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A World Without Teleporters
by Wagner Truppel

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[1578 words]

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"Downsize my operations? Are you nuts?", exploded Dr. Rok Madevil, in a tone made of one part disdain and two parts anger.

"I assure you, Doctor, that I am most certainly not insane.", replied the evil efficiency expert, in his eternally calm and restrained demeanor. "Despite your many years of service to the Academy," he added, "your record as an evil mad scientist bent on world domination has been spotty at best. It is time to downsize, or the Academy will rescind your membership privileges."

At the mention of the Evil Academy of Mad Sciences, Dr. Madevil turned away from the large window and faced the efficiency expert the Academy now have in their employ. Madevil himself had hired him on occasion and had learned to value his advice, though he would never openly admit it.

"Rescind my privileges? I'm on the Board Of Regents. They can't rescind my privileges!", snarled the evil doctor, dropping the disdain act but still angry at the prospect of having to dismantle his operations.

"I am afraid they can, and they have authorized me to relay to you the message that they will, should you not reduce your expenditures by at least 63 percent before the next financial review cycle", replied the consultant, still in a completely calm and restrained fashion. Upon finishing his sentence, he took another sip from the hot tea he had been served and carefully deposited the cup back on the table.

"That's absurd! This must be some kind of plot by my arch-enemy to get me off the board."

Dr. Madevil had now returned to the large window, which spanned the entire eastern wall of the conference room. Of all 127 conference rooms in the invisible dome that comprised his European lair, floating over the Øresund Sea between Denmark and Sweden, Dr. Madevil liked this room best, on level 13, because of the large glass window facing the Øresund Bridge.

He had always been fascinated by bridges, in a morbid sort of way. Rumor has it that he orchestrated the destruction of the famous Tacoma Narrows bridge in 1940. He denies any involvement, however, which is odd considering that, if the rumors were true, it would have been his most successful enterprise.

"That is absurd", he repeated, now in a lifeless voice, betraying his impending acceptance.

Deep inside, he knew that the efficiency consultant was right. Dr. Madevil had attempted to take over the world several times, failing miserably on every attempt. The most famous and most disastrous was also the most damaging to the image of evil mad science as a career. According to the Academy's records, student enrollment decreased substantially for nearly a decade after that fiasco.

Nonetheless, Dr. Madevil had always been well respected as an instructor, having mentored many hundreds of students in the difficult art of mad science, so he eventually settled for an official teaching position at the Academy, following that most famous failure.

He also knew that, sooner or later, his extravagant lifestyle would cost the Academy's coffers a great deal, for both his main lairs had been maintained over the years through the Academy's student registration fees.

It is true that his volcanic lair under the Krakatoa and his cloud city over Denmark had both been originally built at the expense of his own vast fortune but decades of teaching and research, which often caused a substantial amount of destruction of the lairs' facilities and disposable personnel, resulted on a great deal of financial burden on the Academy because he had managed to strike a deal upon which he would use his lairs as real-life lecture rooms and student research facilities in exchange for the Academy's financial backing of any reconstruction costs.

The situation took a turn for the worse in recent times, first after he allowed a particularly gifted student to live in and take control of the Krakatoa lair, at no cost, and later, after his use of the cloud city as the place where the final graduation exam for the class of 2009 was to take place. The graduation exams always cause a great deal of destruction and the costs of rebuilding several levels of the cloud city were staggering. That is not to mention the fact that the intelligence-enhanced Igor he created specifically for the graduation exam resulted in an uprising among Igors that is still causing the Academy a great deal of trouble.

Therefore, despite his dramatic denial, he knew that he'd have to follow the consultant's advice. So it was that, in the end, Dr. Madevil had to shut down all operations in his cloud city and move to one of his secondary lairs.

Preparations for the scheduled shutdown and subsequent transfer of operations were proceeding on schedule until a power overload in two of the three artificial singularities that power the city and its teleporters destroyed the latter, along with twelve city levels.

As a result, Dr. Madevil had no option but to resort to a less advanced means of transportation. For the first time in his life, he'd be taking advantage of those vehicles that the rest of the world calls airplanes.

Having heard of the constant delays and excruciatingly slow airport procedures, Dr. Madevil had decided to arrive at the Copenhagen airport nearly three hours ahead of his scheduled departure. Surely that would be plenty of time to check in his most sensitive equipment. Alas, things didn't go quite as he had planned.

"Good afternoon, sir. May I see your passport and boarding pass, please?", asked the beautiful danish woman at the Scandinavian Airlines check-in counter.

"Hello," said Dr. Madevil, with a forced and nervous smile. "I checked in online but I haven't printed my boarding pass."

He considered explaining to the young woman that one of his genetically altered pets, a cross between a dog and a pigeon, had eaten his boarding pass but, in a rare display of wisdom, decided against it.

"That is not a problem, sir. Please deposit your suitcases on the scale, one at a time," continued the counter lady, oblivious to his strange mannerisms.

Dr. Madevil did as he was told, mesmerized by her physical beauty. He would have done anything else she might have asked of him, too, which explains why he didn't react particularly negatively when she told him that his baggage was excessively heavy, beyond the maximum limit, and that he would have to remove some of the contents, shift them between the various pieces, or send them as cargo.

After considerable effort, and an inordinately large amount of time, Dr. Madevil finally managed to distribute the weight between his three checked-in pieces. He also had to move some of the heavier parts of his multiphased biomelter from the checked-in pieces to his hand luggage.

"Very good, sir. Your luggage is no longer above the maximum limit, but you are above the free allowance per piece. You'll need to visit the British Airways ticket office to obtain from them a written quote of your allowance, come back here so I can issue the proper paperwork and check in your luggage, and then you have to go to the Scandinavian Airlines ticket office to pay for the extra piece and the extra weight," the pretty lady explained.

"How am I doing in terms of time?", asked Madevil.

"You have 35 minutes before the flight takes off, sir. You should hurry.", said the lady at the counter, smiling.

Dr. Madevil then proceeded to tour the airport, visiting the various ticket offices, as she explained. Then, 12 minutes prior to his flight taking off, he was finally ready to go through the security check.

"I am sorry, sir, but you'll have to open your hand luggage. There is so much in it that we can't see what's inside, using the scanner," said the security officer.

Worried that he might miss his flight, Dr. Madevil made no attempt to argue. Instead, he worked as quickly as possible, laying the contents of his hand luggage flat on the surface, for the officer to examine.

"I don't think you're allowed to take these with you, sir. Please wait a moment while I check with my superiors," said the officer. She was referring to the barbell-looking pieces which turned out to be the power source for Dr. Madevil's Instant Flesh Liquefier. He had moved those out from one of his checked-in pieces.

A moment later, she returned and confirmed her original suspicion, explaining that the unauthorized pieces might be used as weapons. With 5 minutes to go, Dr. Madevil decided that the power source was expendable and could be easily replaced, so he told her to do with it as she pleased.

"Your attention please," said a voice on the airport's PA system. "Passenger Rok Madevil, flying on Scandinavian Airlines flight 1507, please proceed immediately to gate B102."

As he heard his name being called, Dr. Madevil desperately tried to run the distance from the security check-point to the gate, carrying his now much heavier hand luggage and supercomputer equipment, all the while asking why the two locations were so far apart and why there were no baggage carts that he could use.

With a minute to go, he finally made it into the airplane and its door was closed shut behind him. Teleporting is so much easier, he thought, as the plane lost touch with the Danish capital.