

Plot Synopsis

Outline

1. University life and a walk in the woods
 - Tim gets his first taste of college life. He meets his roommate, an energetic and carefree to the point of absent-minded student named Alex. He also makes friends with two of his classmates, Eric and Clare. Tim quickly settles into university life and becomes familiar with the surrounding town of Parkersburg. As the weeks drift by, Tim becomes increasingly suspicious of his physics professor, Dr. Heller, who singles Tim out for reasons unknown. Tim also catches wind of rumors of strange happenings in a wooded region just off of campus. As the days drag on Tim begins to wonder if college is for him. Despite help from his friends, he finds it hard to keep up with the courseload and is ultimately discouraged and alienated by the institutional nature of the university.
 - One autumnal afternoon, Tim ventures out to see for himself if these rumors are true, happening across an abandoned tunnel leading deep below the town. In an irresponsible act of curiosity, Tim ventures down into the depths. Though sure to keep track of the way he came, Tim finds that the path he took no longer exists. Instead, he discovers a mysterious abandoned facility burrowed into the ground, evidently used for scientific research. He eventually happens upon what seems to be an experiment that ended in a catastrophe, while at the same time finding a letter and some equipment addressed to him. With no other way out, he follows its instructions, only to realize that this method of exiting is far beyond the means he had ever thought of employing.
2. Passing time in a time gone past
 - Tim, dazed and confused, finds that he is right where he was, but things have changed. The first being that the facility is no longer abandoned. Alarmed by this, Tim quickly hides himself away, working his way through the innerworkings of the laboratories and managing to pass undetected under the noses of the employees working there. After a time, he is discovered by a scientist named Fritz Kaufmann, who surprisingly takes pity on him and agrees to take Tim on as an intern. Now having the ability to pass freely through the facility, Tim makes for the surface, only to find that things have changed dramatically there as well.
 - Tim begins to make his way through life in the year 1972. Though forlorn in having no clear way home, Tim becomes accustomed to this way of life and even begins to make friends through the internship. All the while, he is working to reactivate the device that dropped him here. His work with Dr. Kaufmann proves particularly enlightening as it appears the that project he is working on culminates in the creation of the device itself.

- Miraculously, Tim also finds his professor, a much younger Peter Heller, working as a researcher in the facility as well. It is apparent that there is tension between Dr. Kaufmann and Dr. Heller. Tim chalks it up to differences in their approach to their research. Kaufmann warns Tim of a grave miscalculation made by Heller, and that his efforts must be stopped before he goes too far in his experiments. Tim uses the device to move seamlessly through the lab and keep tabs on Heller. Heller becomes increasingly suspicious of Tim, eventually confronting him while using the device, causing Tim to accidentally throw himself into the far future.
3. A minor miscalculation
- Tim finds himself in a stark and desolate reality. His haphazard trip through time damages the device, leaving it a smoking heap of harnesses and wires. The apocalyptic landscape makes it clear that Tim has displaced himself beyond the fall of his modern society, though he quickly learns that he is not alone. He joins a nomadic group of scavengers who show him how to survive in this harsh environment. A few years pass for Tim as he slowly works out how to make the device operational again while keeping his work secret from the members of his group. By this point Tim is exceptionally well-versed in the underlying mechanisms that power his time-traveling. The remnants of future technology prove particularly useful in his efforts to repair the device.
 - During his time here, Tim learns of a rival group that seeks to gain control of the region his group is currently inhabiting. Tim takes part in a few skirmishes that play out, making it clear that times have become desperate. Growing conflicts with this rival group become more intense and Tim resolves to hastily make his way back to the past. As things come to a head between the feuding scavengers, Tim makes his escape.
4. Before, again
- Tim returns a few years prior to his time as an intern in the lab and he realizes that he now bears a remarkable resemblance to his mentor Dr. Kaufmann. Tim, now realizing that it is his turn to prevent the catastrophe brought on by Dr. Heller, takes up Fritz's name and begins working at the facility once more. Fritz follows Heller's research into artificial black holes. He makes several attempts to have Heller thrown out of the lab but ends up endangering his own position in the facility. Younger Tim appears by this time, and so Fritz uses Tim to keep tabs on Heller instead. Fritz resolves to construct a trap for the anomaly in the meantime, hoping that this will allow him to regain control of the experiment when Heller's efforts fail.
 - In this effort, Fritz travels back to 2023 when he initially went to college there to meet with the older Dr. Heller, who is willing to help Fritz in preventing the catastrophe that his younger self caused. Once the trap is complete, Fritz returns and has Tim install the trap in Heller's lab. This leads to the confrontation between Heller and Tim, sending Tim into the future.
5. The null catastrophe

- Heller begins his first “successful” experiment. Fritz, along with a number of other scientists from the lab attend the event to see how it goes. Fritz is wary, but confident that the trap will work. As the experiment progresses, Heller announces that the black hole is contained, which is met with applause. As Heller attempts to shut down the experiment, the confinement fails and begins to buckle. Seeing that the trap hasn’t activated, Fritz rushes to intervene. Heller, seeing this and thinking Fritz is attempting to sabotage him, tries to stop him. A struggle ensues while the facility begins evacuations. Ultimately Fritz is successful and activates the trap, gaining control of the growing black hole and triggering its collapse. Heller is spiteful but realizes his error.

6. Resolution

- As a result of the partial deconfinement of the black hole, spatiotemporal anomalies linger about the facility. All of the employees are evacuated and the tunnels leading down into the facility are sealed off.
- Heller takes up work at the nearby university. Fritz returns to 2023 to return the equipment to the lab. He has no problems getting into the sealed facility, leaving the device on a table near the point of the catastrophe with a note to the earlier version of Tim, instructing him how to use it to go to the past. Fritz wanders about in the abandoned tunnels for a time, luckily passing through an anomaly and finding himself near the exit to the tunnel. Just after he leaves, he waits just out of sight of the mouth of the tunnel. He sees Tim come across the entrance for the first time and enter, thus beginning the events of the story.

****Some of the details below do not find their way into the brief synopsis above. If the narrative above were to be written out in its entirety, these details would be used.**

Characters

Tim Wells (Fritz Kaufmann)

Tim Wells was born June 12th, 2004. Grew up in Oakland, MD. Early on he showed proclivities towards mathematics and technical tasks, though never capitalized on these abilities during primary and secondary education. Tim went to South Garrett High School and ran cross country for three years (grades 10-12), serving as captain his senior year. He was not involved in any other clubs during high school, opting instead to experiment with electronics in his free time and aimlessly passing time with his friends. Tim later attended Parkersburg University in West Virginia as a physics major.

Alex Fischer, Eric Coughlin, and Clare Oswald:

Alex Fischer was born November 22nd, 2004, and grew up in Indiana. He attended White River Valley High School, partaking in the Academic Team and the STEM Club hosted by the school.

Eric Coughlin was born January 28th, 2005, and grew up in Bozoo, West Virginia. During high school he played saxophone in the school band and took part in the National Honor Society.

Clare Oswald was born February 29th, 2004, in Odd, West Virginia. Her hobbies include running, ice skating, and reading. She played in her high school band, playing the clarinet. Due to confusion over her birthday, she is about a year older than most of her peers in school.

Dr. Peter Heller

Dr. Peter Heller was born July 13th, 1943, in Paw Paw, West Virginia to Roger and Joan Heller. Soon after his birth, Roger was drafted for WWII and ultimately dying in combat on February 23rd, 1945. Shortly after, Peter and Joan decided to live with her father, Norman Turner, who was living alone at the time. Norman had worked as an electrical engineer and would spend many hours entertaining Peter with electronics. This led Peter to consider becoming an electrical engineer, but ultimately he decided to pursue physics instead. For his undergraduate studies he attended Marshall University. His aptitude for physics allowed him to quickly progress in his studies. His abilities were recognized by the Hayter Facility, which recruited him into their Applied Relativity Lab after he obtained his Ph. D. from West Virginia University.

Emilia Young

Emilia Young was born on September 13, 1954. Her father worked as a scientist with Fritz Kaufmann at Hayter labs. Unsure of what she wished to do after high school, she began

shadowing her dad at his work. She became especially adept in materials engineering, aiding in the creation of an experimental electrical power source for the lab.

Ned Hayter

Ned Hayter was a theoretical physicist working for the University of Chicago. His work specialized in relativity, demonstrating a number of remarkable potential applications. The United States Army took interest in his research, offering him a directorial position at an experimental facility. Much of his findings were quickly pursued after he accepted the position. He passed away 10 years later. His singular influence on the research being performed at the facility resulted in it being dedicated to him shortly after his passing.

Settings

Parkersburg University

Parkersburg University is a land-grant institution founded in 1870 by William E. Stevenson and originally chartered as an agricultural college. Enrollment for Fall of 2021 was 8,245, offering over 100 distinct bachelor's programs, with just over 75 master's and doctoral programs. The university has produced 23 National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships, 30 Fullbright Scholars, and 48 Gilman Scholars. It is ranked as an "M3: Master's Colleges and Universities – Medium programs" institution. The university's mascot is Loni the Lion.

Hayter Labs and the tunnels

Hayter Labs was founded in 1902 by the U.S. Government for advanced research in gravitation and subatomic processes. Its research followed the expansion of quantum mechanics closely, with the majority of its labs focusing on condensed matter physics and precursors to trapped ion experiments. The lab received its current name in 1941 after theoretical physicist Ned Hayter, who had considerable influence over the research being done at the time of his employment. The organization was originally referred to as "MAGPAI" (Microscopic and Gravitational Projects for Advances in Intelligence).

Its main facility came to be housed in what used to be a salt mine owned by the Kanawha Salt Company. The mine itself began operation in 1823. It was closed prematurely in 1870 as the company saw a sharp decline in revenue and the mine itself wasn't productive enough to warrant keeping it open. MAGPAI found the location particularly suitable for a growing number of experiments that required isolation from cosmic radiation, purchasing the mine and building a facility in one of its main underground corridors.

Ohio's Run

Ohio's Run broadly refers to a stretch of land running along a portion of the Ohio river, in what was once the state of West Virginia. In the early 2200's it came to be occupied by a nomadic group who referred to themselves as the "Axotyl." The land proved particularly hospitable, located along the 40th parallel north and maintaining a temperate climate, seeing average high temperatures at 41°C and average low temperatures at -2°C. The Ohio river, though diminished in size, provided a viable source of fresh water and a means of weathering the hot summer months where surface temperatures were largely considered too harsh for human life. During its occupation by the Axotyl, the group made extensive use of scrap material and resources in the remains of Parkersburg, which was the state's fourth-largest city.