Permission?”

“What?” Who the hell tells *me* to change course? Tell them to divert *their* course!”

“But, General…”

“DO AS I SAY OR YOU’LL BE FIRED!”

The Admiral sent the message and returned with the answer.

“We repeat: you divert YOUR course, General Trump.”

Trump’s face reddened. He almost screamed for someone to bring him the codes then remembered he was in 1750.

“Tell our armada are gonna sail right through them! That will teach them a lesson!”

The soldier returned with another reply.

“This is a lighthouse. Your call, General Trump.”

\*

England was defeated. Hillary and Trump were loved rulers. They only didn’t know how they got back in time.

Then Trump suddenly remembered. “Area 51! That’s where I was taken! As president, I needed to know everything about the country’s greatest secrets and weapons. I didn’t even believe the place really existed! And then… two men in black greeted me. They put sunglasses and a pen flashed or something.”

“Yes, that was it!”

“But what happened?”

“An accident. They must be trying to rescue us.”

“But Hillary, it’s months now?.What if… they purposely threw us here?”

“Why? That’s absurd.”

“Well, nobody really liked us. Do you think… I mean… were we really that bad that they might’ve seen the future, that I screwed up, then they threw me here, saw you didn’t do any better and threw you here as well? They could’ve brought back cure for cancer or something, but what if people are just shooting fireworks now?”

Hillary stood, outraged. “O-of course not! They must be desperate to get us back and I’m certain people all over the world are crying at our disappearance.”

“Like with that Korean guy?”

“Y-yes! Exactly like that!”

Hillary now remembered the numbers “1750 BC” near the machine. Someone in Area 51 must have screwed up. How could they do this to her? She was an honest politician. She remained bought to the same group of lobbyists for over twenty years, after all.

“You know, my parents were very honest people, and a lot of other people took advantage of that. I swore the same would never happen to me, so instead I did it to them first. I kinda of regret all that now… well, except sabotaging Bernie, that old geezer totally deserved it.”

Trump looked thoughtful. “My father always envied me because of my intelligence. All because of a jigsaw puzzle.”

“What?”

“I was eighteen then. I found a jigsaw puzzle and the box said “3-5 years”, but I managed to finish it in record time, in only three months. Dad was furious and kicked me out of the house. He only gave me one million dollars to build a business. Who can succeed with only that? So of course I broke. Feeling guilty, he kept sending one million, month after month, for years until one day, despite him doing everything to sabotage me, I succeeded and finally proved to everyone that I could create and manage a business built from zero.”

“What a wonderful story!”

“You know what? If they threw us here, we better change History as payback! I’m gonna conquer the entirety of Mexico instead of the fools who stopped halfway!”

“But…”

“And change the dollar bill too. Why a pyramid in it? This is the USA, not India! We’ll replace it with something created totally by Americans, like the Statue of Liberty or hot dogs.” He looked at Hillary. “And then Canada, I’ll conquer their Healthcare in your name.”

“Donald… that’s the only… I mean, the most romantic thing someone ever told me!” Hillary grabbed Trump’s hand and brought him to the prow of the ship. “I’ve always wanted to do this!”

Trump held her, and just like the movie, Hillary opened her arms and started to sing.

“Every night in my dreams… I see you, I feel youuuu!”

Trump followed: “This is how I know you go oooooon!”

Them both together: “Near, faaaaar, wherever you aaaaaare!”

They sang and danced all night, with the grace and virility of animals doing their mating dance with all four legs broken.

Trump and Hillary, now the first Mister and Miss America, founded the Supreme Empire of Trumpistan, forever changing the course of History and humankind.