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ALL  
SCI-FI CLUB  
PRESENTS

LAMPQUOTTERIE  
FALL 2000

Amanda Piering



# The Alfred University Science Fiction Club

Presents...

## LANRUOJIFICS: CHRONICLES OF REALITY VOLUME VI

### Officers:

Benjamin Miller: President  
Jennifer Shuler: Vice President  
Erica Hesselbach: Secretary  
Jamie Kern: Treasurer  
Jamie Kern: Editor

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Amanda Piering: Cover  
Andrea Schwartz: "Dianna"  
Jennifer Shuler: art  
Amanda Piering: "Voice of the Other"  
Katerina Naumento: Lots of art!  
Benjamin Miller: "Our Neighbors"  
D.C. 'Londo' McCoy: "Lost Time Never Returns"  
D.C. 'Londo' McCoy: "Yes!" (art)  
Justin Long: "Artificial Disaster"  
Jamie Kern: "The Moirai"  
Aaron Hydrick: Comic Strip  
Aaron Hydrick: Lots of art!  
Erica Hesselbach: art  
Anonymous: Untitled

### EDITOR'S NOTE:

The Alfred University Science Fiction Club has changed in many ways since the last distribution of Lanruojifics. Not only did most of the old members graduate last semester, thus completely replacing the leadership of the club, but many new members joined. The new members are just as interested and involved in the club's activities as the ones who were here last year – in fact, the McNamara room is becoming too small to hold our meetings in! This is the first time I have edited the Sci-fi Journal, and I would like to take this opportunity to say that I enjoyed it immensely. I look forward to the next issue!

The AU Sci-fi web page can be found at:

<http://campus.alfred.edu/organizations/auscifi/index.html>

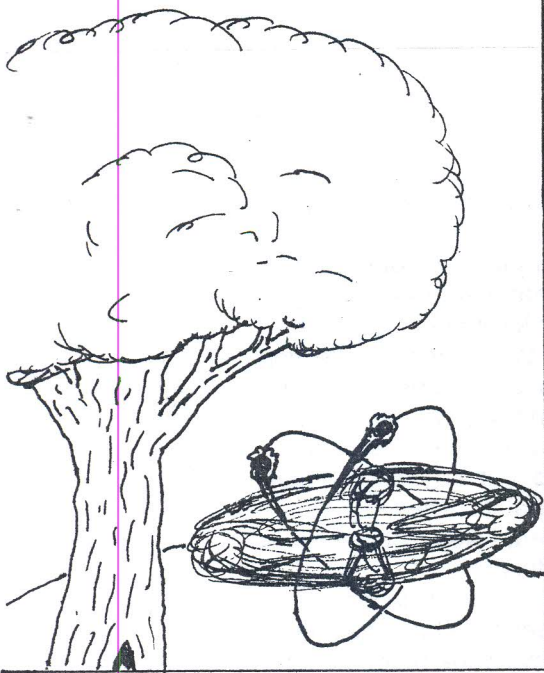
Past issues, events sponsored by the AU Sci-fi Club, and other information related to this organization is on that site.

A copy of each issue of Lanruojifics is donated to Special Collections, located in Herrick Library. We hope that students will take advantage of this by enjoying the fiction and art that members of our club created.

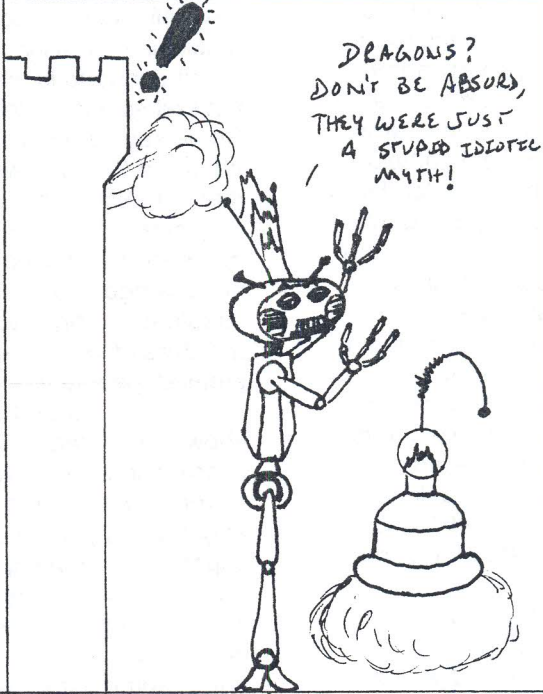
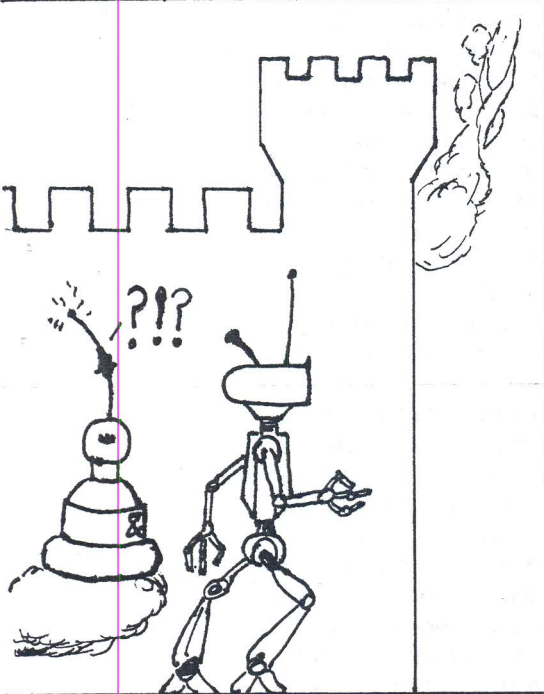
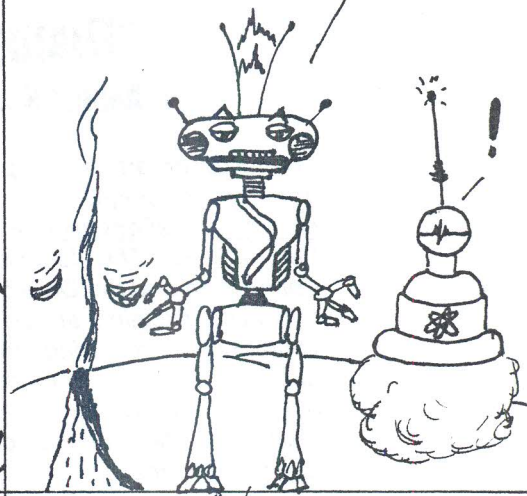
Read on, and enjoy!

*"I hope you brought a change of underwear. You're going to need it when you read this." – Londo M., Babylon 5*

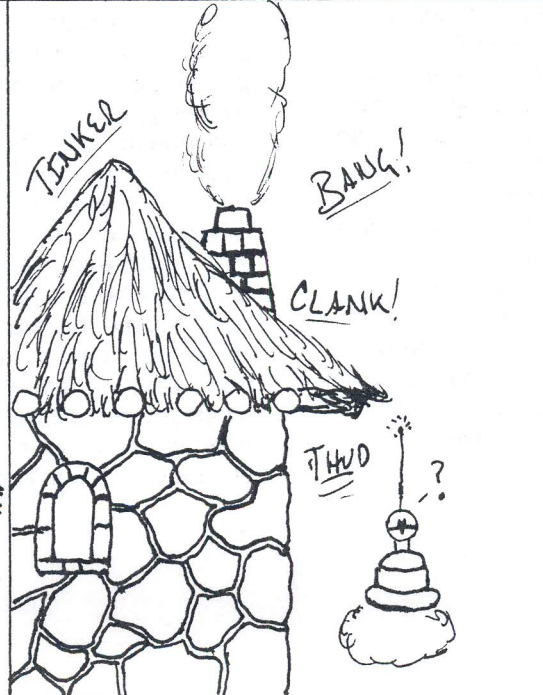
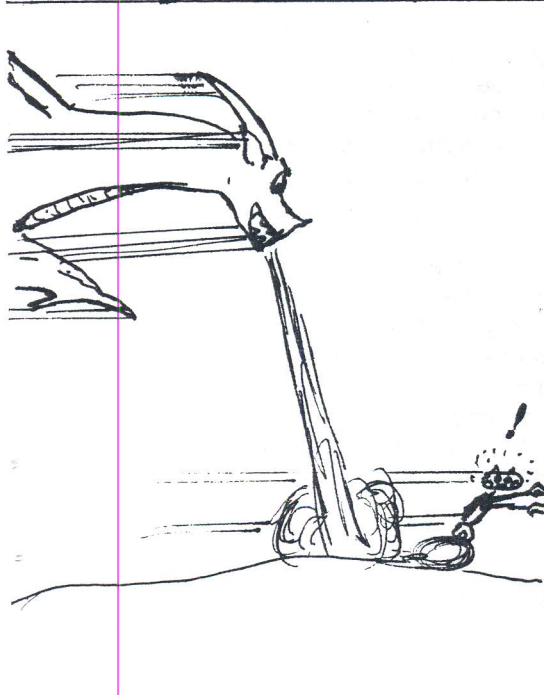
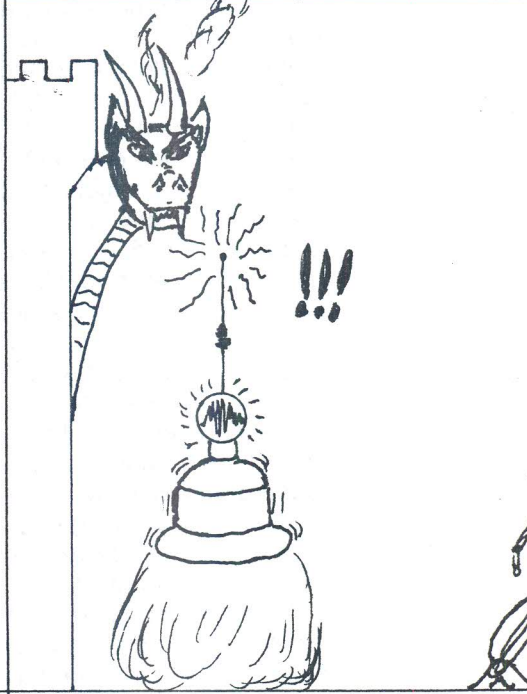




SO YOU SEE, SHAZBOT, JUST AS  
I SAID, TIME TRAVEL IS NOTHING  
MORE THAN SIMPLE APPLICATION  
OF THE CORRECT MATHEMATICAL  
PROPERTIES !!



DRAGONS?  
DON'T BE ABSURD,  
THEY WERE JUST  
A STUPID IDIOTIC  
MYTH!

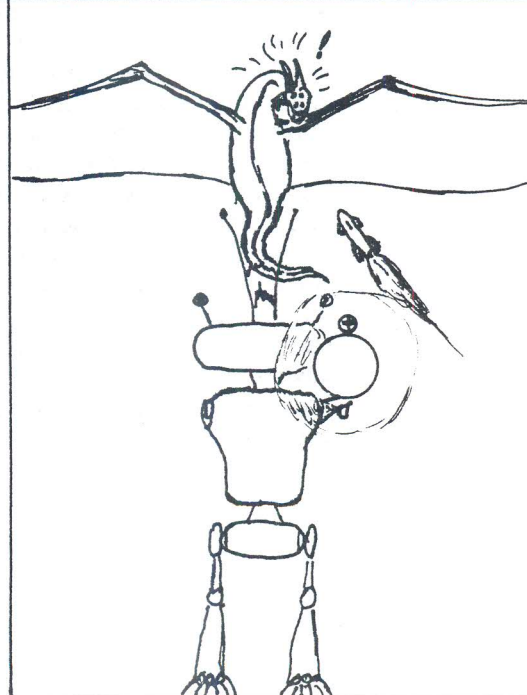


TENKER

BANG!

CLANK!

THUD





# "DIANNA"

BY ANDREA SCHWARTZ

*The following article was posted at a link from the web page, <http://www.nsf.gov/bio/dbi/dsites.htm>, dated Feb. 9, 2183. The National Science Foundation and the Division of Biological Initiatives disclaims all responsibility for the content of the following article, and will neither confirm nor deny the claimed identity of the author. The editors of this journal are unable to determine the source of this article as of press time.*

My name is Donna. Or Diane. Or Dee. I prefer Dianna. See, I was the fourth of the quintuplets they made, so my name starts with "D." The people who made us didn't give me a name, just the letter. Now, I'm the only one of us left. The only others I remember are Angel and Chloe. Chloe I saw the most recently, a few years ago. I don't know if she died, or was killed--either by the researchers, for scientific reasons, or by protesters--or if she was just moved somewhere else. And all I remember about Angel is the three of us little girls playing together. We were princesses, and one of the researchers a white knight, while another played the dragon. We always played together perfectly: we knew who would do what and never disagreed. We didn't know then that we had all been created the same way, created identical.

Now that I do know that I was created, I still don't understand what all the fuss is about. Why are there some people who want to kill me? The researchers, the scientists, they tell me this, they tell me that is why I can't ever go Outside. I wonder what is so wonderful Outside that they are always apologizing for not allowing me there. These halls are home to me, I need nowhere else. The Internet shows me Outside, and I do not see anything great about it. I am used to this place. The ceilings pale blue, the floors white, and a nice glowing yellow lighting from above. Nearly all the researchers wear the same thing: white semi-transparent plastic. It covers their whole bodies, from head to toe. The mask on their face allows their words to come out, and I guess the air as well, though

that could all be internal to the suit. I will have to ask.

Some few of them do not wear those plastic suits, they wear their own clothing. They're the ones I talk with the most often. I've been told the suits are for my protection, not theirs, but I'm not sure if I believe them. It's hard to understand why all those people would wear such things, rather than just making me wear one, but maybe it's to make me feel more comfortable. They say it's because I was created, I was bioengineered. I do not understand this.

I mean, I am familiar with the concept of bioengineering--I have had the standard education everyone receives, so they tell me, but I am interested in art, in music, in creativity, not science. What I do not understand is why I am so special. I do not feel special. I feel like ... me. That is all. Some say I am a freak of nature, that I am an affront to God's power, his plan. I don't know that I am either, but how *could* I know? The only others I have to compare myself to were my "sisters," now gone, and the researchers, not average by any stretch of the imagination. My Internet access provides me a picture of what many "normal," biologically created, people are like.

Am I superhuman? My IQ tests show me average. They tried to create me average in every way, so I would not scare anyone by being too good, and I would not engender pity or be considered a cruel experiment by being below average. I do not wish to take over the world. I don't even truly want to escape, for if I did, I would probably be killed by some fanatic. Will I die of old age? Some think I will not, but I age, just like everyone else does. I grew. I went through puberty. And although I am now out of puberty and thus don't see changes in myself as easily, I have no reason to doubt I will continue to age. The researchers planned everything too well for me not to do so.

I guess I just want everyone to realize I'm just me. I'm human. I'm a person too. I don't even belong to myself, if there is any crime here, that is it. The researchers didn't tell me this, but they don't hide it from me, either. I am not prevented from reading, from watching television, from listening to whatever music I desire, and I have all the Internet I could wish. I'm sure they monitor it all, but that doesn't bother me.



But I don't belong to me. I am a thing, owned, a possession. How long ago were the last slaves in the world freed? Besides me. I do not vote. I am not a citizen of any country. If I am mistreated, the United Nations cannot act on my behalf. I do not know what has happened to my sisters in creation. We were created five of us, and now I am the only one remaining. I have asked the researchers, but they will not answer me. They even leave the room as soon as I ask; I guess they have been told to do so, so that they will not have any chance of giving anything away. I learned not to ask any more. I have searched the Internet, and find no references to any of us by name or the number of us since before I can remember. The records do not show how many of us exist at any time after our "birth," nor whether any of us have died or been moved. And of course, the location of this place is not revealed, not even to me. Maybe not even to the researchers.

I do not legally exist as an individual; I am owned. I can be ... destroyed by my owners as they wish. I am a thing. I do not know who it is that owns me. It is possible that the others were killed for *research* purposes. Chloe disappeared while we were in our teen years, while we were going through puberty. Angel must have been before that, but after I was old enough to remember things somewhat. I would guess I was between eight and twelve. Maybe we are being dissected at major stages of our lives. The others, B and E, may have been done while younger children. Not prenatal though: us five were the ones to make it to full term; there may have been--I am sure there were--others who weren't allowed to get that far. They could have been killed, dissected; they could have died in the process, by mistake; or they could just be frozen, to wait until our experiment is done. Or maybe their experiment is running, too, just somewhere else.

Why am I last? Was I chosen?  
When am I due? Or will they let me live?

Maybe it was to be done alphabetically. Angel taken first, in childhood. B as a teen. Chloe at maturity. Myself at motherhood. And lucky E in old age, or maybe she would even have been allowed to live her full life, so they could find out what we were likely to die of. Or maybe I would have been taken in old age, and E

would then live out whatever life was left to her. What life is left to me now?

If one of these schemes was the plan, that would mean B must have had some accident occur to her which necessitated the taking of Chloe during puberty. And E is also missing from my memory and life. So perhaps now I will fill the next role of death, at maturity. I do not know, and I will not ask this one of the researchers.



So I spend my time as fruitfully as I may. I try to enjoy what time there is to me. And I try to free myself. I am sure it is monitored; hence this plea must be posted anonymously, though its writer is apparent. I have been unable to apply for citizenship of any country. It cannot be done online. I would need records of my birth, records of my country of origin, and I have none. I have no form of ID card at all. I do not exist.

I have tried, I have tried. And this is all that is left to me now, an appeal to the public. Some of you will read this, and fear it, thinking I try to break free. You may come after me, to hurt me or to kill me. But I trust my captors to keep me safe, even as they keep me. And some of you will be moved to pity me, to feel sorry for me, to do what you can to help me. I don't know how you can help me. Maybe appeal to your government, to the U. N., or to those who own me.

Margaret Atwood wrote, in A Handmaid's Tale, that there are two kinds of freedom: freedom to, and freedom from. I have as much "freedom to," to do whatever I might wish: my wants are small and quickly granted when I ask. And I have "freedom



from" nearly everything: no crime, no work, and more money is spent on my safety than many cities spend on their police force. I am in no way harmed and in many ways pampered; many would give the length of their lives for a year of what I live. What more could I ask for?

Freedom from my captors. I would not wish to leave, I assure you, don't fear that. What I *am* is for the good of everyone in the world. My very existence will better the human race. I could not do so if I did not stay here and allow whatever tests they ask of me. But I do not want to have my life cut short by the researchers. There was a man in the 20th Century who was on life support, and went to court to be allowed to turn off the machines when he wished. He finally won the case, but upon winning, he did *not* immediately kill himself, "pull the plug," as it was expected. Neither will I run from this my home should I be granted the ability to do so.

Is it fair that I am kept captive here? Is it fair that a mere accident of my birth should prevent me from ever voting? From being a citizen of anywhere? From having the same rights as you? From being entitled to a *life*? The Declaration of Independence, the birth of the great nation of America, begins with momentous words. I quote:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are *created* equal, with the right to *life, liberty*, and the pursuit of happiness."

*Diana Nobody*  
*Feb. 9, 2183*

## **"VOICE OF THE OTHER"**

**By AMANDA PIERING**

"Ahh, the things teenagers do today," sighed one of the uniformed men from the front of the car.

"I know Bob; and her own mother!"

"She wasn't my mother," I calmly cut in. I know I can't let them see that I have emotions. I can't let myself have any emotions. I don't deal well with guilt, not that I ever have any.

"Quiet!"

They both didn't like me talking. I suppose they didn't want me to seem real; they were in denial. The sharp reply didn't bother me; I wasn't really listening anymore,

anyway. I was concentrating on what we were passing, wanting to know how to get back from here. I was slightly surprised as we passed the Dunkin' Doughnuts, I guess Bob wasn't in the mood for food. I wanted a little more time before reality could hit. We passed the bright yellow sign in the form of a familiar M. I had hoped all the stereotypes were right, but we didn't stop there either.

They were just afraid of me. I couldn't really see why. I was slim and just over five feet with pale blond hair and some freckles scattered over my nose and cheeks; they only showed up because I was so pale. I looked like an innocent waif of a girl who could do no harm because she was weak and vulnerable. My looks often came in useful; but not now. I suppose it was the blood still streaming from my hands and face and hair that let them see what I really was. Or, perhaps it was the look of pure ice that was in my eyes. At this moment I looked like a witch queen, waiting to calmly wreak havoc.

I looked in the rearview mirror from the back seat and inadvertently caught Bob's eye. He quickly averted his eyes. I could smell his fear wafting from the front of the car. It was mixed with something else, though. Something which had recently become familiar to me. Oh, it was horror; he was horrified to look at me. I didn't care. I pulled up both hands and pushed my hair back and felt it slap against my bare shoulder. I really didn't care.

This was good. I was higher above him anyway. Humans should be afraid of me; after all, they have reason to be. I look just like them except I can do more. I actually have senses and strength. Humans are so pathetic, just because you appear one way they assume you couldn't be anything else. Well, we see where that got *her*.

She had assumed by my weak appearance that she could boss me around. Tell me what to do. She was wrong, very wrong. I first met her when she came home with my father, married. I can still remember how sickeningly happy they looked.

"Nadia, meet your new mother," my father timidly exclaimed.

"I'm so happy to finally be meeting you; I hope we can be a real family," Jody added. She reminded me of a Barbie except for the fact that she was more fake.



"I'm ecstatic," I replied in a monotone. I couldn't help but add, "Dad's been looking for a wife for a while; I'm glad he met someone who *almost* lives up to his expectations. I guess he must've gotten tired of looking for a perfect match."

I cold tell my father didn't get it because he looked a little puzzled; she didn't. I saw her eyes turn to slivers and her lips go white. I knew she understood. I wasn't about to let some Barbie come in thinking she could run the show. I was in charge. I have been the boss ever since my mother died, since I was fourteen, since the change. I didn't need her to ask where I was late at night and why my room was often decorated tornado style. My father was blind; he's been dazed since mom died, three years now. I didn't need her to find out what I was. My top priority is to protect myself, my mother taught me that.

"Establish dominance from the beginning," she said.

That's what I did. I was used to being the dominant female. With my father, I was used to being dominant, period. The Barbie would not interfere or challenge me. I had to make sure of that. And I tried. She was one of those fake types who treats you nice to your face but when you're not looking tried to run you over with the Ford Explorer. I hate her.

My hate reached its peak when I caught her looking through my room. It was the last straw. She had already proved herself to be a hypocritical witch (figuratively speaking of course). She'd tell me not to do something and then do it herself. When I pointed this out, I would get yelled at and she'd say, "I'm the grown-up!" Meaning I'm the pathetic child who can't be trusted. I lasted about three months. I controlled myself until I found her in my room at dusk.

It was a full moon that night, and I was late getting into the woods. Every full moon I drive ten minutes away from my house. This way I can get deep into the woods fast, and there's only a slim chance that anyone will see me change. I came up to my room to get my keys and there she was, snooping around my room looking for something incriminating.

I could already feel my muscles tightening and my skin stretching. I was also getting very agitated. Who did she think she was? This invasion was utterly unforgivable.

"Oh, Nadia, I didn't expect you upstairs so soon," she calmly responded as she became aware of my presence.

"What do you think you are doing?!" I growled, enunciating every word.

"Why, I'm just straitening things up a bit. You really should try to keep your room more organized."

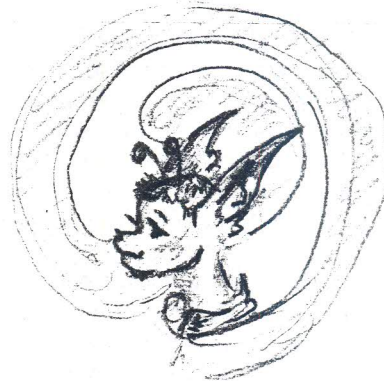
She was so patronizing; did she really think I was going to believe that? I was itching all over. I could feel blood pounding in my ears. I stalked toward her and grabbed her wrist.

"What do you think you are doing?!" I repeated.

She dropped her pretense then and tried to yank her arm away. "I want you out. I know you have some secret and I am going to find it so I can get rid of you! There's something about you that I just can't stand!"

"It's the fear," I said in a deep voice. "You can't stand feeling afraid of me; even if you don't know it's there. You see," I explained, "deep down you're instinctually afraid of me and your mind can't stand it."

She reached up and slapped me, hard. It was her mistake. I fully changed then. I let myself. I felt my skin pull and stretch as my bones moved. I bent to all fours and gave myself up to it. My face lengthened and sprouted hair. My insides twisted and turned until they were in my true form. I was one fantastic looking wolf. I had pale silver blond fur and crystal ice blue eyes. Not an ordinary wolf.



She was screaming uncontrollably. Whatever she had thought my secret was, it wasn't this. I wanted her to shut up. She was backing away toward the window behind the bed. I easily cleared the bed and knocked her to the floor. I growled in her ear



just for the fun of it. The growling always seems to disturb them the most.

I had her pinned on the floor with all paws. She fueled my anger by trying to fight me. As if a human could stand against a werewolf. I felt blood rushing through my ears and did what came naturally. I ripped her throat to shreds. I was shaking her neck back and forth while clawing at her shoulders and thighs. The fur around my mouth became matted with blood. Her skin got under my nails, but I kept at it. After all she had put me through I was going to make sure she was put through far worse.

I let go of her neck and saw her eyes flicker. I went for her stomach next. I clawed and bit through it all, taking satisfaction from her screams. She was dead by the time I was finished spreading her intestines around her body. The wolf in me looked through the window and howled just as my father came in the door. I jumped through the window.

I ran through the woods the rest of the night glorified by my victory, but it was overshadowed. I had been careless. I had killed her in my own room, and let my father walk in on it. I should have known better. Just as I should have known not to go back to my house in the morning.

I went to walk in through the front door forgetting about my bloody appearance, but didn't make it there. As my hand reached the doorknob, I was arrested. I figure the cops had been around since last night, but I hadn't thought to clean myself up. I usually did that once I was in the house; my father never noticed.

I actually find it very annoying that I'm still dirty, but I won't let them see that because it can be considered a weakness. The car starts to slow down and I realize we're pulling over to the Dairy Queen. So that's it, Bob wanted ice cream. I watch him get out of the car, not hearing what he says to the other cop. I am too busy concentrating. He slams the door shut but doesn't lock it. I act fast; I've been hiding my strength all morning. I pull my hands apart breaking the handcuffs. The cop gasps and starts to go for his gun, but I break through the metal wire and break his neck before he can do anything.

Bob is still inside, chatting with the waitress. I suppose he doesn't want to come back to the car. Good choice. I open the door, thankful I don't have to break it, and

start running. I run to the woods because there is nowhere else to go. The woods are my natural habitat; I should've been born a wolf.

I know I won't be able to hide forever, but it's my own fault for being careless. I enjoy the woods and my own company until the moon comes out. I change again, always three nights in a row. With my wolf ears I hear feet cracking the dry leaves on the forest floor. I knew they would come.

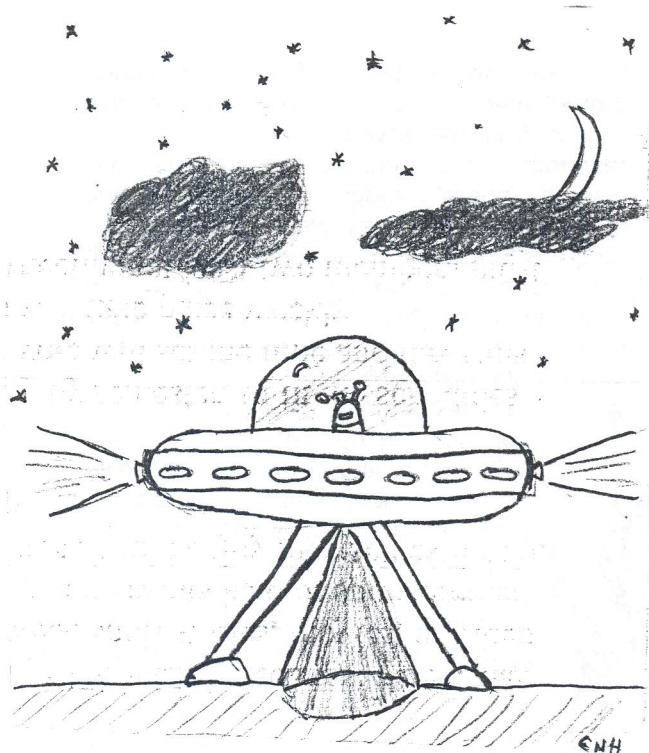
"Establish dominance from the beginning," I repeat in my head.

I jump out at the group I know awaits me; there are seven of them. More than I thought. Bob is there with four cop buddies who are stupid enough to try and help him. I look towards the other two standing slightly apart from the others and see that one of them is my father. I realize now that he told the police I was the one who killed my stepmother. That must be it. The man with him I recognize as one of his friends. All this observation I achieve in two seconds as I pounce for one of the cops. I take him down and start to move for the next.

A loud sound echoes through the woods and as I feel a piercing pain in my side I realize the sound was a gun; the one my father is holding. He shoots me again, and again, and again. He's using silver bullets. Stupid humans. Don't they realize that silver bullets don't have a special effect on werewolves? The silver bullets work just like regular bullets, which is good enough. I can't move anymore and know I have lost this time. Stupid humans, if only they understood. As they all start to leave I realize I could have avoided all this. If I had controlled my temper, if I wasn't always on edge from the fear of being discovered, if I didn't let fear make me careless, if I wasn't always alone, if my mother were alive. But it's too late for ifs. The humans are all gone from the clearing, and I know things will never be the same.

"Establish dominance from the beginning." I tried, I tried, but I was messy. I won't be so messy next time. There will be a next time. Stupid humans, I think, *stupid humans*.





## **"OUR NEIGHBORS"**

**BY: BEN MILLER**

Daybreak on the eastern edge of the Atlantic Ocean marked the end of the first data gathering expedition from the second solar grid's virtual particle research project. Alex saved the data he had received from the vacuum chamber constructed just outside of his office. He walked out into the second solar grid's main passage and said "Hi" to the friends he passed along the way. As he had lunch and thought about ways to find the requested patterns in his data, he was glad that the project was, so far, ahead of schedule.

Back at the department of energy, people continued to look for ways to use possible new energy sources to fill the ever increasing energy needs of a space-faring civilization. This is what had prompted the research at the second solar grid. The knowledge of virtual particles had been around for a long time, but this was the first concentrated, scientific effort to use them as an energy source. Even in a vacuum, the space is not truly 'empty'. Every once in a while two particles would appear to be generated spontaneously from empty space. One is the negative of the other. Both particles would exist for only a very small

amount of time, before they annihilated each other, again leaving the space as it was originally. This operation did not defy the law of conservation of mass/energy because the net gain was always equal to zero. However, it was believed that some part of this process could be used to generate energy. Perhaps instead of allowing the particles to directly recombine, they could be made to do some kind of useful work. But, before any of that could be investigated, there needed to be a way to tell when and where such virtual particles would be generated. This was the job of the virtual particle research project.

Alex returned to his office, and tried again to find some type of pattern in his data. The soft sounds of a radio permeated the background. It was one of his favorite songs. Alex hummed along while thinking of ways to discover the pattern among seemingly random data. He had been trying to discover the pattern for a month now, and so far there had been no luck. He finally decided to give up for the day. As he walked home, he thought of how the energy department continued to ask how he was progressing. He knew they would want an answer soon.

When he awoke the next morning, Alex had an idea. He got ready for work and as he walked, he thought about how he had been looking for some type of pattern of placement of individual types of virtual particles. "But what if the data are transient, or have some type of pattern over time instead of space?" he thought to himself. To test this new theory, Alex picked one common type of virtual particle, and asked his computer to correlate the data for this particle over time and graph it. After a few moments a graph came up on his flat screen. Scaled to a reasonable range, the graph showed what appeared to be close to a sine wave. He could not believe it. Could this actually be what he had been looking for so hard? Alex immediately tried verifying his results with another particle. In a few minutes, a similar sinusoidal graph was displayed. This was a bit more distorted. It was not exactly like a regular wave, but still definitely followed the pattern of a sine wave. As soon as he could get a report together, Alex emailed his results to the energy department.

"Well, I'm glad I finally found something in all of this information", Alex



remarked to a few of his coworkers on the second solar power grid. They had come to see his results. As his friends, and fellow energy department employees, they were also interested in his research. Dave, one of Alex's closest friends, congratulated him on the discovery. Then he said, "These waves truly do look very much like sine waves, but as you mentioned, they have some irregularities in waveform. I wonder where this distortion is coming from."

"We probably won't know that until we know why the virtual particle data are even sinusoidal at all," said Lindsay. There was general agreement on that point, followed by the dispersion of people back to their jobs. Alex, however, couldn't help wondering if the distortion could also have some type of pattern. If he could find it also, this would give even more support to his work. The music in the background was slow and sweet. It helped Alex to focus on his project. After looking at the results of his research for the better part of an hour, and still not noticing anything new, Alex went home for dinner. It had been quite a productive day, after all.

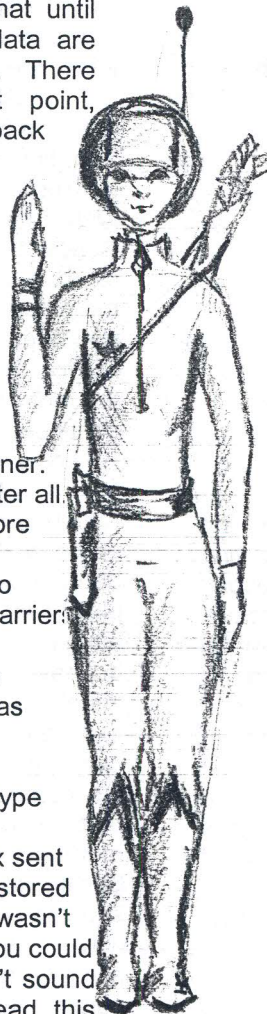
The next day proved even more interesting. Alex remembered that telecommunications signals, like radio and TV, have carrier waves. These carriers are larger than the signals that they transmit, so the actual signal appears as variations in the carrier wave. It was a stretch, but perhaps sending the virtual particle data through a radio circuit could give a better idea of the type of distortion that they were noticing. After this was set up in his office, Alex sent in some virtual particle data that was stored on the computer. The output at first wasn't very clear, but after a little filtering, you could notice that the audio produced didn't sound like random distortion at all. Instead this was, as far as anyone could tell, a faint, static broadcast. There was a melody beneath the random wave pattern.

Virtual particle research now became more than just a relatively obscure energy project. When scientists began to hear of the discovery from the second solar power grid, many were surprised. There were no theories to help explain how or why radio frequencies would be reflected in virtual particles. But, much about virtual particles

was still not known. The phenomenon proved interesting enough for Alex to receive a grant from the government to continue his research. To find out exactly which stations could be 'heard' through virtual particles, and then to find out if any were outside of the range where they could be heard through conventional EM methods. If he could find information like this, perhaps people would have a new way to communicate cheaply over greater distances.

So, they listened. Virtual particle data continued to be gathered, and Alex (with some others) tried to determine where the signals were coming from. Once in a while, someone would hear something that didn't make sense. For example, there was a reference to the South American country, Banal. Dave had heard this transmission and dismissed it as either a misspoken word or some sort of joke. There had never been a country called Banal in South America. Others heard similar facts that didn't make sense. At first, those listening concluded that they had heard incorrectly. But eventually, as rumors circulated, some people began to wonder. How can we all be hearing things that aren't really true? No radio or television station admitted to sending out such strange broadcasts. So, the source of the virtual particle transmissions remained unknown.

Alex thought about what this could all mean. And he kept coming to the same conclusion: if there wasn't any known radio or television or other broadcast which could be sending the signals he was detecting, then it had to be a source that they did not know about. The first thought Alex had was that possibly it was some type of secret government communication channel and perhaps they did not want to reveal their existence. But this didn't make sense. The information that was received did not contain any sensitive government data. It just sounded like regular old radio. So, the last option was that the broadcast was not from a station in or near our world.

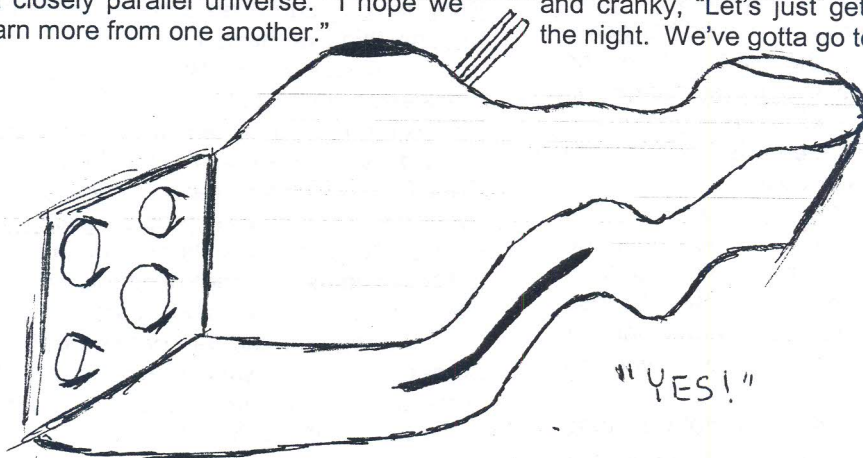




There was finally something very interesting broadcasted through one of the virtual particle monitoring stations. It described a new research project on virtual particles which was to take place at a specific location in orbit around earth. The place was said to be currently unused. But, this was the position of the first solar power grid. So, to test his radical theory, Alex set up a power radio transmitter on the first solar power grid.

After a month of preparation and waiting, Alex sent out a repeating radio signal. It said only, "Who are you?" along with the name of a station overheard through a virtual particle broadcast. Then they waited. Could it work, would the strange theory that perhaps the signals were not from earth be true?

They only had to wait a couple months. A reply was finally registered on virtual particle monitoring system using a fairly common particle. "We hear you. Your signal is not from our world. Thanks to your helpful repeating broadcast, scientists have determined that we are not really alone here on this earth. Your transmission comes from another place, possibly another dimension which closely parallels ours. Virtual particle emissions must be a result of radio waves from a closely parallel universe. I hope we can learn more from one another."



## **"LOST TIME NEVER RETURNS"**

**D. C. "LONDO" MCCOY**

"Well I had fun spending time with you this past week honey."

"And I with you."

Jen and Michael Gardner were returning from a camping trip in the mountain of Central New York and nearing returning home to Western Pennsylvania. Both were thinking the same thing but neither mentioned the "w"-word. You know four-letter words like that can really down someone's vacation.

As they pulled up to the their home, they noticed something's not quite right. "Hmmm, Jen," said Mike, "Does the grass seem really long to you?"

"Yes it does. I'm tired honey. We've had a long drive. Let's just get to bed and worry about this tomorrow," said Jen.

"Sounds good to me," said Mike tiredly. They each grabbed their packs out of the trunk of their old beat up Volvo station wagon and walked to the door. Mike pulled his keys out of his right jeans pocket and fumbled with the keys while keeping his pack in his left hand instead of simply putting it on his back. As Mike tried to put the key in the lock, "Jen, the key doesn't fit," he said surprised.

"What?"

"The key doesn't fit in the lock. It's not going in."

"I don't believe this," said Jen, tired and cranky, "Let's just get a hotel room for the night. We've gotta go to work tomorrow."

"YES!"

She said the four-letter "w"-word. *She must really mean business*, Mike thought to himself. "Alright," he agreed.

They drove to the closest hotel, unfortunately it was also the most expensive hotel in the area, and checked in. "Do you want a room with a DSL connection?" the hotel clerk asked.

"What?" asked Mike.

"Ah, never mind," said the clerk. "Will that be in a credit card?" Mike handed



the clerk his card. "I'm sorry sir this card this card appears to have expired a year ago."

"Excuse me!" Jen was annoyed now.

Mike turned to Jen to try and calm her. "I'll just pay in cash, alright honey." He turned to the clerk asked with a more annoyed tone in his voice, "Cash still works right?"

"Yes, sir," the clerk said, trying to be as nice to the customer as possible. Michael handed the clerk the price he quoted them, and the clerk handed them their keys. They went to their rooms and got ready for bed. Since they just returned from a camping trip, they didn't have anything to change into so they slept in their underwear. Jen was tired; she fell right to sleep. Mike, on the other hand, lay awake wondering if they had slipped into the Twilight Zone or something. Eventually Mike had drifted off to sleep.

The next morning they awoke, got dressed in the clothes they had worn the day before and went to work. They knew they'd have to explain their attire to their respective bosses. They didn't really feel that would really be a problem. Michael worked for Cyrix Corp. as a plant manager and Jen was a programmer at a company that wrote software for hospital computers. Mike dropped Jen off at her work, kissed her good-bye, and drove off to the plant. When he arrived, a Via company's logo was hanging in front of the building. *Ok! What's going on?!* Mike's curiosity was superceded only by the amount to which he was upset.

He entered the front door of the plant. Deciding to act as if he's lost, he stopped the first person he could find, who was the secretary. "Uh, excuse me. I'm lost. I'm looking for the National Semiconductor Cyrix Microprocessor Plant. Could you tell me how to get there?"

"I'm sorry you're in the right building but they went out of business about a year and a half ago. Via moved in here about six months later."

"Oh, ok thank you," he said trying not to act to surprised. He glanced over at the calendar. *July 2000! We've been gone for two years. Where have we been? I gotta get Jen!* He thanked the secretary and left. He jumped into his car and drove to Jen's work going at least double the speed limit. When he arrived, Jen was standing outside waiting for him. She told him that she no longer had

a job because her company programmed on a MD/R Computer in RPG, the top of the line back in the early 1970, was bought out by a company that programmed in C++ on a Windows interface, the computer science latest and greatest. He explained to Jen that they were now in the year 2000.

"What? We skipped ahead two years? That can't be," Jen retorted in disbelief.

"What other explanation is there?"

"Where did we go for those two years? Where were we?" Does it really matter? Does it matter if they were abducted by aliens, sitting in their own closet, or if they were living out their daily lives just ignoring technology. In the world of technology, if you don't keep up, soon you too will be left in the past.

## **"ARTIFICIAL DISASTER"**

**BY JUSTIN LONG**

The skies are dark these days from the ashes of this falling world. Everyday the cries of the weak and starving get louder. I don't know what to think about these days. We have dug ourselves a grave, and time is the only thing we have left.

What a world. Stories of open grasslands and forest that supplied the homes for many lives unlike ours now dance in my dreams. I feel lost to tell the tale. Cries from my children and my wife haunt me everyday; the past was once so great, so strong. Now life consists of living in a bubble of lights and controlled this and filtered that. Artificial is how I feel.

I regret being part of this world. Sometimes I find myself looking through the portal of this metal hell in space, with a razor to my wrist and my thoughts never to rest over my eye's deception. Earth looks too beautiful to contain so much hell.

Life in space is life; to live on earth is to live with death. A prophet back in the days of the Renaissance thought to see life end by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; this wasn't truly until 2001 when George W. Bush was elected. His view on foreign affairs basically came down to WAR. Troops were sent here and there for the purpose of fighting countries denying proposals sent by our



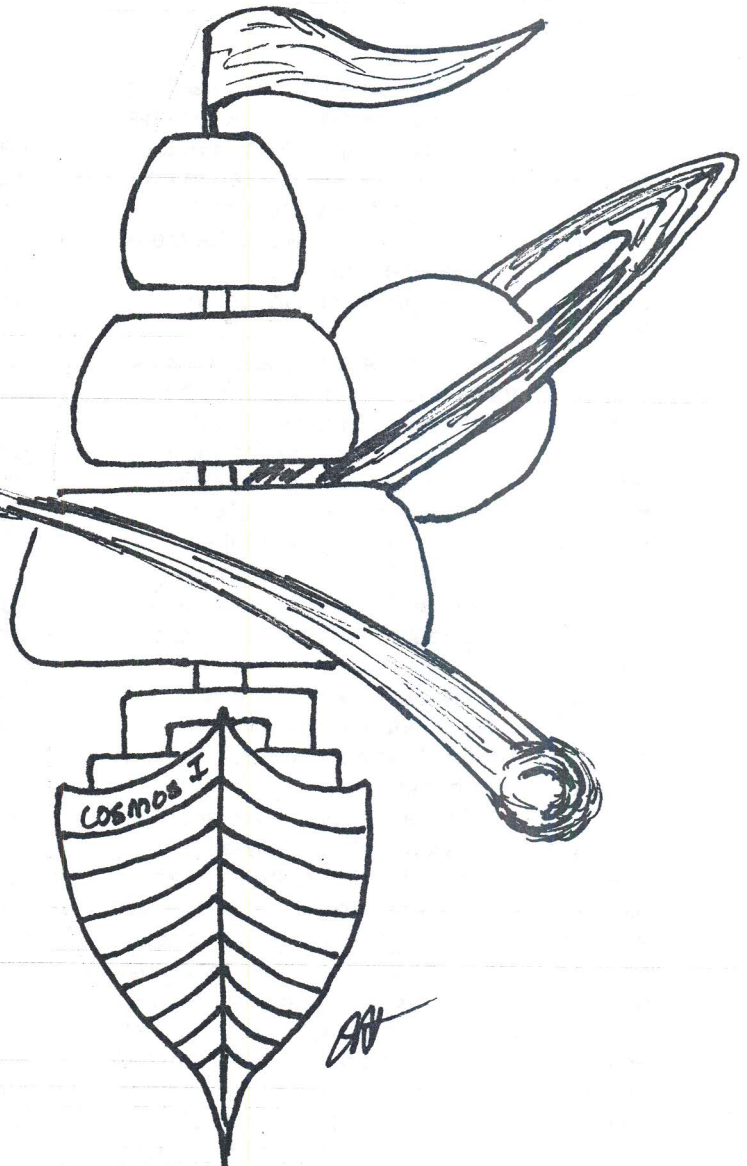
president. These were mostly under resource demands by him, so the American family could still drive their desired SUV under low age prices.

A push of a button ended all. War over resources, what an all time low. America was not hurt in the crisscross bombings or any touchdowns of nuclear tipped missiles, because of Bush's father's program "Star Wars." We were in the clear, but in years following, nature took its course, sending acid rain from the five-year fires that swept across the Middle Eastern countries and a good part of Europe and northern Africa. People were dying in large numbers and there was nothing to do.

I'm up here now looking at the graves of my family; they take with them my heart. All I have now is this weak desire to move on. I remember the day when the skies got darker and the temperature got lower and lower. I worked for a Russian space travel service that helped business get satellites into orbit. This was a good position on my part. When the government fell apart do to the transferring of all funds into space programs I started to rack in the money, but life around me was falling apart. I grew farther away from my family due to work. Work was becoming mandatory under new laws by our newly appointed president, a five star general. They died under a power outage, which caused the filtration system in the house to go and resulting in my wife and my two kids to breathe the carbon monoxide and sulfur dioxide mixture earth was plagued by.

I came home to find them dead in their beds. I blamed myself. I look back at their deaths, for they died in peace. I am in hell, why couldn't I have been home that day and died in peace with my arm around my girl. WHY.

My ship, an old missile that once was made for destruction, is now my ride aimed for my future. The red rock in our solar system will become my new home, where mining will become my business. Yes, I am just another ant to do what the queen wants. I am their one that they push, but for the rest of human kind it's important, maybe this red rock can sustain life like the PhDs say. Maybe we can heat up Mars' atmospheric



temperature, melting the ice caps and bring back life, but still I will feel Artificial.

## "THE MOIRAI"

By JAMIE KERN

Hundreds of viewers had already packed the lobby of the Liberty Science Center in New Jersey by the time Roderick Muret strolled through its revolving doors. He had to stop a few feet past them, blocked by a wall of people stretching their necks, despite the fact that the demonstration would not begin for another three hours. He checked his digital watch.

The crowd hummed with the busy, excited talk of the people who had been lucky enough to make it here – Dr. Vellweb



had been extremely careful not to attract the attention of the press, remaining there in his hometown while receiving funding from the federal government. He had spoken to no one of his success until recently, simply allowing the press to be notified to "be there" at the Center when he made his first presentation to the public on November 8, 2004.

Rick's watch read 8:34 am, 11-8-04 - less than three hours until what may be the greatest breakthrough of the century (the new one, that is) would be unveiled for him. He clamped his hands together, standing on his toes in an attempt to see the raised platform in front of the two ground-floor walkalators. Finding that futile, he rocked back on his heels and raised his gaze to the great metal folding and unfolding ball that hung from the Center's high ceiling. It expanded and folded back in on itself hypnotically, the silent heartbeat of the crowd. Rick wondered how he could build a smaller one for himself.

The only reason Rick knew about this event today was that Dr. Vellweb had been a professor of his before he devoted himself full-time to his "project," and Rick had e-mailed him a few times after he left since he thought he was cool, especially for an old guy. A month ago, Rick had asked whether Dr. Vellweb wanted an intern, and, along with an affirmative response, the Dr. had sent him this date, time and place, saying the new invention he would present there would revolutionize not only science, but the quality of life for everyone on the planet. Although Rick had no idea what that meant at the time, he thought Dr. Vellweb was a cool guy, so he decided to go, and began working for the Doctor.

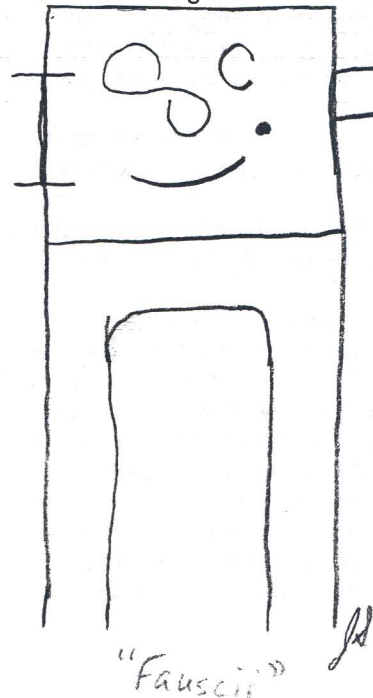
He now had more of an idea what the whole shebang was about, having worked for the perpetrator of it for a month - but he still wasn't sure. Rick had been more of an errand-boy than anything else. He had never seen notes on the device that had become the Doctor's pet, much less the device itself. Rick did the uninformative office-type work, while Dr. Vellweb kept his research at a safe distance from the media. Rick only knew that whatever it was had something to do with time.

Well, he thought, in three hours he would find out. He wished his girlfriend were there to help him pass the time.

\* \* \*

Rick's watch beeped at 11:30; he had set it to beep then in case his mind wandered (which it often did). Bouncing up and down on his toes, he found that the platform was still devoid of all human life, unlike the lobby. Some people had been allowed to climb to the higher floors, including some of the people from the media who needed to set up equipment, but Rick was hardly any closer to what was to be the center of attention. As he craned his neck to count the people he could see along the second-floor railing for the 20<sup>th</sup> time, he heard a buzz of excitement from the front of the crowd. He could see Dr. Vellweb's contraption - the AWD, which stood for something Rick still did not know - as staff wheeled it in and unveiled it. Rick cocked his head, unsure whether or not to be disappointed. It stood on a sturdy cart with wheels - so everyone could see it, he supposed - but it looked disappointingly like a computer screen: kind of boring. He wished he could tell whether or not the back was flat. He had been hoping for something really cool, like a time machine or something, but it was a blank screen, like any other. He had put six things similar to that together in his parents' basement.

A moment later, the room thundered with applause - the doctor had climbed onto the platform. He was not a young man - he looked unduly archaic in his charcoal slacks and black-rimmed glasses that hid some of





the wrinkles around his eyes. Rick knew the speech would be forced; Dr. Vellweb was not the world's best public speaker. But, the ex-professor's smile was genuine, as was his confidence. He took a stiff bow before he began his Spartan introductory speech.

"Ladies and gentlemen, welcome. As I have never been much for dilly-dally, I will get strait to the point. Most of you here know that I have been working on a government-sponsored project for some time. At my request, the first public appearance of it is here and now, not far from my own home. It is the AWD – the Advanced Wave Detector. Those of you who have studied modern theories in physics, etc. will know that an advanced wave is basically a wave from the future that causes a particle to vibrate in the present. There is, naturally, a great deal of disagreement about the existence of these waves, but after extensive testing I believe I have built a mechanism that will receive these waves. This will, however, be difficult to prove to you here, unless I use an example which you will all recognize. I believe there is a crew from CNN here – would you please identify yourselves?" A group of people with their equipment set up from a good vantage point on the second floor shouted and waved. "Are you recording this?" Someone shouted "yes."

"And, at what time would this be aired if considered extremely... newsworthy?"

They gave their estimates, and Dr. Vellweb turned to the AWD. Evidently, despite its blank screen, it was on. He began to "type" away at something, although nothing showed up on the screen. Then, he turned to his audience, grinned, and touched one more button.

The screen came to life immediately, along with sound. The Doctor's microphone began to feedback upon itself, but he simply shut it off, apparently unperturbed.

Rick stared at the screen through his glasses. It *looked* normal. The CNN logo hovered in a corner, and the usual reporters were there. But, he realized, the topic of the report was the AWD and Dr. Vellweb. As the newscaster in the lime-green suit told her story, Dr. Vellweb turned and began to explain that what they were watching was a news broadcast from later that day. As he spoke, everyone – including the CNN crew –

were a bit skeptical, until a few moments later.

There were two Dr. Vellwebs now – and they were speaking almost in unison. The live Dr. Vellweb standing in front of them was just slightly behind the one on the screen.

And the one behind him was just a little bit further ahead, as was the one behind him – there, in front of the bewildered audience, stretched an infinity of Dr. Vellwebs and his AWDs, complete with the backs of the heads of the people closest to him.

Rick could understand it if the screen had been showing the past with respect to this point... but it was showing them the nearest future to the present, something that could never be recorded exactly, unless someone knew beforehand how every atom in everything in this room would be positioned in the near future.

Rick heard a hushed breath of awe escape from his lips. This was better than a time machine.





\* \* \*

Rick laughed. "You don't have to be quiet, Gin. He's not here."

Ginger gave him the cute, confused sideways grin he loved. She was one in a million, this one. He laughed again. "Just don't touch any of the paperwork... I don't make a lot of money, but I want to keep this internship."

She swayed back and forth, hands shoved in her coat pockets. "I wasn't planning on it."

He smiled. "Come on," he said.

Rick felt kind of bad as he unlocked the door to the official laboratory with Dr. Vellweb's number code – he had seen him use it once, and remembered. Rick was good at that. He knew Dr. Vellweb trusted him, and thought Rick would never do exactly what he was doing now... but what harm could it do? He just *had* to show Gin what this thing could do. He knew she'd be just as interested as he was. Heck, she was a math and physics double major – how could she *not* be? Then he remembered she had a math turn-in due the next day, and turned to ask her if she really had the time to do this.

"Er?" she said, cocking her head as he looked at her. It made him smile. Oh well, it would only be a few minutes – she'd have plenty of time.

"Enter, madam!" The heavy door swung open, revealing a crowded laboratory, with the AWD at the rear. They both stepped in, shutting the door behind them.

"Well..." Rick said, nervously walking toward the AWD, "this is it. The AWD."

Gin blinked and shuffled her feet. Then she slowly moved toward it and him. "It looks different than it did on TV."

"That's because on TV you couldn't see the 'keyboard' or the mini-screen or any of the other neat gadgets on this thing."

She pursed her lips. "It really did what the news said?"

He nodded quickly. "Yeah, yeah I was there, saw it firsthand. It was the most awesome thing I ever beheld, and it beats a lot of theories and stuff into the ground!"

She giggled. Sometimes he sounded like he couldn't decide whether to be a typical college student or a scientist. She was still rather skeptical of the whole idea, despite the CNN broadcast, although she had studied advanced wave theory.

"Umm..." She cracked her neck. "So... are you going to show me how it works?"

"...Well, I don't really know what to do with it... I mean, Dr. Vellweb only just started showing me how to use it, hasn't even let me touch it yet myself." He beamed. "He wants me to keep working for him even after I graduate."

"Really?"

"Yeah." He shrugged. "I guess if he trusts me that much... well, I can't really break it. If it starts to act funny, I'll just stop and shut it off."

A few minutes later, the students found themselves watching the middle of the next day's part of the new Anne McCafferey's Dragonsong mini-series on A&P. They were both thrilled not to have to wait till the next day to find out more, and it convinced Gin that the AWD could really detect advanced waves... how else could it be playing part of a mini-series that hadn't been shown anywhere yet? They watched it for a few more moments.

"Isn't it fantastic? Just think of it... you could watch the news and see what's going to happen the next day, and then you can prevent all the disasters," Rick said.

Gin shook her head at him. "Silly. If you could prevent the disasters, you wouldn't see them on this thing."

"...Huh?"

She grinned. "You should know that. If the future could be changed, we wouldn't be able to see it on this thing, because advanced waves would not exist. The only reason we can see this at all is because it *will* happen."

He blinked rapidly, turning his head back to the screen. Then he reached for the keyboard.

"Whatcha doing?" Gin asked.

"Umm..." He didn't answer until he was finished typing. Then he turned back to his girlfriend. "Are you sure about that?"

"Yeeeeaaaaah.... This thing would be worthless if that weren't true. Wouldn't it?"

He bit on his lip, then pressed the enter button. "Well... I don't know. I'm gonna find out."

The picture changed to the five o'clock news on channel 7. Then he just watched it. Mostly, it contained things one would expect, like more conflict in the Middle East and a short clip of the President's new puppy. Then, it got to the local news. Rick's



ears picked up when the newscaster said, "Now, to Joseph Matheson, reporting live from the corner of 65<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, where a devastating traffic accident occurred approximately 45 minutes ago."

"There..." Rick said, standing up. "Dr. Vellweb won't be back for a while, I'm leaving."

"What?! But – you just *heard* her say... well.... You're not going *there* are you?" Her voice, as always, was quiet, but the bewildered look on her face told him she was scared.

He smiled. "It's ok.. I just want to prove that I can stop that accident. You'll see." He strolled nonchalantly out, picking up his jacket on the way.

Gin sighed, turning back to the screen in front of her. There really wasn't anything she could do to stop him. He would be taking his car, after all, and she had walked there. The reporter on the screen droned on – how anyone with such a monotonous voice got a job as a reporter was beyond her – while the camera crew filmed the scene of the accident. They showed earlier clips of firemen dragging people from their flaming cars.

Then she gasped. Was that...? The picture was now on the reporter at the scene, but one of the cars behind him, half-crushed by a fallen street-light, was a teal Chevrolet. It was the same ugly teal that she had tried to talk Rick out of when he was looking for a car. And it was the same ugly teal colored car he had bought.

She gaped at it, then checked her watch. It was 4:41 now. The future news was a little over halfway through, which meant it would be about 5:35 or so when this would actually be aired. And if Rick was heading right for that intersection...

She jumped up, not bothering to shut the AWD down. Right now, it didn't matter to her whether or not an ex-professor would be angry. She just wanted to find Rick, to make sure he was still outside fumbling for his car keys. She was sure the future couldn't be changed if its broadcasts could be detected ahead of time. She wanted to know that that wasn't Rick's car. She had to keep him away from that intersection, she had to be sure that it was someone *e/se's* disgusting teal Chevrolet that burst into flames.

She ran outside and around the corner where she knew he had been parked.

The space was empty. She stared at it for a moment. As she turned to run toward the nearest bus stop that would take her where she needed to go, a red car pulled over to take the space Rick's car had so recently occupied.

\* \* \*

The bus driver was either drunk, or out of his mind. He kept stepping on the gas with the breaks on so he could get a jump-start whenever the traffic lights turned green, and he was speeding quite a bit. Gin politely asked him if he could slow down, despite her hurry, but he told her to go to hell. She stood quietly glaring at him.

They were almost there, and it wasn't that far. It wasn't time yet. The bus had come almost as soon as she came to the stop. The driver was revving up the engine again. He sped down the last block, where someone was pulling out of their alleyway.

Whoever was in the car either didn't see the bus, or thought they could beat it. They gunned it, shooting out into the middle of the street.

The bus driver yelled some of the nastiest profanities Gin had ever heard, and the passengers standing on the bus screamed, some falling like dominoes as the bus swerved to avoid the car, and slammed into a street light, knocking it over.

The bus came to an abrupt halt, and Gin, who had been in the very front, felt her feet lift off the ground and her grip wrenched from the metal bar she had been clinging to. She heard her bones crunch and felt delirium take over as she crashed through the bus' windshield, landing on the glass-covered asphalt below. As the street light fell, it crushed the screeching cars in its path. Gin heard that, but then it was gone.

\* \* \*

Everything was too bright. His eyes hurt, so he kept them tightly shut. He heard a soft, woman's voice.

"Rick? Honey-bun..." she had seen him move a bit, and wondered if he was awake.

"Mom," he mumbled. "...Hate...that."

His mother giggled, still holding his hand. "How do you feel?"

"Uuuh."

She smiled. "Sleep, then."

\* \* \*

The next day, Rick was sitting up in bed, nervously reading the letter Dr. Vellweb



had written requesting that Rick no longer work for him. Rick didn't understand why Gin hadn't turned the AWD off herself after he left, if she didn't want to watch it anymore. Then, Dr. Vellweb would never have known. Rick crumpled the paper in his hand. He was disappointed, but Gin was more important to him than an internship. And she *had* been right about not being able to change the future, hadn't she? He hadn't caused the accident, certainly, but he had gotten himself right into the middle of it, ending up half under the pole of a street light hit by a bus. He had gone unconscious almost immediately.

Then, his mother came in again.

He smiled at her. "Hey, mom. Is Gin here yet?"

She bit her lower lip. "Gin?"

He blinked and drew his eyebrows together, confused, saying slowly, "Yeah... Gin. You know, the girl I met in college? The one I've been dating for years? The one whose second home is your basement?" He smiled.

The smile faded as he saw the expression on his mother's face. "Wh-what is it, mom? Why are you looking at me like that?"

"Hun—" she walked over to his bed, and clasped his hand in both of hers. "I wasn't going to tell you right away, but... honey..." She started to cry, bewildering her son even more. "Gin was on the bus that hit that pole, honey... she went through the windshield..." She burst into uncontrollable tears.

It took him a moment before he understood. He sagged back onto his pillows, staring ahead of him. He didn't cry. He just stared. Gin was dead. Because he tested fate, because he didn't believe her when she said it couldn't be changed... she was dead. Because Dr. Vellweb had made a machine to see the future, she was dead.

\* \* \*

Within the next few years, the AWD became a popular tool, not only with scientists, but with the military and some of the middle-class population as well. Lotteries, stocks, and other gambling-type things no longer appeared on television, however. Some scriptwriters had used AWDs to look for programs written by them, and then wrote the whole script down. Debates about the legality of such practices

occurred all over, and became more and more heated. Actors, actresses, directors, and countless others in the film industry used the device as a personal fortune-telling machine.



News became restricted to certain hours a day, which were blocked by safety devices on each AWD, with the exception of the prototype. Everyone loved it—they looked forward to someday being able to watch anything that would ever be aired on television in the future at any time. They also contained limits on the amount of years into the future they allowed the viewer to see.

One person named Roderick Muret became the leader of a protest group against the existence of the AWD. Whenever asked about his beliefs, he always said that it was the one thing that had been invented that could wipe free-will completely off the face of the planet.

There was something else, though, that he never told anyone except for his mother. She had owned one of the first AWDs sold on the market at one point, until her son had made her get rid of it.

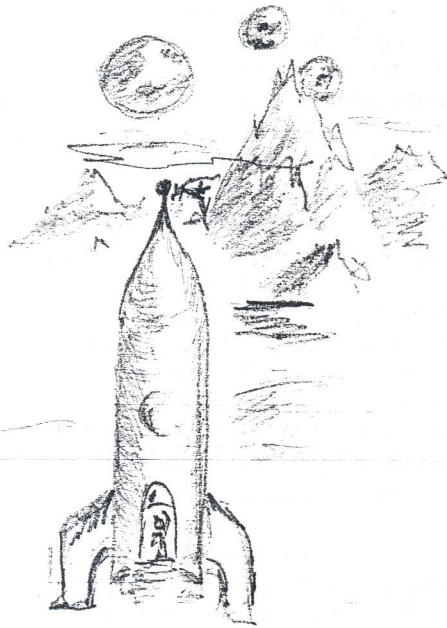
In morbid fascination, he had programmed it to pick up waves from further and further into the future, beating the "safety" settings with a hacker's skill. It went on and on and on, until the year 2707, in September. Then, abruptly, in the middle of something he could not even understand, it



just stopped. The screen became a billboard of static. He checked further then, up to 100 years afterward, and all he found was more static. He hoped that, by some miracle, if no one else ever saw that – if no one else tried to look that far – it might not exist. He hoped that the future was only fixed if someone saw it in the present. Because, if what he saw was what *will* happen...

There was no hope for anyone anymore.

*\*Note: "The Moirai" was written as a paper for the Time Travel honors seminar.*



## UNTITLED

By ANONYMOUS

Dr. Foster stood above his unconscious patient tightening the final stitches, which would conclude his afternoon in the OR. "Amazing doctor," his aid complimented as the thread was cut. "We're not done yet my friend. We must not get too excited before we know the final results," he replied with the sound intimidating wisdom in his voice. "We'll see how she turns out," the doctor added.

"What was her name again doctor?"

"Patricia."

"How old is she?"

"Why, she is going to be twenty three."

"Have you ever met her before this afternoon?"

"Why of course I did." Dr. Foster retorted sarcastically as he removed his blood stained gloves and exited the operating room.

Later that afternoon Patricia awoke to a blinding light above her. The silhouettes of three men appeared to her. "Miss Fanning?" said one of the figures. After a moment of rubbing the effects of her anesthetic out of her eyes, she was able to recognize one of the men as her doctor. "Dr. Foster, is that you?" she said, forcing her voice.

"Yes. Yes it is, Patricia," he replied. The other two men stood by the doctor's side with looks of intense anxiety upon their faces.

"Please call me giggles, doctor. You're my doctor, not my teacher. My friends have been calling me giggles since the first grade. And you saved my leg. I think I can consider you a friend," his patient said as her voice trailed off.

"Oh it was nothing, giggles. Just doing what I had to," he replied with a smile. Meanwhile the two men conversed on their own behind the doctor.

"Absolutely astonishing."

"Her memory appears to be working."

"Her syntax and word usage is astounding."

"What's astounding?" Patricia said, over hearing the recent conversation.

"That the new kind of anesthesia I have been researching was a success on you giggles," the doctor responded with a cold swiftness.

"You mean I was the guinea pig?"

"Oh no. You were just another success. It would be absolutely unethical to do such a thing to you."

"Oh." Patricia agreed repositioning her head on her pillow.

Dr. Foster shot his two friends a look of frightening anger. In that moment of silence the doctor said more to his friends than he could have in an hour's lecture. "Well, you better rest up giggles. I'll see you in the morning."

"Wait." she stopped her doctor. "My head really hurts. Are you sure you didn't



operate on my head?" she finished, letting out a giggle.

"Of course not," the doctor joined in giggling. "Nurse. Pain killers for patient 317."

"Yes doctor."

Later that evening Patricia was up and walking on crutches through the halls of the hospital. "Are you ready for your meeting with Dr. Roslyn?" a nurse surprised Patricia with a heavy foreign accent.

"Yes," Patricia confirmed. The nurse led her down the hall, and to the psychologist's office. Patricia's companion opened the door allowing Patricia to enter Dr. Roslyn's office.

"Please sit, Patricia," he invited with an extended arm as the nurse exited. Patricia slowly lowered herself onto the couch and set her crutches aside. "Is there something you want to talk about?" offered the doctor.

"Well. It was a pretty serious accident. My leg was crushed," she said forcing that lump back down her throat.

"I would most definitely consider that a serious . . ."

"Now seeing a car is just absolutely unnerves me. I get nervous and start to cry. My heart races and I get dizzy," she interrupted as tears fell from her eyes. The doctor sat in silence watching his patient cry while Patricia would stare at herself in the large mirror just across the room. An hour passed and their session ended. She was sent back to her room to rest her leg, and the doctor remained alone. He remained motionless on his couch with a look of severe anxiety and guilt upon his face. In a quick leap he darted to the large mirror just on the opposite side of the room. He stared into his own eyes but saw more than just his eyes. In a rage he lifted the nearest chair and crashed it through the mirror exposing an opening into another room. Stepping through the shattered glass in a rage he began to shout.

"Tell her goddamn it! She can't live like this!"

"Mr. Roslyn, please sit," said one of the men on the other side of the mirror. "There's no need for the violence, nor is there a need to raise your voice. Sit Down!" shouted the man.

"You can't do this to her!" Roslyn continued.

"Mr. Roslyn where's your sense of accomplishment? Our experiment was an

indisputable success," he finished as he fell into a chair and crossed his legs. "The programming wasn't what we expected but that's just due to human error. It seems our programmers over-did her memory of her *accident*. They've given her a phobia. But that can be fixed. She even remembers what her first grade class mates called her," the old man added with a giggle. "And by the way, that two way glass is coming out of your check," he finished.

"You're sick you old man!" Roslyn shouted.

"Yes but I'll be a *rich* sick old man, Mr. Roslyn. I would say my scientific breakthroughs could be described as nothing but phenomenal. To think this woman we have been growing in an oversized test tube for 23 years could have a life . . . which we programmed in, and honestly believe she has been part of society for 23 years of her life. To have only been made conscious a mere 5 hours ago after 23 years of unconsciousness, and to have solid memories, good syntax, clear speech, bodily and lingual coordination. Things that take people years of their life to develop she downloaded in a few minutes. To be able to make sense of visual, tactile, olfactory, audio stimuli without ever really seeing, feeling, smelling or hearing anything! She can even give a name to what she is tasting. To be able to remember things that never happened and swear they did," the old man boasted as his grin grew wider.

"But her life is a lie! Where are her parents? Where does she live? Who will know her?" Roslyn shouted. "How would you feel if you were created a few seconds ago and your meeting with me is just a false implanted memory!" Roslyn continued shouting as the old man slowly walked over to the large mirror across the room. Once he reached the mirror he turned to face Roslyn.

"Oh don't be silly Mr. Roslyn. That can't possibly be. I am the first to make such a break through!" he said with his back to the mirror. He turned to fix his tie in the mirror and continued. "I wouldn't worry too much Mr. Roslyn," he said as his eyes froze on his image.

The old man now entertains the possibility of his existence being a lie. And so the old man looks into his image and wonders: How many mirrors does it take to get to the truth?



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