# 10 BLINKS TO LEVEL

Countdown to Blink

## Prologue

After the Drone Wars of 2037 which resulted in the loss of 500+ million human lives, the projections and the popular consensus were that the next great war could take an added 1.2+ billion. However, that was nothing in comparison to what was coming.

Earth's human population had gone from eleven billion to less than three billion almost overnight.

The region called the Pacific Pale is sparsely populated. This part of the world had not begun the clustering of humanity as it had done in the past.

These landmasses of the Earth were renamed after the continental shift and divide of most of the Western hemisphere in 2038.

Every island on Earth was lost to the vast oceans along with nearly every life on them.

The unprecedented eruptions all along the Ring of Fire changed everything. The apocalyptic destruction from this cataclysmic event forced mankind to rebuild nations and relationships with the entire world in new ways.

Global leadership needed decisive and quick action was needed as the population had now decreased by 45%. The remaining 5 billion people left on earth had to survive and learn to prosper once again. There was little time for mourning. Feeling sorry for yourself, was no longer an option. Everyone has a role to play.

Isolation was nothing new to our team as 90% of their work is accomplished from their fortified self-sustaining habitat and VR compound.

As society collapsed, the world became so fragmented that finally, the internet broke...as in, it had become fractured under the Oceans, intermittent in the Satellites and currently irreparable.

Necessity called for the first instance of the SPARQ virtual space. The Catnasium was created to develop a sort of ninja cat school for minion bots.

The little virtual ninja-cats made perfect reconnaissance bots. They managed the global traffic monitoring and communications for the team.

The team also was delighted to discover the Catnasium was the perfect arena for VR training.

And now...

**..Countdown to Blink**

The Earth is out of water.

After years of battle, creation, and destruction, Kolt and the SPARQ team gain the Coordinate Key rights to set the first Blink destination.

The SPARQ team leads Earth on a mission to rehydrate the planet and then return to the Sol system.

The Earth is out of water.

Desperate times...

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Pick a path

<<Do you want to watch Kolt fall?>>

Go to: Meet the team

<<Do you take the initiative?>>

Go to: The fall

<<Do you want a News update?>>

Go to: Meet Solomon and the Cinja (sounds like "singe-ah" —these little reconnaissance bots are trained and act as the eyes and ears in the greater world. They are fast, independent, long-range, capable of evasion, armed, and rogues of the net. Their primary role is to bring intel to the team and Solomon. Their primary goal is to gather information from the fragmented internet and lost data stores.)

## The Fall

Just below the exosphere, two figures can be seen chaotically tumbling in a freefall back to Earth.

Now, on June 8th, 2087 at precisely 3:41.73 PM, the planets in the Sol system came into perfect alignment for the biggest, bravest move humanity had ever done yet.

Exactly 6.53 seconds ago, Kolt and Samantha, bitter rivals fought as they flew to seat the final Qtile in the Blink shield around Earth.

Both knew the other one was wrong and was just buckets of crazy to put the entire Earth on the line on the other's bad calculations.

As the seconds ticked off and they both reached the faulty Qtile placement, Kolt performed an impressive flip, reverse thrusters, and slide kick. Amazingly, he was able to fend off Samantha, click the misaligned Qtile into the correct position, and pop in the last Qtile, his team's unique stamp, and solution, into place.

The Catnasium was paying off!

The problem was not supposed to be the return to Earth, but it was.

Once the Qtile was seated, the entire Blink shield activated around the Earth in a cascade of shimmering silver polygons. The sheen came and went in an instant but every person on Earth looking up at the time saw a short shimmer, like a brief reflection that appears and disappears.

Neither Kolt nor Samantha expected the kickback from the activation and so merely seconds later they were both heading straight down, at terminal velocity, and out of control.

Meanwhile, as the Blink shield completed its activation cycle, the secondary stage of the Qtiles expanded on the outward-facing surface. Smaller tiles popped up attached only by a small tether to their parent Qtile.

As the secondary Blink shield activated, a golden shimmer of polygons rippled around the Earth's atmosphere.

Even though Kolt was still in freefall, he knew he had done it. The Destination Key would be assigned, at once by the Council, to his team.

"Triangulum 1*, here we come!"

After final preparations and of course rescuing Kolt, again, the SPARQ team, in raucous celebration, "hit the button, Max!" and the entire Sol system would ever be the same.

The Blink drive activated in the subterranean bunker and the whole continent shook just a bit.

In the Sol system, Earth disappeared.

As predicted the system began to re-arrange to account for the new gravity well where Earth had been.

Multiple recording space drones and stationary sensor bases on Mars and the Kuiper belt clicked and wired into the vacuum of space, capturing everything that happened next.

## Meet the Team

Earth is out of water.

After the endless pandemic, year-round wildfires, drone wars, extreme weather from global warming, and the slow death by dehydration of 82% of the population, the team worked furiously on the last tile.

"Solomon! Do you have him?!," Allen practically screamed.

"I have him. On-screen now."

Solomon simultaneously zoomed the wall display.

The team gasped in unison as they saw Kolt tumbling through the air like a rag doll in a dryer.

"He's coming in too hot! He's gonna crash into the Ocean. Ready the sea rescue bot squad."

"Let's bring him home."

**Close Call**

The day had already been long but when hurricane Carl started crashing into the cliff-face and SPARQ lab's transparent aluminum bay windows, Kolt knew he still had a lot to get done and no time to do it.

Kolt's reluctance to join the team earlier didn't come from the overly bossy Earth Council; it wasn't from the spat with Samantha; it wasn't this damn storm that had been getting bigger and bigger for weeks.

It was time. "Time is the only protagonist," Kolt repeated to himself in a psych-up mantra. These were the final moments.

These were the moments where he had to choose to get over the things of the past and make the move toward the future.

The future was now. The drone wars didn't matter anymore. The death of the past had to be put aside. The chaos hung in balance. Kolt's next actions would change the course of history forever...one way or another.

**We're Not Going to Make It**

It was right there...in virtual color.

"We have to get the sims down. We won't make it."

"I believe that Kolt may have a parallax algo that will eliminate 7 of these. With your permission Kolt."

Kolt nods quickly. He had already thought of this but hadn't had time to run the sim. Solomon was living up to his name and job. Kolt was glad. He hadn't been sure of the entity at first.

"Ok, that's pretty good. Make sure it's right. We need a 95% confidence level to eliminate and not lose valid edge cases."

"Yeah, yeah, we know. Everyone knows. We still need to eliminate 4 or we won't have time to validate before the fab."

As Kolt deftly made his way through the living spaces to the Qpods, the earth shook from the endless barrage of waves, wind, and fury crashing into the cantilevered observation deck of the base. Despite being The SPARQ Habitat was architected to withstand meteor strikes despite being on the cliff face shook and rolled like a drunken monkey but the sound was even more devastating. The whole place was an echo chamber for the crashing waves against the structure. But the SPARQ Habitat would hold. It was proven.

**Fast Emersion**

Kolt entered the lab and climbed into his Qgel Connection Chamber. This was his secure pod to enter the virtual lands that he and the team had created.

The Qpod was warmed up and waiting for him.

Solomon's virtual projection stood to the left to ensure all procedures were followed and observations recorded.

As the Qpod tilted to be level with the floor, the Qgel began to fill the pod.

Kolt looked around and saw his complete team already immersed in their Qpods.

"Solomon, have you been able to solve the problem with the generator overloading on our harmonic deltas?"

A few blank stares around the room clued Kolt into the room's mood for his shorthand with Solomon.

"Yes, Kolt I have completed the first revision of the mandala connections. I'm afraid I don't see how this helps us now though..."

"So, I was thinking that we could use the harmonics we discovered to eliminate any equations that won't align. What do you think?"

"One moment...", Solomon's face calmed and the calming tones began.

After a moment, Solomon smiled.

"I believe you are correct Kolt. Alignments of 6 of the equations can be eliminated. This is excellent. Shall I begin the variations now?"

Everyone at once in nearly panicked relief shouted "YES!"

The team had already logged in and Solomon, the resident AI, had organized the next steps.

Kolt quickly acclimated to the process that he had done countless times and entered the SPARQ Space.

The team was waiting in front of the town hall. The virtual space the team had agreed on was a medieval township with all the tech hidden as magic.

It was a fun way to make tech work that was new and experimental.

Solomon waved his hand and as if by magic a board appeared. It ran down a summary of the current situation.

The landscape changed to that of a central meeting area with a large round table, the display of information floating in the middle, and a full complement of seats and snacks.

Everyone looked at the screen as they picked their seats and grabbed a treat as Kolt began to speak.

The screen updated with the new information

SPARQ Summary Update
Time to Alignment: countdown
Simulations Required: 7
Simulation Runtime: 42 hours
Time to Generate Qtile once Solution is Found: 12 hours 14 minutes 2 seconds
Tile Placement Time: 18 minutes

"FML! This is gonna be close..."

"Solomon, punch in the key. Sam, get ready for Blink. 3..2..1...BLINK!"

Worldwide Announcement
Prepare for Blink

Blink Down Commencing

"We all know the stats. We know what's on the line. Now, how many experiments are we short?"

The team scanned the new information

| SPARQ Summary | |
| --- | --- |
| Year | |
| Location | |
| Earth Population | |
| Qtiles Placed | |
| Qtiles Generated | |
| Time to Alignment | |
| Simulations Required | |
| Time to Generate Qtile once Solution is Found | |

| SPARQ Summary | |
| --- | --- |
| Year | |
| Earth Population | |
| Qtiles Placed | |
| Qtiles Generated | |
| Time to Alignment | 3 days, 4 hours, 17 minutes |
| Simulations Remaining | |
| Time to Generate Qtile once Solution is Found | 6 hours, 3 minutes |

Completing 38 simulations in the amount of time remaining wasn't feasible...

3..2..1...

When the Blink drive came online, the runes that surrounded the Earth glowed almost as brightly as the sun for a moment.

The harmonics of the words responded to the corresponding resonance of the universe and briefly flashed and shimmered in a silvery cascade of refraction.

**1st Blink**
Earth Blinks

Blink Storm (many blink shifts in the solar system)

The Sol system rearranges to hold positioning for Earth's return

Immediately following Earth's Blink, reconnaissance bots already present in the atmosphere begin relaying information about Earth's new position in the galaxy.

As reports come in, it's hard not to panic. The eastern hemisphere had already reported a giant armada of alien spacecraft heading towards Earth on a collision course looking to be armed for war.

Earth finds itself between 3 enormous space armadas; in the middle of a war over the twin water planets in the Triangulum system alpha (the first choice that Solomon set for the SPARQ team coordinates).

This was enough to cause panic and everyone. Luckily that information didn't get spread widely because the Council had put a small filter in place to preempt information that could cause greater panic.

As if running out of water wasn't a big enough reason to panic.

Unfortunately, as reports started coming in from the Western hemisphere's scanning branch it became clear there was even more reason to panic.

Approaching from nearly the opposite vector on the other side of the earth was another armada heading directly towards Earth and was only about 6 ½ minutes out from being able to destroy Earth from a very reasonable distance.

<<Appropriate and Possibly Unique by Relatable Explicative>>

What the hell are we going to do what the hell are we gonna do? What would you do?

The Blink generator needs 12 minutes to refresh, nearly shouting.

Emergency protocols klaxon over the planet to sway panic

We do now Kolt?

We better figure out how to optimize the Blink generator. And fast. It looks like we have to do it in...Three minutes?

It is not right Solomon?

We haven't done the final analysis yet but it appears that these ships are as surprised by our appearing in the middle of their war as we are to be here.

Shit!

OK.

Use the overdrive converter! But it hasn't been tested fully!

No choice...either that or hope these aliens, with armadas both bigger than Earth, will just wait?

No NO No! Fuck that!

Do it Solomon. Do it now.

As you wish.

As the seconds pass, the overdrive system drains the oceans, consumes magma, and finally reaches 83% charged; just enough for a short emergency jump.

**2nd Blink**
Emergency Blink procedure kills 137 thousand due to an unadjusted populace from the earlier Blink.

Earth Blinks to the dark side of the small water twin planet.

The good news is that it worked and Earth and all its inhabitants slotted very nicely into a satellite orbit over one of the swirling pink luminescent hurricanes bigger than Jupiter from back home.

This was the second planet of swirling sparkling pink atmosphere of storms of unfathomable strength.

For the moment we had effectively hidden Earth from those warring fleets. There was no question they were here for water too.

Our systems drained and refined the atmosphere via collector towers littered around Earth for this very purpose —to restore water to earth.

The analysis was complete and despite the alien taste and pink sparkly afterglow people got from drinking it, it was effectively water and, for the moment, humanity could feel relieved.

It was a short breather. There was still much to do.

With the new "water" the SPARQ team was able to charge and prep for the next Blink. After all, there was a war going on. One that we couldn't afford to get in the middle of. We hoped to collect enough of the pink substance to make our next 5 Blinks.

Earth siphons pink water substitute to 63% before being discovered

Whoa...

The crew looked at the observation feeds. The new solar system, in the Triangulum constellation, was amazing.

In the distance, we could see two twin planets circling each other around

But before the team could realize the truth of what they had accomplished, an urgent communication came in. It was from the other team.

The vid came across, as nice and clear. Outside, coming right at Earth was a fleet of what looked like very scary warships.

No doubt there was scrambling all over the world.

Team SPARQ did what they did best...solve!

The intercept with the war fleet looked to be 12 minutes if they didn't change course or speed...

The Blink Generator normally took 15 minutes to recharge for another trip.

A whisper of an idea started to form in Kolt's mind.

Executing a quick virtual sim, the team worked all the angles.

Several favorable plans were generated, but only one had the real potential for the immediate need for water and getting out of the way of the oncoming fleet.

Just as Solomon began the final few simulations that we didn't want to miss out on an incredible edge case, a new urgent message came in. This one was from the Council.

The team didn't respect the Council, but any new information was always welcome.

The new vid showed a very different-looking fleet...

This one was approaching from nearly the opposite direction.

In a flash of insight, both Sam and Solomon proclaimed, "we blinked into the middle of a way??"

What are the odds of that?

We have no blood in this game. Let's get out of here.

Solomon displayed a new summary board.

War Fleet 1

Intercept: 11 minutes 32 seconds

War Feet 2

Intercept: 16 minutes 2 seconds

Prediction
War Fleet 2 will obliterate Earth and the other fleet without fail in 16 minutes and 49 seconds

**3rd Blink**

The plan was simple and yet SOOO complex.

The team needs to Blink again to a secure place while avoiding this conflict AND getting water from one of the twin water planets.

It had become clear that this was a battle over water.

With that seeming to be the most likely case, we had to get out of here NOW.

The Blink generator hit the red line and we kept pushing.

At minute 8, the other team comes online and helps with the Blink generator and applies some of their virtual hacks into Solomon to speed things along.

At minute 11, the first shots hit the Earth's defense shield. A few simple shots at long range and the shields were already down 22%.

It was clear that in seconds, the Earth would be a casualty of this conflict.

Wrong place; Wrong Time!

The Blink Generator hit charge ready at 83% and the short trip we had planned should work even at this low charge.

At the very last Pico second, Earth Blinks.

**4th Blink**
Earth Blinks the Triangulum beta in search of a more "friendly" life and possibly previous Earth visitors

Earth is now a new satellite of the largest of the two water planets. The blink coordinates chosen were on the other side of the planet and both fleets and their conflict were obscured by the Jupiter-sized water planet.

The system had the potential for first contact and untapped resources that could sustain Earth for preparations for the next blink.

The other team joins up

Earth Blinks into the Sirius B system and meets the Ancients
Finally…

Meet the ancients

The ancients are kind and it turns out did visit the earth and set up a base of operations.

The team did not know about this base but once the Oceans were drained by the Blink Generator, many discoveries were made.

The ancients had a problem. They are a dying race and need DNA from around the universe to complete the genome that will heal their race and allow them to breed again.

Once the Earth settled in its new locale, drones were sent to the surface to collect water specimens.

The 3 of the 20 drones returned and only 2 had samples.

It would be hard to get more…very hard…the weather was something new…something very alien…like lightning jellybeans… Or something…

The samples were interesting. 98% H2O and 2% unknown.

Sims was run to determine if we could use it.

The 2% turned out to be benign and had a strange effect on anyone that was exposed.

It turned out that the unique properties of this unknown changed everyone.

When exposed people get a slight luminescent pink-silvery glow.

The ancients fix the Earth's water problem and advanced humanity's technology and knowledge.

The ancients refine the Blink technology and help to build a small fleet of blink ships.

The star navigation path is set and the blink speed runs begin.

Reacquainted with Earth and the Ancients, find there is much to be done and mutually beneficial goals are set forth

The Ancients need the blood of the ages and set the SPARQ team to Blink around the Universe while Earth is restructured and "healed".

SPARQ+ team formed (addition of red's team)
Ancients decipher the tech we found

They utilize the tech to create long-term subspace communications between SPARQ and Ancient Space.

It was odd but harmless as far as we could tell.

Earth can set up a siphon and fill the Oceans and storage capacity.

With time, they examined the system.

And while they had achieved the impossible and could, theoretically return to the Sol system, they remained disappointed with the contacts they have made so far.

They filled enough water supply for 1 year of the current population.

They set new coordinates for the other 2 systems in the Triangulum constellation.

Blink generator is less efficient on new pink water

**5th Blink**
Abandoned cities and technology found on the burned-out planet

**6th Blink**

Blinking around the universe to find the DNA segments that the Ancients need.

There are 12 fragments.

Finally, the blink teams return with the fragments.

The war has come to their home world.

Weblink into their base directly and get the DNA fragments into the production system.

Instead of engaging in this war, the Ancients decide that they have to find a new hidden location while they rebuild.

It's decided to hide, for a short while, in the Sol system (our system).

Qgel fail

Earth completes the Blink loop of the constellation finding nothing further than a bit more unusual technology

Finding nothing more of interest in the second system they moved to the third system.

If they didn't find anything here, they would explore the team B selections; namely the Sirius system.

On the 4th planet in the 3rd system of the Triangulum constellation, a message was found.

It was a simple message once decoded.

"Allies of the Ancients are Called to Defend. Your assistance is called for now."

We blinked.

New coordinates set for Sirius B; the other team 1st choice

The Earth's new position was in the Sirius b solar system and the most likely place to find a friendly new species.

New tech found

Ancient on SPARQ team identifies and fixes tech.

Tech reveals 3 DNA strands to collect in the system

Blink ships deployed locally to gather the samples

The last location exploration shows where the next DNA may be.

The information conflicts with what the Ancients said

**7th Blink**
SPARQ team ignores the advice from the Ancients and follows the new lead found buried deep in a piece of the old tech they found.

7 more strands are found in the next 3 sibling systems. No need to blink after the Ancients added the Mobility layers to Vector One (Earth).

**8th Blink**

The last 2 strands are found on the edge of the known universe.

The last planet is one of the oldest in the universe, theorized to have been formed just after the Big Bang.

Countless centuries have allowed this civilization to grow and expand its planet. Millions of years of

civilization building with little internal war. Lessons are passed on.

**9th Blink**

Vector One (Earth) Blinks back to the Ancients in the Sirius B system.

Ancients get DNA from the SPARQ team

Ancients begin repopulation —rapidly populate other solar systems

Ancients further bolster the Blink technology and Earth's Spatial

Fold Shell (the blink network around Earth). We had 2 layers. The Ancients added an Energy collection layer,

an armament layer, an environmental controls layer, and a surveillance layer.

Pink Blink shell and communications include translators for other universal races

Ancients expand our languages and mathematics and star map information including friendly and warring

civilizations. Including some races to avoid at all costs like the Eliks, Luags, Glozax, and the Nha.

**10th Blink**

Instead of engaging in this war, the Ancients decide that they must find a new hidden location while they

rebuild.

All parties agreed on the decision to hide, for a short while, in the Sol system (our system).

The ancients help to rearrange the solar system to re-insert the Earth. Sol blink arrangements reverse and

reorganize

They live with us until they have developed the infrastructure to allow Earth to continually blink around the

Universe.

Just as they are about to complete a new blink shell, an armada-sized threat peaks out of the Kuiper belt on

a direct course for the sun...They want to blow up our sun..!

You can almost feel the global sighs of relief and blessed hydration.

As the team started to settle, comforted with the successful mission. The Earth leveled up and that was more

than they could have hoped for, Solomon suddenly broke the calm.

"Alert! Vector One Defense Array has detected a Glozax fleet entering the Kuiper belt. They are heading

straight for us. ETA 32 minutes.", Solomon spilled the unsettling news.

Kolt says, "This is not the end."

**Fin...**