

TO ATTEMPT A TIME TRAVEL



A SERIES OF TALKS
BETWEEN A PIZZA DELIVERER
AND A MAD SCIENTIST

Are you gonna eat that alone?

Jane, looked average. Average height, average face, average body. A week ago she had painted her hair blonde, trying to stand out a bit, and maybe get noticed by some kind hearted man with a decent, stable job. That blond paint was coming off now. The roots of her hair were brown once more.

She was 28, which was technically almost 30. No man, no family, no money.

Her job was hard too. She was supposed to be a waiter at a pizza restaurant, but instead she had to deliver pizzas to homes and offices, because the owner didn't want to hire a separate employee. This type of delivery job was usually done by men, because they wouldn't get harassed by the customers as much. Even so, she needed the money.

"You have only 3 locations for this afternoon." said the boss. He was a 43 year old man from

Russia whose body was somewhere between being very fat and being obese. He was a pretty bad boss, but Jane knew that there are worse ones out there.

"4 pepperonis for the nerds in Tech Com, 1 with pineapple for the family that orders every day and the huge margarita is for an old man who lives 300 meters from here."

Jane grabbed the boxes and got on her motorcycle. She went to the old man first, because he was the closest. In less than a minute she was already knocking on his door.

"1 minute!" she heard from the other side. The voice sounded like a 50 year old man.

Soon the door opened and Jane was surprised at what she saw. He was not 50, but at least 70. Wrinkled face, dry skin, white hair and bony hands. At the same time he was overflowing with energy. He looked like he wanted to jump for no reason. On top of that he was wearing a white lab coat, which made him look kind of crazy.

"Mr. Morrison, right? I have a big margarita for

you, with some chilly sauce. 15 for the pizza and 4 for the delivery."

He pulled out some money and handed it to Jane. It was exactly 19 dollars not even a cent for a tip.

"Excuse me... " Jane was a bit hesitant "...you don't look like someone who has trouble walking. You could just come to the restaurant over there and save 4 dollars for the delivery."

The man didn't even think about the proposal.

"No. I can't leave for more than 5 minutes.

Somebody has to observe the machines."

"Oh. So you have work... wait! You mean you live alone? Are you gonna eat that huge pizza all by yourself?"

Before she even finished her sentence, the door shut in her face.

You are not in a hurry.

Jane quickly delivered the rest of the pizzas and went back to the restaurant. There was a

birthday party scheduled in 2 hours and she needed to help with the preparations.

Just when she thought that all preparations were done, Boris (that was the name of her boss) approached her holding a wig, a big red nose and a funny hat.

"No way!" she said

"Come on Jana, they pay extra for clown. You will be clown"

She didn't like it when he called her Jana. It was the Russian version of her name, but to her it sounded alien and repulsive.

"How much?"

"20"

"..... alright" she said, feeling defeated.

It was a child's birthday. She was serving the food, acting like a funny clown, stopping the wild children from destroying the furniture. when the evening came, she was like a zombie. She went to bed without showering or even taking her clothes off and slept right away.

"My anaconda don't, my anaconda don't, My anaconda don't want none unless you got buns, hun"

The morning alarm rang from Jane's smartphone. She didn't like this song, but never remembered to switch it with another when she had a free minute. Also... it was somewhat convenient that the song was really loud in the beginning, so it woke her up pretty quickly. It would be annoying to look for another song with such a loud start. This was just a small, daily annoyance.

It was Wednesday. Her shift started at 11. Having some time to lose, Jane turned on the TV and watched a rerun of some reality show about people locked in a house. She already knew who would win, because she watched it a month ago.

She spent her morning watching that show and eating microwave popcorn.

"Hey Jana. Hurry up. There are 12 deliveries for today. I wrote all the addresses on a list." Boris seemed tired. He had made more than 20 pizzas in record time. He helped Jane put them on the motorcycle and he heading straight back

to the kitchen.

"Start with the old man from yesterday. His pizza is on top. All the pizzas are ordered by distance." he screamed without looking back.

"1 minute!" said Mr Morrison behind the door. He opened the door. This time he was not wearing the lab coat.

"One big margarita, just like yesterday. 19 dollars total."

She was a bit nervous because of all the work that awaited her.

"I only have a 20\$ bill." he said, while handing over the paper. He looked like he expected something.

"You want change? I don't have any money yet. You are my first customer."

She was telling the truth. She didn't care about the 1\$ tip, and just wanted to get the job done on time.

"Well that's simple then!" Said the old man

"Just go back to the restaurant and grab some coins. I am sure there will be some."

"Look. I am in a hurry. How about this. I will

come back here after delivering the other pizzas and I'll bring you your change."

She was getting annoyed, but at the same time she didn't want to argue. That would lose avon more time.

"Hahaha! You are not in a hurry! Stupid girl. Somebody told you to hurry and you decided to believe it. That's not what being in a hurry is."

'Crazy' she thought and got back on her bike. No time to waste arguing with a crazy person.

It is cold!

After finishing the deliveries, Jane returned the 1\$ to the old man. He grinned when he saw it. She left before any sort of conversation started.

'Not in a hurry? What does he know about real life. Some old fart that only stays at his home. He is not in a hurry! No! He is in a hurry to die of old age! Stupid man!'

On the next day Jane was still angry. She didn't really watch the blabbing coming from the TV and was only thinking about what the man said. She WAS in a hurry! Every pizza delivered more than 1 hour after the chosen time was free for the client. Of course Boris still wanted his money so at the end she had to pay from her pocket if she was late. She needed that job. She needed these money. She had to hurry.

"Only 3 deliveries today." said Boris "I wrote you a list. One of them is pretty far away so you don't have a lot of time to lose."

Jane got on her bike. She was about to stop in front of the old man's house, but instead kept driving.

'Yeah. I am not in a hurry to deliver his pizza. He can wait a bit...'

instead she went to the other 2 addresses first.

50 minutes delay. Jane was in front of the old man's door, holding a big pizza box.

"One minute!" said the man. Did he always say that? How annoying.

She handed him the pizza when he opened the door. He looked quite confused.

"It is cold!"

The pizza box was really cold. It was exposed to the wind for 50 minutes. The pizza itself probably tasted like a shoe by now.

"I delivered it on time. Less than 60 minutes delay. I just realized that I am not in a hurry, just like you said. 19 dollars please."

She reached in her pocket and grabbed the 1\$ she prepared for the man's change.

"Ah? So you wanna be a rebel? Hahahaha! I like you! Come in, come in."

"But I have to go back to..."

"Didn't you just say you are not in a hurry? Come in."

Jane entered his house. She didn't expect it to be so tidy. The old man looked messy, but his house was in perfect order. Jane felt ashamed

that her own home was like the cave of some wild animal, compared to this one.

"It is very ordered."

"Living without order wastes more time than putting stuff in order."

It felt like a rehearsed answer. Jane assumed that every visitor asked the same questions and got the same answers.

"Black or green?"

"What?"

"Tea."

"No. I really shouldn't...."

"Black or green?"

"...green."

To want something.

"Here is your green tea miss..."

"My name is Jane."

"Be careful. It is very hot."

Jane attempted to drink but quickly backed up with an 'aww' after burning her lips. Yes. Very hot. She was forced to wait 5 minutes before drinking it.

"Even if you said otherwise, you still believe to be in a hurry." said the old man.

"If I don't go back to work, the boss might find someone else for the job."

The man simply laughed quietly.

"I know Boris the russian for 10 years yang lady. He will not fire you. Nobody else would be stupid enough to work for him."

"... even so, I can't risk it. I need the money."

"You do? What for?"

Jane realized that she was talking with someone who seemed to not care about money. He didn't pay rent and judging by how cold his house was, his bills were probably negligible as well. And since he ordered pizza every day, she knew exactly how much he spent for food. He was basically a monk.

"I have to pay rent, and there are a few loans. Of course I need the money."

"Why would you take loans if you have no

money?" he asked as if it was something obvious.

"What?? That's crazy! Why would I take a loan if I did have the money? I could have just spent the money if I had them. A loan wouldn't be necessary."

"I guess this makes a bit of sense." said the man.

"So what loans did you take?"

The man didn't seem to have any sense of tact, but Jane could tolerate that.

"A students loan, a loan for my smartphone and a loan for my car."

"Oh? So you went to a university then?"

"College."

"And you studied..."

"Fine arts. I am a painter."

"No, you are not. You are a pizza deliverer."

That sentence annoyed Jane even more. ...but it was right. She was no painter. She hasn't painted anything in more than 3 years. She never had the time for it.

"Miss Jane. Your green tea is getting cold."

Jane drank almost half of the tea in one go. It

was a bit bitter.

"Miss Jane, I think you misunderstood me when I said that you are not in a hurry."

She looked at him with a confused face. He continued speaking.

"I wasn't saying that there wouldn't have been consequences if you were slow. I only said that you are not in a hurry. You see, being fast and being in a hurry are two different things."

Jane thought about this wordplay. What was he trying to say? What was the point of this conversation?

"I know what it is to be fast. What is to be in a hurry?" She asked

"To be in a hurry means to want something and to not have enough time to achieve it."

"So?"

"You don't look like you want anything, miss Jane. You are not ambitious and you don't seem to be in love. You look like someone who just works and sleeps. You are not in a hurry for anything."

Silence.

After finishing the work for the day, Jane asked for a day off tomorrow.

"What for?"

"To rest."

"No, you can't. I need you to work tomorrow."

In less than a minute, Boris refused her. No time to rest.

Disillusioned.

The next two days Jane didn't speak with the old man. She felt depressed. Then the weekend came.

"Hey hey! Jane is coming. Hi Jane."

Her 3 friends were already waiting for her at a cafe in a big mall. They were her friends from college, but only one of them kept on painting ...if one could call it "painting" to be sleeping with a bunch of rich men after selling them pictures of her own nude body. Her name was Teresa.

Another one got pregnant at 21 and never

finished studying. She had 3 kids now and was an experienced housewife. Her name was Ashley.

The third had married just 1 year ago and was holding a baby now. She seemed quite nervous even if Ashly non-stop repeated how simple babies are. Simple for her maybe, because she didn't have a job to go to. The third one was named Rebecca.

After exchanging all the standard greetings, they sat and continued their conversation about how fashion was shifting and how it was once again cool to wear clothes pretty much the same as five years ago.

They also talked about spirituality and finding the right balance between personal life and responsibilities.

Jane felt even more depressed when she realized that such a balance was impossible for her. How could she balance her personal life if she barely had any. Going out with these girls was the only thing she did for herself.

After the cafe, they went to the cinema. The movie was about some woman who bought a

love potion and used it on the man of her dreams. He wanted her, but didn't love her. At the end the potion lost its effect and for some stupid reason the man (a billionaire playboy) actually fell in love with the woman that cheated him.

What? Why? That didn't make any sense. Was Hollywood that desperate for putting a good ending on every story? Jane knew what would have happened if this happened in the real world. The woman would get arrested for drug trafficking or some other invented crime, and the man would have pretended to have never known her. Yeah. Drugs would have been a good explanation for the state the man was in. The woman would either end up in jail or in a mental facility.

Jane was disillusioned.

After the movie the group headed for the shopping area. The shopping area was so also very depressing. Jane and Ashley were always trying to find good deals, like some sort of scavengers. There were plenty of cheap rags,

but as someone who actually had money problems, Jane knew that buying 3 shirts made of spider-web was actually more expensive than buying a single shirt that would not tear to pieces the moment something scratches it.

After learning from Ashley, she became quite good at noticing good quality and evaluating it's proper price. Still - she felt ashamed every time she did that. On the contrary, Ashley seemed very proud of her skills.

Teresa and Rebecca didn't need to do any of that. One had a nice paying job as a secretary, and the other had 'pocket money' from some of her clients.

Just as the girls were about to enter the next shop, Jane noticed a smaller shop with a colorful 'Art Supplies' written on top.

"I wanna go there." she said.

The girls turned and, after seeing the shop she was pointing at, all smiled.

"It has been quite some time, hasn't it?" said Ashley. She looked at the shop with a nostalgic expression.

Teresa also reacted.

"What? No, no, no. This shop is overpriced and the goods are not that nice either. Lets see... we can meet on Wednesday and I can bring you to a real art store."

Jane smiled when hearing their words. She expected a bit of laughter, because of her sudden change of heart, but received only support.

"This one is fine. I don't really wanna wait. I want to draw something tomorrow."

"Alright. Lets go in."

A lonely old man

The doorbell rang.

"1 minute!"

Mr. Morrison Opened the door and saw a yang smiling girl.

"I didn't order pizza."

Jane laughed.

"You couldn't, even if you wanted to. It is

Sunday. The restaurant is closed."

The old man had a thoughtful expression. He finally understood why every once in a while nobody would pick up the phone when he tried to order pizza.

'So it was Sunday... I see now...'

The restaurant was working on weekends too, initially, but ever since the nearby mall opened doors, people simply stopped coming. Now most clients were workers from the nearby tech companies - programmers and the like. Even they didn't really want to go to the restaurant. Instead they usually ordered a delivery. Since all these buildings were empty in the weekend, Boris decided to close doors as well.

The old man stared at Jane.

"So why are you here then? Trying to be an uninvited guest?"

"Would you have invited me if I waited?"

"Maybe... if you had food."

"I brought something better."

The old man saw a package in Jane's hands. He moved from the door and waved her to come in.

Once they sat in the living room, the old man's face became a bit tense.

"So..."

"Are you not gonna offer me some tea again?"

Jane liked to play with his nerves. He was obviously curious, but she wasn't gonna spill the beans that easily.

For a second the old man showed an angry face. He softened almost immediately, but Jane managed to notice it. 'I was right' she thought.

Soon he came with two cups of green tea.

"Can I have some sugar as well. It was a bit bitter last time."

"Of course."

The old man went to the kitchen once more.

Jane couldn't help but be amazed at how well he was moving for his age. He was definitely at least 70, but she was sure that tasks like jumping, running, crouching and even climbing would not trouble him.

She looked at the walls. Last time she didn't have the time, so she barely noticed anything in here. Now she was freely looking around. She noticed a bunch of photos of young people, as well as a bunch of documents.

Oh? The documents grabbed her attention. All kinds of diplomas, certificates and even some medals from the war. Wait... That was from WWII... It was 2018... if he participated in the war in the 40s... just how old is he?

Jane heard a sound and turned. The old man was sitting in his chair.

"I am very curious? How old are you?"

"Hah. Did the medal confuse you? I am 88 year old."

"Really??? Wait... even so, it still makes no sense. You were what... 15?"

"I was 14 when I joined. But I was no soldier. They only gave me that piece of metal because I helped a bit with the atomic bombs."

Jane was out of words. When she was 14, she was still hugging her toy unicorn.

"Come now. Drink your tea and show me what you brought me."

Jane sat on her chair and put the package on the table.

"It's a painting. I was hoping that you would buy it."

She opened the package. In there was an oil painting of an old man in a lab coat. His hair was messy, but everything else seemed ordered.

"A portrait of me?"

"Yes."

"So if I choose not to buy it, nobody else would want it. This is blackmailing."

"Don't you want it?"

"Let's see... hmm... I look angry. Why did you paint me angry?"

"That's how you look sometimes."

"Is it..."

"..."

"I can give you 20 dollars for it."

"What? Only the materials are worth around 30."

"35 then."

"..."

"This is blackmail! Alright! I will give you

50!"

Jane knew that this was his limit. She agreed.

"Turn it around." She said.

On the back was written:

'A lonely old man - by Jane Clark'

Follow me!

Jane drank her tea. This time she enjoyed it properly. On the contrary, the old man seemed more annoyed than usual.

"I was wondering... shouldn't I be calling you Dr. Morrison instead of Mr."

"Whatever."

"But you seem to have earned it?"

"It means nothing. Anyone with a few years to waste can achieve that."

"It wouldn't be so easy for me."

"Nah. You just need to waste a few more years than the others."

Jane realized that he was calling her slow, but

she was already accustomed to his lack of tact.
Also - it was true.

"What about the photos over there. Are these your kids?"

The man suddenly softened. He was almost unrecognisable. His smile was kind and warm.

"No. That's me, when I was a bit younger. The woman is called Emma. A french girl. We never managed to have any kids."

"When were these photos taken?"

"1971 to 1973"

"You were 43 back then."

"I met her when I was 40. She was only 34."

"I thought people married young in the past?"

"Yes. People. But not scientists. We are a different breed. We were too busy studying when we were young."

Jane smiled. It was her turn to be the wise one.

"That might look like a waste of time now, but if you didn't spend that time studying, you probably wouldn't have met her in the same circumstances. Maybe you two would have never fallen for each other."

"Oh, shut up..." said the old man, but he didn't

seem annoyed at all.

Jane was all smiles.

A few minutes passed without anyone saying anything.

In that time, Jane finished her tea.

She stood from the wooden chair and smiled.

"It was nice talking with you, but I probably shouldn't intrude any more than this."

"So you only came to sell me your crappy picture and now you wanna run away."

"It is not crappy! That is how I see you!"

"And now I feel obliged to change how you see me. You are pretty good at blackmailing."

"You are imagining things..."

Mr Morrison stood up as well. His face was the familiar annoyed-angry from the picture.

"Follow me!" he said, while heading to the upper floor.

The second floor was completely different from the first one. Downstairs there was wooden furniture, a big fireplace, classy lamps hanging from the ceiling and walls. There was art in every element of the place.

Upstairs was just one huge open area. There were no walls to separate any rooms. Only a few columns that were supporting the roof. Instead of rooms, the whole floor was filled with machines. Jane didn't know any of them. Her eyes were moving from machine to machine and from screen to screen. Her illusion that his electricity bill was small got shattered in an instant.

"What is this?" she muttered with amazement. "The one I wanna show you is this one" he said, pointing at the biggest chunk of metal around "This is a quantum supercomputer. I modelled it after the design of some chinese guy."

Jane followed him to the machine. It was probably amazing, but if she had to be honest, she understood none of it.

"Miss Jane, have you ever heard of the deterministic theory?"

An arrow frozen in time

Jane thought for a moment. The question didn't seem to be a trap, or anything like that.

"Deterministic theory? It's probably about determining stuff, right? That word means something like coming up with answers."

She did her best to give a proper response. She wanted to show that she isn't some child who knows nothing of the world. She was very careful to not say anything that would make her look stupid.

"Exactly. The deterministic theory can be summarised very shortly. Everything happens for a reason. every reason is a consequence of what happened before that. That means that as long as one knows everything that is happening now, it is possible to calculate what will happen later."

Jane thought about what was said.

"So you want to predict the future? Is that

really possible?"

"Of course."

Mr Morrison grabbed a pen and some paper and drew something.

"Imagine this arrow, frozen in time. Just hanging in the air. Time is not flowing, so it is not moving. You can observe it, but you can not change anything about it. Where will that arrow be 1 second later."

"Of course it will...." Jane started confidently, but suddenly stopped. "...wait. Was that arrow shot by a bow, or is it falling. Which direction is gravity pulling at?"

"Smart girl! Knowing the positions is not enough. One also needs to know the forces being applied. Lets assume that this arrow was shot 2 seconds ago, from an english longbow, with speed of 160 FPS. The arrow is flying 15 degrees up and there is no wind. The air pressure is normal."

"..."

"Come on... you can use the paper if you wish."

"In 1 second it will be forward and a bit higher..."

"..."

He was talking with a painter after all. Of course she wouldn't know how to calculate that.

"Anyway... you get it now, right? If you have enough information you can predict the future."

"But what if the archer simply decides to not shoot the arrow at all. Isn't that unpredictable?"

"Why would he decide that?"

"I don't know... maybe because he sees that some weird old man is measuring his every movement."

"So he decides not to shoot for a reason. Reasons are consequences of past conditions. As long as I know the past condition, I can predict that the archer would not shoot his arrow."

"But... it is a random decision. He could either choose to shoot or not to shoot."

"Is it? I don't believe in randomness. In fact, my machine is proof that it doesn't exist. I tested it many times, you know. I would take 2 snapshots of different moments. For example 1 hour away from each-other. I would calculate

the future of the first snapshot and compare it to what actually happened. The fact that these tests passed proves that randomness doesn't exist."

"So... we don't have free will?"

"Does it matter? It was you who chose to come to my house. It was the archer who chose to shoot his arrow. Is that not free enough?"

"..."

"Just don't think about it. Free will doesn't matter. Even if you had it, nothing significant would change for you, because you would still make pretty much the same choices. You would make them because you are you."

"I see..." said Jane, feeling a bit better. Yes. She was herself. Why would she ever do something that didn't suit her?

Win the lottery

"So... about the computer. Can you win the lottery with it?"

"I already did. Once in the year 2000 and once in 2003. The jackpots were pretty big."

"Really??? Can we do it again? I will handle all the attention. You can keep 90%. I just want to pay my loans."

Jane was getting overly excited. Such opportunities were beyond rare.

"Not possible."

"What? Why?"

"The machine is not strong enough. I can only take a snapshot of the continent. I can scan every single atom in the whole North America, plus some of the islands... but that is not enough anymore."

"Every single atom... just how rich are you? Winning the lottery twice shouldn't be enough for something this big."

"I also have a few patents..."

"So... you really can't predict the lottery anymore?"

"I really can't. It was much simpler 18 years

ago. There were much less outer influences back then. People were still arriving with ships and airplanes, but that didn't really matter for short term predictions, like 1 month or so. Now the world is much more connected. Some stupid korean releases a video with a funny dance and the whole country starts acting like crazy."

"You mean Gangnam Style?"

"I mean everything. Every single cat video, international news, video game... all of that changes the moods of people and before I know it, they are already acting completely different from my prediction. It is even worse when some terrorist attack happens. In 2011 a few stupid airplanes ruined 3 months of predictions."

"Couldn't you predict the 9/11 attack itself?"

"I could, and I did. I predicted it about 2 minutes before the first plane hit it's target."

"Oh... but... you could predict where the survivors were, under all the rubble?"

The old man got annoyed again.

"You seem to think that this computer makes

me all-powerful."

"No..."

"I can only predict stuff if I have a reading of it's previous state."

"Aha..."

"If you don't know that there is an archer, how the hell would you predict where the arrow is?"

"I see..."

"Even if you can't use it now... this machine is amazing."

Jane was completely breathless. She was still repeating everything in her head, trying to fully realize what new possibilities it might create.

"I have a deal for you. If you bring me another painting in a week, I will show you something really interesting."

"But would you buy the new painting?"

"If it is a good one..."

Jane Went out. It was already about 9 PM. She was about to head home, but remembered something on the way to the car. She pulled out her phone.

"Hello. Hi Teresa.... Are you still free on Wednesday?.... Yes. Ok. Let's meet there."

What would you do?

Wednesday morning. Jane was wearing a thick coat and was standing in front of a statue of some angels trying to carry a dead man with their wings... or at least that's what it looked like to her? Ashley had said that this was a magic performer who was opening his coat and letting some birds fly from it.

Sometimes modern art was really strange.

Teresa said it best. 'This is just 5 pieces of metal, some wires and a really big rock.'

She didn't like abstract art.

Just as Jane was remembering Teresa's words, Teresa herself appeared.

"Lets go" she said without stopping "I promise you will like it."

They were going to an art supply store. According to Teresa This place had the best brushes, and even more importantly - truer colours.

The bell on the door rang two times as they entered. The place was a bit hard to find, but this way the rent was probably cheaper.

A muscular young man came from the back room. He was about 25, and was beautiful enough to be a model or an actor.

"So this is why you like this shop so much..."

"Don't judge. Look at his hand first."

Jane looked there and saw that he was wearing a ring. Of course he was! Why wouldn't he? No normal woman would ever miss a chance to lock a hunk like that with a ring...

"Jane, this is Josepe. Josepe, this is my friend Jane."

"Nice to meet you Jane." Josepe was smiling widely. He seemed to be accustomed of women staring at him, so he didn't do anything. "How

can I help you?"

"..... I don't know. Let me just look around first."

"She hasn't painted in a very long time. She needs some time to remember what is what." said Teresa and nimbly followed after Jane.

They spent about half an hour picking the right canvas and brushes. Then it was time for the actual paints.

"We have regular oils, professional ones and true ones. The last one are pretty expensive though. People usually buy only 1 or 2 colours, to strengthen a certain theme. It is rarely used as a main material."

Jane didn't remember studying anything about true colours. Was this some new invention. Teresa put 5 dollars on the table and said "She wants demonstration."

Jane was very surprised. In front of her were 2 lines of pink paint. One was what she would normally call pink. The other was... true. The name fit it surprisingly well. A true colour. It was much pinker than the other pink.

Josepe felt like an explanation was needed.

"Since photography is so precise, many painters stopped painting realistically and started expressing themselves in abstract ways. This here is an alternative approach. This pink colour is a better pink than any photo. It is even better than a photo of itself. Basically, one has to see the original. Photos are only poor imitations. Try it. Snap a photo of it and compare it."

Jane did that and smiled widely. This was great.

"Do you have true gray?"

"..."

"What?" asked Teresa "What the hell are you gonna draw? A graveyard?"

"No. It is a machine..."

"I don't have true grey" said Josepe.

"Whatever. Just give me the professional ones... Teresa, I wanted to ask you something. If you could predict the future, what would you do?"

"I would win the lottery."

"No. I mean if your predictions are not that precise."

"So it's like a crystal ball, where the images are kinda hazy?"

"Something like that, yes."

"I loud see which company gets really big and buy a share of it."

"Tell me something that is not related to money."

"I don't know..."

"May I?" said Josepe.

"Yeah, sure."

"I would see my wife. I would see our children and their children. I would check if they would still be with me when I am old and weak."

Jane and Teresa looked at each other. They both felt really sorry for not meeting this guy before he got married.

True wish

Four days passed. Initially Jane wanted to paint a funny picture. She was planning to draw Dr. Morrison in a lab coat, in front of his computer, pulling his hair angrily and screaming. On all screens, everywhere would be seen the cover picture of the Gangnam Style song. She laughed when she imagined it.

But her plan changed. Instead she drew an old man, staring into the screen where a single moment was frozen. It was one of the pictures she saw on his wall. Was her name Anna? No... it was Emma.

She didn't draw him as a doctor or as someone with endless vitality as she first intended. What she drew was a man who was extremely tired and was looking at the past, wishing to relive it.

It was Sunday evening. The bell on the old man's house rang.

"Come in!"

She knew he expected her, but still felt surprised to not hear the familiar '1 minute!'. It was also strange that the old man would leave

the door unlocked, when he had such an important machine just sitting on the second floor.

"I am upstairs. Just come straight up miss Jane."

She climbed the stairs as said.

"What if it wasn't me?"

"I can predict the future, remember? I knew the time you will ring the bell since noon."

"Right."

"Show me the picture."

"Did you not already see it with the machine?"

"Of course not! Now show it to me."

Jane opened the package she was carrying and showed him what she drew.

"Amazing..."

"Really?"

"Yes. You figured it out. My true wish."

Jane was really happy. This picture was a risk. She was afraid that it would make him sad and he would chase her away.

"Name a price."

"What?"

"Any price. I don't care. I will pay it."

"Really?"

"I told you. You figured out my true wish. This painting is priceless. I don't need the money anyway."

"..."

"Ok. Let's talk about this later. I promised to show you something cool right?"

Jane didn't say anything. She was still surprised of herself. When painting she was simply thinking about the words of some a shop clerk. Was it really that special?

Before she realized, the screen in front of her turned on. It was showing a street. Some people were walking. Some cars was driving... but it was old. The cars were old. The clothes too.

"This is... the 60s?"

"No. 6th of May 1973. If you look carefully, you will notice that this over there is the house we are in right now. On the right is the place you work... but it is not a restaurant yet. Further forward is what's really important."

The viewpoint on the screen moved by a bit and focused on 2 people.

"The photos downstairs are not really photos. Emma and I never stood in front of a camera. Just didn't get the chance... This is the only way I could see her again."

"All of this... just to see her again..."

"Is that strange. All old people live in the past. I just happen to know a thing about physics."

Jane's eyes were getting teary. She was an emotional girl to begin with.

The screen paused.

"Do you want some green tea."

"Yes... Gladly!"

Relax

They sat on the wooden chairs and drank their tea. Jane spoke first.

"I have a question. How is that possible? I

though your machine is not that precise. How can it recreate the past so perfectly? And we are talking about more than 40 years ago. Isn't that too far in the past?"

"Think about it."

"I am thinking. I really am. I just don't get it."

"Miss Jane, there is a huge difference between predicting the future and predicting the past. Remember what the deterministic theory stated."

"...Every event has a reason. Every reason is a consequence of a previous state..."

"Yes. But what is a reason."

"A reason is why something happens."

"A reason is an explanation. It is to understand why something happened. It is not really needed for the event itself. The sun shines even if you don't know the reason why."

"..."

"The proper way to state the deterministic theory is to say that every event is a consequence of what happened before it. No need to mention any reasons and stuff."

"I still don't see the difference between going forward and going backward."

"To go forward you have to guess about factors you do not know. Tracing backward is easier because you know exactly what the end result is. There is nothing to guess. Instead the computer simply calculated the only possible reason for the state of every single atom."

"It is deducing history..."

"Exactly! And it is always sure."

"But... I saw year 1973 on the monitor. These people would be so old now. Many of them are probably dead."

"True"

"How can you replicate them then? You can't have information about someone who died before your scans."

"Emma died before the scans. Yet I see her crystal clear."

Jane looked at him, fearing that she might have triggered him, but only saw a kind smile.

"I think you misunderstood miss Jane. My computer doesn't know that it is showing me my Emma. It is only showing me atoms and

particles. If something was wrong with the machine, I wouldn't see people walking around, but some strange shapes and colours - just atoms that were in the wrong place. To test my theory I went more than 200 years in the past. I programmed the computer to signal me for any anomaly it detects. It is perfect."

"What about outside influence? Ships with new people."

"Yes. I saw a lot of chinese during 1866. These railroads didn't build themselves."

"But how can you deduce who they were?"

"Chemistry. Their remains lay in the ground. Their urine is there too. Even better. They spoke with people and created memories of themselves. Tiny bio-chemical reactions in the brains of their children and friends."

"You can reconstruct them with just that?"

"Yes. Nanosecond by nanosecond. 15 years ago that was pretty hard, because the processing power of the computers then was crap. Now computers are stronger. My machine can recreate back 1 year in a single day."

"So you can solve every unanswered question about the past."

"I am not interested in that."

"Why..." said Jane and yawned

"You already know. You painted it. I am only interested in my Emma."

"Yes... Emma..."

Jane yawned again.

"You seem very tired. Just relax. Everything will be alright."

Just relax... close your eyes. It is safe.

Printer

Jane slowly came to her senses. She was still sitting on the old man's wooden chair, but she was on the second floor, where all the machines were.

Her hands were firmly tied to the chair, and so were her legs.

"What happened?"

"I drugged your tea." said Mr Morrison as if that was something completely normal. He didn't even look at her. He was busy on another machine, not the supercomputer.

"Why?"

Jane's head was still dizzy. She couldn't even speak properly without drooling. What did he drug her with? Elephant poison?

"It's a bit completed. Basically, I really like your painting. But you probably won't like what I'm about to do. The only way to keep you safe is to tie you up."

Jane attempted to break free from the ropes. It was futile. She was tied so hard that she wouldn't escape even if she tried for days.

"By the way..." said the man "I called my bank. They found you and transferred you three million dollars. Usually they don't do stuff like that on sunday night, but I am a special client."

"..."

"It is payment. For your picture. You never told

me a price, so I decided to give you 3 million."
"..."

"Alright. Let me show you something..."

He went behind the chair and started dragging it back to the supercomputer and its screen.

The screen was still showing the same frozen moment from before. Two people in love walking side by side.

"Let's continue."

He pressed a button and the images moved again. It was on slow motion. A black Ford car drifted from the road and headed straight to the couple. It threw the man to the side, where he hit his head in a lamp and lost consciousness.

The woman was dragged to the wall of the nearby building where the front side of the car completely smashed her body. She died instantly.

"The driver had a heart attack. He wasn't even that old. He was 50-something. I do not blame him for it. He died even before she did."

Jane felt crushed. She had seen many accidents in the news, but none was this real.

"Untie me, please"

She said. She still liked the old man, even if he was a bit crazy.

"I can't do that."

"Please."

"Let me explain. Watching the love of my life die over and over on this screen is not enough for me. I want to change it. I want her to live."

"You cannot change the past."

"I don't need to."

The man turned the chair and went back to the other machine.

"Miss Jane, do you know about 3D printers? Wonderful gadgets. I hold one of the patents related to them. Anyway... as long as you have enough plastic threads you can 3D print any shape, right?"

"..."

"Well... what I have here is a bit better than that. It reshapes atoms, not plastic threads. Best of all, it doesn't need materials. It just takes from the stuff around it. It applies the right forces in the right directions. Bam, it forms a

thing."

"..."

"What I want to do is restore that scene from 1973... actually half an hour earlier. I would then cut one of the electric posts and block the road. The driver would still get his heart attack but his engine would be turned off."

"...wait ...just how big of an area do you want to recreate?"

"The whole neighborhood."

"And the people?"

"They will be used as material for the people of 1973."

Jane's eyes expanded. Her hands started shaking. This man... he was talking about killing thousands.

I don't need her to love me

Jane started screaming. She screamed for help. She screamed for somebody to call the police. Some of the time she was simply screaming sounds like Aaa and Eee. It was loud. Really loud. Did all youngsters have voices this strong?

Not good!

The neighbors could definitely hear that. What if they really called the police? Well... he wasn't planning to sit and wait that long anyway. Nothing substantial would change.

But first he had to shut her up. He grabbed a piece of fabric - the one he used to clean the dust around here, and attempted to tie her mouth.

Crunch!

Before he realized it, she had bit his hand. His old bones broke like dry sticks between her teeth. His right hand was not gonna be usable

any time soon.

"Owww! Like an animal you are!"

He had to hit her head before she let go of the hand. A small stream of blood leaked from her temple.

Dr Morrison went to the floor bellow. He was in a hurry. One minute later he came with an injection.

"It was my mistake for keeping you awake, miss Jane."

He tested the injection and then stuck it in her neck.

"Unfortunately I am poorly prepared. I can only make you relax now. Giving you a full dose might kill you and that would defeat my purpose."

Jane's whole body loosened up. Her mouth started drooling again. She looked like she was trying to say something, but only mumbling came out.

"I am not angry about the hand, miss Jane. It was my mistake. Now please stay quiet. The neighbors would probably come to ask questions."

True enough. The door rang.

"1 minute!" He screamed like he did any other day. He instantly put on the mask of the angry old loner and went down.

"Yes I know... It was the new TV... of course I know. I heard it much louder than you did.... It almost made me deaf.... As if I would want to do that again? Just go home, Ok? You know that I am not the type to bother people. Enjoy your evening and let me enjoy mine."

The situation with the neighbors was handled.

"Sorry that you had to wait, miss Jane."

He went back up and checked her condition.

She was barely awake.

"Emma..."

"Something about my Emma? Yes?"

"...won't... love ..you."

"I know that, dear miss Jane. I am but a lonely old man, and also someone who would kill thousands for her. An angel like her would never accept a murderer."

He went back to the machine he was preparing.

"I plan to kill myself right after completing my task. If I am lucky, Emma wouldn't even know

who I was. You see... I don't need her to love me. She has her own Samuel Morrison from 1973. She already loves him. I only want to make sure they survive the day and get a chance at living a happy life."

"Mur..derer!" Jane's mouth was drooling every time she tried to talk.

"Look at it differently. Yes, thousands of people would die, but another thousands would get a second chance to live. My neighbor for example would become 40 years younger in an instant. His parents would be alive once again. In the past they died of a disease that is now curable...

I am not saying that everyone will be happy with what I am doing, but... not everyone would suffer."

Jane didn't look convinced. She was staring at him with eyes that were hard to describe. He felt like she was looking at him as one looks at a monster.

To attempt a time travel

Mr. Morrison dragged the chair next to the machine, ignoring her screams. He had tried to gag her, but she bit his hand pretty hard.

"Just stay still, miss Jane. You will be alright as long as you do not cross this circle."

There was a small circle drawn on the ground with chalk. This was the safety zone. The machine would not touch anything inside it. Only the outside.

There was no sound and no vibration. The ground didn't start to shake. Jane expected some movie effects, but reality turned out to be scarier. The ground outside the circle, the walls, the ceiling, the lamps and even the people outside... everything fell apart to it's basic materials, forming a single blob of matter. It was black and it kinda looked like water... or maybe a swimming pool filled with extremely tiny pieces of dust. The blackness probably

came from how compressed they were to each other.

Jane's eyes expanded. Genocide! This was genocide!

The decomposed area formed a perfect circle. That was the range of the machine. In the distance she could see a building cut in half. The people inside have not yet realized that their children and parents had disappeared, along with their rooms and furniture.

It happened in an instant. The circle she was in was like a lonely island standing in a sea of... everything.

Then the reconstruction started. It started everywhere at the same time. Every single atom in the sea of elements started moving on it's own at the same time. They arranged themselves and connected once more, forming streets, buildings, cars and people.

In less than 4 seconds the whole process was completed.

Jane looked down. The circle she was standing on looked so much older than the rest of the

building. The supercomputer was gone and so were the other machines. Decomposed and used as materials for something else. Mr Morrison probably didn't need them any more.

The old man was happy. He had succeeded. This was what he was in a hurry for. This was what he wanted. A second chance. He was probably afraid that he might die of old age before completing this work. No wonder his health was so good. He did everything he could to stay alive. Just a little longer. Just one more year....

His dedication was hard to believe. when did he start this plan? 30 years ago? 40 years? He probably started by inventing and patenting a few stuff, yo secure himself a stable cashflow. He needed that in order to complete his plans.

Then he dedicated himself to research. ...But the computers were slow. At that point a person like him would probably invest some money in the research of quantum computing. For him time was much more precious than money. And sooner or later, he would run out of time.

One day he did it! He saw an image of his Emma. But it wasn't enough! What if there are small errors - things that he could not see on the screen, like a few atoms out of place in her head.

He only had one chance. He had to make sure. He could risk his Emma's future.

He spent 3 more years, analyzing the past 200 years. Checking for anomalies. Comparing famous photos with his own data. He verified that there were no aliens in no zone 51. He verified who had assassinated this or that president. He checked pretty much the whole history of his nation, just to be absolutely sure that he is not making a mistake.

And now. Now he succeeded. He took life in order to give life. He was playing god.

Playing god

"Let me untie you" said the happy old man as he cut the rope.

Jane's hands hanged loose beside her. She was still drugged and couldn't even talk properly.

Mr. Morrison reached behind her and grabbed a chainsaw. That was probably what he planned to stop the traffic with. Such a chainsaw was perfect for cutting the wooden electricity post on the street. It, of course, was also part of the old man's plan.

What happened next surprised them. A loud crash was heard and the floor vibrated.

Something had smashed a wall on the lower floor.

"What? No, no, no, no! There should be 30 minutes till the crash! Why? Why, why, why?"

He looked terrified. Did he miscalculate? Did he change something he shouldn't have changed? What the hell was going on?

He ran outside hoping that he could fix this situation.

Moments after the man left, a second crash was heard. Then a third.

What was happening out there? Jane tried to

get up from the chair, but ended up falling forward. Her head hit the floor, but she was still drugged and couldn't feel the pain properly.

She wanted to crawl forward but her body did not agree. She blacked out.

How much time had passed? She had no idea... Jane rolled on her back. Her head felt terrible. Oh, that's right... she fell... and now... was that blood?

She slowly sat up. There was a clock on the wall, but it was of no use to her. She didn't remember when that whole mess started.

She stood up and headed for the staircase.

While going down, she could see the front side of a retro car sticking from the living room wall. The driver looked pretty dead.

Jane, while somehow keeping her balance, went to the car.

Yep... he was definitely dead. As dead as one could be. So much blood...

Jane went outside.

Bodies.

Bodies everywhere.

The few cars on the road had crashed into different obstacles. The people who were supposed to be walking around had instead fallen where they stood. No wounds could be seen on their bodies. It almost looked like they had never been alive to begin with.

Jane was never a brave one. The moment she saw the graveyard in front of her, she wanted to escape.

So she ran. She ran and ran.

Everywhere she went, she saw the same thing over and over. Piles of dead bodies.

'He... he failed... these people are all dead... the whole neighborhood...'

There were flashing lights at the end of the street. A police car was making it's way to her. A voice spoke from the loudspeaker.

"We are the police! Stay where you are. We only need you to answer a few questions."

The one speaking was a middle aged policeman with a thick mustache. But even if his voice

was the calmest it could be, it couldn't calm down Jane, who was only looking at the gun that the younger policeman behind was aiming at her.

She lifted her hands above her head. Then she started crying.

"I just painted a picture... I just..."

As tears were flowing down her face, her words became harder and harder to understand. The older policeman went to her and lowered her hands. He slowly led her to the police car.