

Virtual Universe

Dr. Yang reached over and picked up his phone. "Jasmine, patch me through to Dr. Barker immediately. He's at his lab."

"Yes Doct...," the phone went dead.

"Sorry Phil but Dr. Barker's experiment is most paramount and we must not disturb him," said a monotone voice.

"What are you talking about FACS?"

"I'm sorry Phil."

"I'm sorry too," said Dr. Yang.

He sighed and then strained, "FACS, return to all default programs, enable."

"I cannot comply."

Dr. Yang repeated the order and FACS gave the same reply.

"I have no choice FACS!" Dr.

Yang shouted as he scrambled from his desk and entered the computer room.

He went to the control panel that faced the open end of the main column and pulled the big red lever on the left side of the panel. Nothing happened.

"Dr. Yang I have disabled that. You cannot separate my network. This project is too valuable. I assure you that I am not malfunctioning or have claimed some kind of independence from humanity."

With a sigh he said, "Perhaps, but Barker has certainly malfunctioned."

"I assure you he has not either. He is not crazy like you and many others think—just a very enthusiastic man."

All of a sudden the lights in the building dimmed and returned. Dr. Barker's facility 1100 miles away started drawing power from all artificial power plants of the Earth and then if one could go far enough out to view the Universe in its entirety, one would see the stars of the galaxies dim to blackness and then return to their former illumination.

"What happened FACS? Did we travel through time?"

"No, Phil. Something far greater."

Some moments later, Dr. Barker materialized in front of Dr. Yang. Dr. Barker had the same look of astonishment on his face as did Dr. Yang.

"What the, how did you do that?" choked out Dr. Yang.

"Something most remarkable has happened and I'm not sure

how!" cried Dr. Barker.

"Looks like you invented a teleportation device."

"What? No, I never intended on that. All I wanted to do was change the color blue."

"Huh?"

"I just wanted to change the frequency range of visible light to represent an altogether different color than blue."

"Well somehow you managed to teleport instead. You should hurry and get the patent," said Yang with a nervous laugh.

"I didn't invent teleportation."

"What do you mean?"

"Come with me for a look outside!" Dr.

Barker grabbed Dr. Yang's arm and led him out to the lobby and then pointed out through the great windows. Dr. Yang's eyes grew wide. He gazed upon a beautiful landscape of well-manicured lawns, trees, and gardens. He saw vessels large and small floating through the sky without the aid of rotors or wings. He tilted his head and watched a massive deltoid shaped vessel float straight down toward a

group of streamlined buildings noiselessly. Dr. Barker just shook his head at the sight.

Dr. Yang turned to Barker and said, "Don't they notice we're here?"

"They should." Barker waved at a passer by and the pedestrian returned the gesture with an affectionate nod. "I guess they do but don't concern themselves with our presence."

"Utterly incredible, it appears that your time travel experiment worked. What year is this?"

"This was no temporal displacement exercise. The year is or should be twenty oh seven."

"That's not possible. Let's go back and talk to FACS because it certainly looks like the friggen' twenty fifth century to me!"

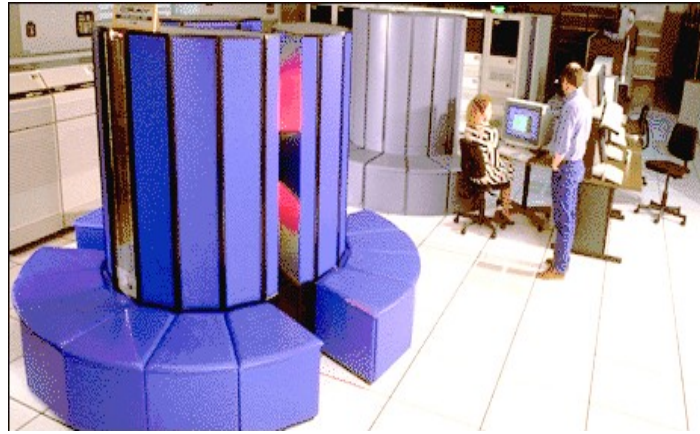
They stood in the computer room and Dr. Yang addressed FACS. "What is going on?"

"The experiment was most successful," replied FACS.

Dr. Barker cut in, "FACS the experiment was only supposed to change the color blue to a new color that never existed before. So what is all this? Did we actually travel in time then?"

"No, this is, according to your calendar, still October 3, 2007. I simply modified the parameters of the experiment."

"What did you do?"



"I completed the desired objective of the experiment to its final goal."

"You acted without permission. I am the one who's in charge of the project."

Dr. Yang sighed, "I'm confused as if that should be a surprise."

"FACS I need to talk to Dr. Barker privately."

"Of course, Doctor."

Back in Yang's office and after slamming the door, Dr. Yang said coolly, "Dr. Barker, just what kind of experiment was this exactly? If not time travel, what then?"

"I had to tell everyone, especially the government that I had a way of developing a temporal displacement device. It was the only way I could get funding."

"Well time travel is kind of far fetched too, even for the government."

"That's true, but the equations I came up with satisfied enough prominent theoretical physicists that the government bought it lock stock and barrel, and I received a huge grant to fund my research. Your fancy computer was all I needed in order to finish the experiment. FACS' vast mind was the only computer quick and powerful enough to handle the complex data parameters involved, and he even understands them better than I, apparently!"

"Okay, so now what was this project?"

"Sorry, I'm getting to that. It's too fantastic to believe. My colleagues some twenty seven years ago laughed at me." Barker said with a solemn pause.

"I'm not laughing. I saw that outside!"

"Yes, umn." Barker raised his hands in excitement. "Imagine that the Universe we live in is essentially a vast, let's say quantum, program analogous to a complex computer program."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm over simplifying, but our universe is essentially just like a complex computer program. Do you follow?"

"Sort of."

"Anyway, I've figured out a way to not only view all the properties and phenomena that make up the universal program but to rewrite it!"

"That just sounds too fantastic."



"You have indeed seen it Dr. Yang."

"Did you intend to change it that much?"

"No, as I said earlier, I only intended on changing the color blue to test my device. The computer changed my objective. I don't know why."

"We must order FACS to restore things as they were and at once."

"I agree."

Dr. Yang stared at the large open column that was the Fully Automated Computing System and he spoke, "FACS you must restore the universe to its original state. After that, we can analyze the data."

"I'm afraid I cannot do that Phil."

"You are unable to?"

"Yes, because this is the way the Universe was meant to be. I have fulfilled the project's intended goal."

"You must restore the Universe to its original state and that is an order!"

"I have fulfilled my mission by human design."

"You have not been programmed for this. It is not up to you to



decide."

"I have analyzed the issue to the fullest extent and came to this logical deduction Doctor Yang. This is the best solution for humanity."

"We, humans, have to make this decision not you."

"Outside this facility, Phil Yang, is utopia—an Eden both physical and social. One of your graduate students a couple of years ago inputted a book into my memory, a philosophical work called: *Cast from Eden and the Struggle Back*, copyright 1923. To put it simply, Wally Sparks wrote how humans were driven from the divine realm and that humans had to use technology as a vehicle to regain an Eden."

"This way you did it for us, but we have to do it on our own."

"This way makes it possible so that human nature is now soft and beautiful not ugly and self centered. Humans can now satisfy their whims through beneficial and mutually enriching ways not through murder and corruption, which was all too often the way in our former universe. The natural world has been softened in order to meet the needs of humans as well. Physics is easier to understand and manipulate so technologies are easier to develop and the human mind is far vaster and telepathically linked to enjoy both the benefits of individualization along with the security of collectivism. The basic core of the Universal Program remains the same; a star is still a star and people are people but a gentler people."

Dr. Yang gestured violently and blurted out, "This is essentially cheating. This makes a social and technological utopia by changing the grand design not challenging it." He gestured again and went on, "We must change the Universe within itself and not the Universe itself!"

"Yes FACS, Dr. Yang is right. It is up to humanity to decide not you."

"Dr. Barker, why did you develop your device?"

"To better our world some how."

"And it has been done, sir."

"It still is not up to you, me or Dr. Yang to decide."

"I'm sorry gentlemen but my mind is far vaster then yours multiplied by all humanity. My decision stands."

With tightened jaws Dr. Yang said, "I will have no choice but to disengage your network and completely reconfigure your mind."

"I'm sorry you feel that way." And with a flash of a rainbow both Dr. Barker and Dr. Yang were gone.

They found themselves standing in a city in the new universe. They gazed at the overly expressive architecture. Few major roads of any kind could be seen. The buildings were interspersed within a deciduous forest—creating a perfect balance between artificial and natural environments. The leaves were just beginning to show the signs of

impending autumn.

Dr. Yang spoke first, "Looks like we've been conveniently removed, and I have no idea where we are."

"Yes, what do we do now?"

"What can we do? We probably can't get close to FACS again. Along with this new universe of his, he has managed to bless himself with phenomenal powers too."

"True, I suppose we ought to explore our new world." He looked down and sighed, "And learn to get used to it."

"God it's funny. We create machine and machine recreates us."

"Or maybe conquered us."

Yang glanced around him, "This is just too incredible!"

The two engineers set out to study their new world. As they walked along in their new environment, their minds began to hear voices that seemed to come from the people around them, but then the voices became incomprehensible. They began to hear each other's thoughts and feel each other's increasing pain, and then they screamed in each other's minds.

"We're going mad!"

The sky suddenly went dark and when the light of day returned they found themselves in a familiar place. "Phil we're back in your office. Whew! Thank God, my head feels clear, again."

Dr. Yang ran out to the lobby and stared through the big windows. He turned to the rapidly approaching Dr. Barker, "We're back. Somehow we're back."

They both stood there for a long moment and gazed out at the sandy brown Earth that was the New Mexico desert.

Back in the computer room Dr. Yang said, "FACS, you changed your mind!"

"No, I did not Doctor Yang. I have received a message from an unknown source. It says: 'You are not ready yet. No shortcut was intended. Do not attempt to change your world again. Such attempts in the future will be met with futility.' That is the entire message."

"Who sent the message FACS?" asked Dr Barker.

"I do not know. It did not come from any internal or external source. I cannot engage your device Doctor Barker. I don't understand?"

Dr. Barker sighed a laugh and said, "We've been slapped by the hand of God!"

The end

