

Distant Hofstadters

A Companion Book to *Hofstadter's
Grandchildren*

Adam Cole

Distant Hofstadters © 2007 Adam Cole

Published by Nuncici Press

Unauthorized duplication is a violation of applicable laws.

Visit www.acole.net

Author's Note

This is a collection of metaworks that didn't make it into *Hofstadter's Grandchildren*. When I first recognized the common thread in some of my work I thought about using all of the representative pieces, but I soon decided that they were not all suitable for the project. Some were just samples of my playing around. Even after I made a short list of what I considered fit, I still found many of them did not create a flowing manuscript.

Nevertheless I have a fondness for the games I played with these ideas and if you've been intrigued by the pieces in *Hofstadter's Grandchildren*, you'll find a lot more here. This isn't so much a unified work as a collection of related pieces. Here, as in *HG*, you'll find nested loops, reversals, and self-referentiality galore: poems about poetry, poems designed to represent mathematical ideas, stories that contain paradoxes.

I hope you enjoy them.

For an explanation of the poetical forms I've invented, please visit

www.hofstadtersgrandchildren.com .

Contents

Poetry

Prelude	8
Canon 1	12
Canon 2	13
Canon 3	14
Canon 5	15
Canon 6	18
Canon 7	19
Canon 8	20
Canon 9	21
Canon 10	22
There are some poems you want to destroy	23
The Fog	24
A Failed Poem	25
Fugue	26
Cascade 1 (Test)	27
Cascade 2	28
Cascade 3a	29
Cascade 3b	30
Cascade 3c	31
Cascade 4a	32
Cascade 4b	33
Cascade 4c	34
Cascade 5	35
Cascade 6, A Poem For Ragnarok	37
Cascade Cascade	38

Top Ten Recursive Sentences	39
Elf-mow	40
Invention 2	41
Invention 3	43
Two-Part Invention Number One	44
Eight-Würt Poem	45
Self-Definition	46
Completely Lost.....	47
To say so much with	48
Cube 1	49
Cube 2	50
Cube 3	51
YYUB	52
the fewer the words.....	53
Hyperbola 2.....	54
Hyperbola 3.....	55
Canon - Pure Sex	56
Grants Pass.....	57
Filth.....	58
Canon – Imbecile of Night.....	59
EUology	61

Fiction

Writ of <i>Habeas Corpus</i>	63
My Trip	68
The Last Day.....	70
Dear Ancestor	71
Herstory.....	73
The Destruction of the City of Gelthrunne	79
The Unkillable Man	80

Cole - Distant Hofstadters

The Jokerster	86
The Storm.....	88
Continuous Cities (After Calvino).....	91
Captain Barnabas	92
The Experiment.....	94
Desert	98
About the Author	102

Poetry

Cole - Distant Hofstadters

Prelude

The tide rises, the tide falls

The tide rises, the tide falls

The side rises, the side calls

The side rises, the side calls

The side rises, your side calls

The side rises, your side calls

The tide rises, the tide falls

The tide rises, the tide falls

The tide rhymes and the tide recalls

The tide rhymes and the tide recalls

The side chimes with simple calls

The side chimes with simple calls

Your side rhymes and mine recalls

Your side rhymes and mine recalls

Your tide rises, your tide falls

Your tide rises, your tide falls

How tide rises, how tide falls

How tide rises, how tide falls

Oh how side chimes, such side chimes

Oh how side chimes, such side chimes

The side chimes with simple rhymes

The side chimes with simple rhymes

The side limnes and life resigns

The side limnes and life resigns

There side finds and kinder tines

There side finds and kinder tines

There shy finds what candor tines

There shy finds what candor tines

Your tie lines what finding finds

Your tie lines what finding finds

Your sky dines what days remind

Your sky dines what days remind

My sky finds what days remind

My sky finds what days remind

In my sky I'm always kind

In my sky I'm always kind

Are you of the same in mind?

Are you of the same in mind?

Are you of a similar mind?

Are you of a similar mind?

Cole - Distant Hofstadters

If you are then we'll be mind

If you are then we'll be mind

That there are then we'll be find

That there are then we'll be find

Which when are but some may find

Which when are but some may find

You can are but some may climb

You can are but some may climb

Yes, can are but find some climb

Yes, can are but find some climb

Yes, I dare but find the tide

Yes, I dare but find the tide

Yes, there dare what is the side

Yes, there dare what is the side

Yes, there dare where is your side

Yes, there dare where is your side

Yes, they know but how the chime

Yes, they know but how the chime

Yes, I dare to hare the falls

Yes, I dare to hare the falls

Yes, there dare to hare the calls

Cole - Distant Hofstadters

Yes, there dare to hare the calls

Yes, there dare to care remind

Yes, there dare to care remind

Now we lose to scan the rise

Now we lose to scan the rise

Now we think we know what we are

We are what we know we think we

Now but rise is almost rise when

almost rise will take us to the

Tide.

Canon 1

The woods are beautiful

The verdant

wood's shades

are dazzling,

beautiful to my eyes

I feel the verdant

woods within me,

its ephemeral shades

are dazzling;

subtle, yet beautiful to my eyes

weakening wonder

As I traverse a misbegotten leaf

I feel the verdant woods within me;

its ageless and ephemeral

shades are dazzling, remaining earthbound

subtle, yet beautiful to my eyes weakening wonder;

I sense that I soar!

Canon 2

I need your love

 Isn't it obvious

I need your love

 from my hungering spirit?

Life isn't

always what

 it

 seems,

 so obvious

I need your love,

 inaccessible from my hungering spirit.

Restore

life to me -- what

 isn't

always fair releases my sorrow.

 It longs for what

 seems

 so obvious

I need your love -- such

 inaccessible passions eternally retreat

 from my hungering spirit.

Canon 3

Keys

Give. Fluctuating

keys give vibrations,

melodies. The fluctuating

hammer takes its cue from

the keys; fingers give vibrations

meaning -- melodies decoded.

I sit, surrounded by my own

joy as the fluctuating

hammer takes its cue

from the assorted keys.

Notes give vibrations of varying

color. Melodies emerge, revela-

tions of joy, the finger's meaning

decoded

Canon 5

before love

is love

what comes before love

is

a result of nothing. Is

love more than that?

One can only take

what comes.

Desire before love, this

is a human flaw, and its

result, plowshares

of nothing.

Need and

want con-

fine our-

souls in

a way that

is almost too

human.

We surrender to

love

in the same heartbeat, little knowing the difference.

We perhaps discover

more than that

deception,

our cage

Deeper than one soul's want

is love.

This can only

give within the universe.

"Take" is a conception where
what comes,
higher than
desire,
will be misunderstood for event's release.

Love,
that soothing flow we fancy we
need...that
need is a human flaw we cultivate and its
result will always be
plowshares
of nothing.

Part of us, though we dread it,
"need" and
"want" con-
fine our
souls. In a way it shows us to be that beastly and helpless
soul without substance.

Is this too
human?

Even despicable?

Creature of
"we" that
surrender to
love, ignorant
in the same heartbeat.

Want is a little knowing creature barely
aware of the difference, the dis-
tinction between

Cole - Distant Hofstadters

we

and I.

Deserving perhaps to discover

love

more than love,

love before love,

love after love,

enough of an excuse to inhabit that

deception,

our cage,

this

trans-

cidental want.

Cole - Distant Hofstadters

Canon 7

In God we trust

Trust in God. We trust God

Do you trust in God? We trust God.

Do what you will. Trust in God. We trust God.

Canon 8

acting inactive

acting, you remain

inactive

In acting, resisting rest,

you remain.

Activity defines itself

inactive.

Wherein the

acting soul remains,

resisting rest,

there shall you,

the ever weary, remain. Practice the eternal

activity, relentless restlessness, which

defines itself, even

endlessly drives itself towards

inactive infinity.

Canon 9

I am plagued perpetually
with memories false and fierce
Each night
I am plagued
dreams pound my conscience
with memories false and fierce
Each frightful night
I am plagued
I cannot escape into dreams
that perpetually pound my conscience with

cobalt

memories false and fierce
Each frightful night I am fast
plagued
I cannot escape into dreams
that perpetually pound
my conscience
awake with
cobalt
memories
false and fierce...

Canon 10

Thou
the great
betrayer, begone!
who thou art, the great
betrayer, mine evil inside, begone!
show me who thou art: the great betrayer, he who
retains mine evil: Inside that self deception is myself.
Begone!
my
illumination does show me little good. Who but myself thou art:
the great betrayer,
seen clearly in the mirror,
he who retains my evil inside. That
self deception is the worst of my
crimes against mine eyes, myself. The truth
cannot begone, lie

Cole - Distant Hofstadters

There are some poems you want to destroy
Being content with having written them once.

The Fog

its
always

j u s t

v e r

o

r

t e e

h

A Failed Poem

Frost is quiet

I feel loud

Frost is silent

I feel proud

Reading Frost's like reading snow

I've got places I must go.

Nobody knows what reap I sow.

Ho ho ho ho ho ho!

Fugue

The subject will always be the same
and the subject, a figment
of my imagination, has always been that
very thing I thought distin-
guished it but which made it
the same and no different from
the subject that was a figment
of my imagination, any thing
it made which distinguished
it from that very thought, my
imagination will always subject the dis-
tinguished thought to the same
imagination of my figment

Amen, amen

name man me,

a name men

mean: nema.

Cascade 1 (Test)

Up in the air
looks like a night
where can I go
there is a place
made for mistakes
that I haven't been
I've only dreamed
too bad I'm out
nobody knows
made of satin and lace
at least for your sakes
the depth of my sin.

Cascade 2

by the power vested in me,
egregious error--
what will become of the children
I now pronounce you
when so little stands
once all is said
man and wife
or so much
and all is done

Cascade 3a

for people who think
it isn't impossible
God exists
there is
if you believe
for those
no alternative
it isn't impossible
who choose

Cascade 3b

alternative

you

God

for people who think there is

believe it isn't impossible

exists for those

for

if

choose

Cascade 3c

for people who
believe
who choose
think
it isn't impossible if
God exists
there is no alternative
you believe
for those

Cascade 4a

once

I have

everything

I knew

no idea

I know

an idiot

what

you know

Cascade 4b

once

I have

everything I know

I knew

no

you

an idiot

idea what

know

Cascade 4c

I know

what

I knew

you know

I have

an idiot

everything

no idea

once

Cascade 5

verity
find me
relative
victory
must be
what I
to my
can be
close to
wish to
nearest
dearest

when I
form my
can't try
they fly
find that
own by
to see
with me
true then
you so
my way
within
I know
you can
can you
wherein

verity

shows me

much of

what is

Cascade 6, A Poem For Ragnarok

when all is lost, or all is said and done
when all that can be is, and all is still
when gross symphonic subject bows to one
I shall the deepest draught ingest of Nil
then cross the empty deserts shall I roam
immensely silent as before the start
the swift and slow shall seem as metronome
whose laughter mocks the beating of my heart
in search of nothing, pondering the time
of introspected patience, endless hour
and I, the practiced balladeer, shall mime
as worldly cacophony bows to silenced power

endless, silent, infinite and dumb
shall all the world, and I as well, become

Cascade Cascade

a practiced motion hardly noticed
for it is a drop in the river
that expands and wends its way oceanward
sets a pattern into focus
as we are all parts of a larger whole
each part carries its requisite energy
closure in an infinite locus
separate but inseparable
and effecting an unending chain

Top Ten Recursive Sentences

1. Top ten recursive sentences
2. Top nine recursive sentences
3. Top eight recursive sentences
4. Top seven recursive sentences
5. Top six recursive sentences
6. Top five recursive sentences
7. Top four recursive sentences
8. Top three recursive sentences
9. Top two recursive sentences
10. Top one recursive sentence

Cole - Distant Hofstadters

Elf-mow

Won

too dry

fear sank cease

set wheat

'nuff

Invention 2

If I saw a star shining above your house...

if...

would the sky I saw be the same sky?

would a bright star burning be guiding

in shining above those empty souls in

the night,

the light

your beacon to a house bright,

burning

or inversely

a different sky

lacking

a bright burning,

so noticeably missing its beacon guiding one

to the fullness of the light?

Those empty souls in the night

might

compromised, in despair of knowing guiding warmth

be burning, and emptiness would

reveal bright absences

which are not

would not

be the same sky, cannot be the sky

seen or known

without such light;

...would...

might

compromised, despair

of knowing

Cole - Distant Hofstadters

warmth,
and emptiness
reveal absences which are not
would not,
cannot be seen or known
without such light

Invention 3

Intellectual talk, I am so very sick of
intellectual talk all around me
Around me there is talk, all nothing, intellectual,
but sick, created of emptiness
AND
very tired, so-endless, non-am-
sense I vomit from my mind
There is nothing but created
emptiness and tired endless nonsense,
vomit from my mind.

Eight-Würt Poem

m
Pill u
l l a
o über mensch
wolf t t
e
s h
e t
b
e a
i u
niel uarf

Self-Definition

Poetry is
like an
island unto
itself
those
who venture
there are
immune and
alone

Completely Lost

into the woods

and out of

the woods

and into

we go the woods

but there

escape is no

in which

for what

Cole - Distant Hofstadters

To say so much with
the simple haiku format
really works for me

Cube 1

One finds necessary life is that
Flat bone. Minds tarry; strife aris
Viz habitat, alone. Kinds wary rife
fife, ms. Cravat, Condone binds, apothecary
marry, wife. (Jizz spat, moan; hinds)
Blinds vary. Siph fizz, stone

Cube 2

penny for your thoughts
wise deeds will come
but so one cheaper
pound deeper still than
foolish yet committed words

Cube 3

the pocket of intensity
furious by a reusable
commended fire bright furnace
is only metal of
one recalling shiny light
that lucre of admiration

YYUB

Have you read the poem?

{Really?}

What did it say?

Something about trees

or were they bees...

fighting for space

to pray.

It doesn't matter, right?

It's just poetry

Just mispeled, probabli intetionalli

(or punctuated: weird, an oversight?

or in order wrong the words didn't

the poet write.

What's that you say

a {meaning}?

In that wordy spray?

Do my ears need cleaning

or my eyes?

Read it again.

Then add the y's.

Cole - Distant Hofstadters

the fewer the words
the easier to invoke
poetic rewards

Hyperbola 2

which is
in some sense
of being finite,
but not entirely

Hyperbola 3

coul-

dn't say

(it had never

occurred to him]

anyway, being

as he

was

Canon - Pure Sex

pure sex is no more pure
in this place of
sex
hate
is no more pure in this place
rather than any other area
of
that we discuss,
sex, hate,
we abdicate
pure in
our minds at least
this place rather
like a living lie more
than
we know is less like
any other area of
the wisdom
that we discuss
sex
of Solomon,
hate,
and his song
remaining pure
we abdicate

Grants Pass

Go, ye old grizzled inspiration
Attack. The world's been inhospitable
to you. Failure in business; lost in
politics. War remained: the
sad arch of desperate
soldiers whose love awaited you, denied any
alternative, the forced keystone to a
society; a chilly mirror,
never more so than to a sensitive man
reconciling his only talent to the world.

Cole - Distant Hofstadters

Filth

Filth

Canon – Imbecile of Night

imbecile of night
are you receiving?
Imbecile, the title
of a release from fright
Madness of night

You imbecile alight
are you receiving?
on the tops of buildings

imbecile
dancing with the light weight title
of a release
through the heavens
running from fright

you imbecile of night
from top to top
are you receiving?
On the tops of buildings
Hardly looking while the night calls out
Imbecile!
dancing with the name you have chosen
for yourself

the light sweet weight
the title sound of a release
falling from the sky
plummeting

Cole - Distant Hofstadters

through the heavens
running from fright.

EUlogy

Let us now rem

ember those fine let

ters which are now sleep

ing peacefully beneath their

cover of liquid paper

They were good letters

They served their purpose well

They did all that was asked of them

That they should be,

so untimely, cut

off from

the continuum of

words, reality, under

standing

is a testament

to the bravery of these

words. We seek not

to remember them here,

but to honor them.

They are the

stuff of which

our dreams are made

and are not to be

passed aside too easily.

Fiction

Writ of Habeas Corpus

A period of time passes when you are in the shower. Then another when you find yourself on the street. You aren't really paying attention yet; you've just woken up.

Do you remember how last week Mr. Durante told you about that antique clock in the pawn shop he knew you'd be interested in? Well, that's where you're going; DownTown Pawn on Mostado Boulevard to take a look at it. The weather is very cold. You can't wait to get inside.

You push the door open and step in. There's the heat from the antiquated heating system, blasting you, bathing you in a dry wash of hot air which feels like warm nothing on your cold skin.

You look around. There's the old man in charge of the shop, rather well-dressed. The bright colors of his suit and tie contrast his brown, wrinkled face.

You'll see the antique clock, you say.

He pulls it out for you.

You blink in surprise. The clock is a masterwork. It is clearly of a different origin from the vast majority of clocks you've seen in your lifetime. The gold lattice dances around the flawless, uncracked face with a deliberate, furious virtuosity. The hands point proudly at hand-painted Roman numerals as if to say, "These belong to us!" You are impressed. Quite a find for a pawn shop. You look around back and the key is still in the wind-up mechanism. A silken fringe of strings hangs from it.

The man asks you will you take it?

And you say Yes.

The man tells you the price and you snap back to reality. The price is reasonable. Two hundred and forty dollars, which you'll make back this evening, anyway. You pull out your money roll and flip out two one-hundreds and two twentys.

The man nods and turns his back on you. You survey the shop quickly, just to check it. You notice the iron bars on the windows. The man turns to face you and puts the clock in a paper bag. You pick it up delicately and you take it to the door.

The cold rushes back to your face. You decide to put the clock on the wall in the entrance hall in your apartment. This type of clock would have had a hollow space near the base, a good place to hide things like Mortensen's key, which Johnny thinks is still missing. You remember Johnny, a scary creature. Not horrifying...merely stupid, and frighteningly so. Where did he get that scar on his right hand, so faded it looks like an old cut? Very likely a knife fight. It's not a deep cut.

Not as deep as the cut the clock has made on your palm when it tore through the bag. It stings, and you curse, surprised.

Fortunately, you're almost home. You avoid looking at the policeman checking a piece of paper in front of your building. You enter, check your mailbox, ascend the stairs, make your way over to the door. The cut is beginning to drip, a little blood spilling onto your hand. You set the clock down, find your key and open the door. You leave the clock in the hall as you make your way to the bathroom. You flip on the light and run the water.

The cut isn't bad, just a little dirty. The water is warmer than your hands and feels rather uncomfortable. You wash the cut out. It's still bleeding slowly, a bit, and it stings.

You take the clock inside and shut the door.

You have arranged to meet Mr. Dali for lunch at Fablios. You made the appointment some time ago, and just now remember as you put on your coat and put the chess-board away. You head down the stairs and check your watch. You won't be late.

Fablios is just down the street from the apartment. You can get the kind of food there that isn't too heavy, just enough to keep you alert and in control. Not a bad place for a meeting, just a bit distracting with all its random noise. It makes you nervous. You have to pay that much more attention.

As you push open the door, you can see Mr. Dali gorging himself on sandwich. Mr. Dali is waiting at a booth by the large window through which the street can be seen.

"Hello, Mr. Dali," you say.

Mr. Dali greets you with a half smile as he looks at you through a bite of sandwich. You've ceased being disgusted with Mr. Dali. He's simply, irretrievably, a bit of a slob.

You cut through the pleasantries fairly quickly and get straight to the point.

"How's the arm?" Mr. Dali asks you.

You counter with a question of whether it has anything to do with the business at hand.

"It does," Mr. Dali says.

You inform him coldly that the arm is much better than it used to be.

Mr. Dali smiles again. "Can you get into the Mutual Building?"

You inform him that that will depend upon the time of day and the reason.

He pushes an envelope, which you had not seen, across to you. You take it up and open it. Inside is a piece of paper that says "If you wish to surrender, put your hands flat on the table. Otherwise, you will be shot through the window."

Your hand is on the knife in your boot instantly and that knife is immediately pressing Mr. Dali in the outer thigh. Dali jumps and the sandwich falls in pieces on the table.

You tell Mr. Dali that killing you would be a mistake.

Dali looks shocked and says, "What did the envelope say?"

You mention to Mr. Dali the hands on the table.

"I'm sorry," Mr. Dali hastily says, trembling. "That was the wrong envelope. Yours had a check in it. Please..."

You retract and replace the knife, watching him very carefully.

He pulls the envelope away and, shaking violently, goes through his briefcase. You get up from the booth and walk towards the exit. He calls your name. You turn slowly.

He has regained a measure of composure and the smile is back.

"Lunch tomorrow?" he says.

You nod, without smiling.

As you exit the building, your heart is beating quite quickly, but you know better than to let it show. You head for home, go up the stairs, unlock your door, lock it behind you, close your curtains and curl up on the couch. Your body trembles ever so slightly and you force yourself to go into a sleep.

You awake, but you forget what your dream was about. Something about...but no.

It is now sometime in the afternoon. Opening the curtains reveals that it is later than you thought. A glance at your watch, with which you now set your new clock, confirms this. You wind the clock. And the clock begins ticking...soothingly, just like a good clock should.

It's nearly dinner time. Enough time to go through your meditations. You head into the bedroom, pull out some sweat-clothes, and change into them.

You sit upon the floor in a cross-legged position, and you think about what you have to do tonight. You stretch your right leg out in front of you, and you pull. You stretch your left leg out in front of you, and you pull.

You rise to your feet, and bend over. You feel the blood pouring into your head. You hear your heart beat loudly in your ears. You straighten up and feel the blood drain away. You think about the thing you have to do tonight.

You think single-mindedly about who you are, about what you are tonight. You are an assassin.

You do a number of sit-ups and push-ups, stretch again briefly, and you rise.

There is a suit of black clothes in the closet. Do they belong to you? You put them on. They fit tight. Can you feel them?

You reach out to grab your strangling wire which is hanging from the closet door. You cannot feel it through the thin gloves on your hands.

You put your coat on, check your key, and turn out the lights. You close the door behind you.

You are a reader. You are not a murderer!

You head down the stairs, full of your single-minded purpose. Not a thought remains in your mind except the task you have to accomplish, on the Plaza, at eight-thirty.

But you are not a murderer. You are not wearing the black clothes. You are sitting with a story in your hands. Stop this madness!

As you walk down the sidewalk, you feel the cold night air on your cheeks. It caresses you, and numbs you as it touches you. Your eyes see only what is in front of you. Another street, which leads to another street, which leads to a third street that feeds into the Plaza. Your victim is there.

But you can stop this! You are not a murderer. You need not finish the story. It will not keep you from doing what you have already done. But it will keep you from doing it again. You will no longer be responsible for the death of a man whose name is Janos Kirper.

The street is dark and deserted. No thugs are braving the night. A cat or a rat shuffles somewhere from some dark alley. Across the street, another figure passes in the opposite direction.

But you are not a murderer.

The other figure turns to look sidewise at you. Through you are still focused on your purpose, you are prepared for a sudden movement from the figure.

None comes. The figure continues to stroll down the street and turns out of sight.

You, who are not yet a murderer, turn a different corner. There ahead of you is the Plaza. Where you go to kill. Where you have killed several times before. Where you have been asked to kill Janos Kirper. Where Kirper waits, unsuspecting.

But it is not too late.

Why do you read on about the low wind on the Plaza, the leaves shuffled gently by a bitter wind. The figure on the bench, his back to you, is Janos. You are not a murderer yet! He is engaged in thought like he always is.

Your approach is silent and swift. Janos turns, hearing the slightest sound. You wrap the cord around his neck and you pull violently.

There is a snap and a struggle, and Janos flails wildly. He paws at the cord. He struggles to turn himself, to face the person who is killing him. But you are holding him tightly. You are keeping him from turning around. You do not want him to see the face of the one who is killing him.

Finally, he sputters and falls limp. You maintain the pressure on the cord, but Kirper does not rise again. When you release the pressure, his body crumples upon the black bench. You release the wire and see it fall away from the red line on Kirper's neck.

You pause very briefly, satisfied at a good night's work. Then you run quickly from the square. You, the reader, have killed a man.

My Trip

When I came to my senses, I was sitting in a room, surrounded by people in white medical coats, looking at me with some wonder.

It seems I was frozen in a bizarre avalanche and amazingly preserved for hundreds of years until their technology could restore me to normal. Cliché, eh?

When I had fully recovered, I walked all about the new world, anxious to see what several hundred years had done to my planet. I was astounded at what I saw. Great tranquility, children playing on the street, unwatched by parenting eyes. These children and their parents were of many colors and seemed to be mixes of many different races and ethnic backgrounds. The language spoken on the street was a peculiar mix of many dialects. The languages varied from country to country, as did the mixes I saw. Yet in each country, this same tranquility ruled, a contentment, a happiness I had never seen before on the faces of a human.

Literature had grown in astounding ways. Music had changed beyond recognition. Visual art was breaking the boundaries of the known senses. And everywhere ruled a free exchange of information that updated itself every second.

I was so happy until I asked how things came to be this way. To this my guides replied that Adolph Hitler had been the sole beneficiary of all that I saw.

“Adolph Hitler?” I exclaimed. And I attempted to explain to them the downfall of this most ancient madman-criminal.

The people smiled at me, not understanding, and thinking I was somehow misinformed. Their own impressions of the man were based on information they had received since their youth and were totally incongruous with my own knowledge of the facts.

I looked around me and saw a world completely opposite of that to which Hitler would have led society. And yet somehow his name, and only his name, had survived to exist as the cornerstone of their bright, beautiful world-order.

What was I to do? Did it matter that the personality of the man had been changed to fit the society? Did it matter that this man had been chosen as benevolent father to a benevolent planet which had no true notion of what he had truly been like?

Could I spend this one-dollar bill, which I gazed at in consternation from this park bench, when it so proudly bore his face?

The Last Day

It's so quiet out. Night is a wonderful time. The sky is completely black...no city lights reflecting off clouds or anything. It's just black.

I sit here thinking of nothing. I'm letting my mind go out into the sky...far and far and far...way past our atmosphere. Kind of silly, really. Nothing there but vacuum. Space. Hard to believe any nothing could be so beautiful.

I love looking into it, that endless sky, especially on a night like this, with no lights around for dabs and dabs, still and quiet.

I can look into it, and close my eyes, and open them again, and even though there's no difference between the two, I can tell the difference. It's like the difference between being immersed in water and drinking. When I close my eyes, I'm stuck in this frail, hot body. But when my eyes are open, I go rushing out, dabs and dabs into the open, endless sky, until I can't stop, racing into that blackness of space. Just by lying here, I can fly out so far...even if there is no point.

I was told, once, when I was little, that people used to believe in little lights in the sky. That was so long ago it could have been myth. No one's really sure what happened that long ago. Thousands of little tiny white points of light, and blue, and red! Twinkling, blinking, looking back at me! Other suns, some would say, just like ours.

But there are no suns now, except for ours, even if there were once. And they say our sun, which I think was merely a beautiful fluke of nature, a tiny aberration in the infinite blackness, is getting old and will go out soon. Not long, they say, not long.

Dear Ancestor

I'm writing this on one of your ancient typewriters. I've got excellent news! We've discovered how to send matter back in time! Isn't it marvelous? I'm sure you're infinitely curious as to the state of things "up here," so just keep reading!

There's only one country now, a great Federation. That's right! As in "Brotherhood." Men only! We've domesticated the spirit out of all women and now they're as obedient as kittens! Handy, isn't it?

I work in a recycling factory, where we recycle old garbage into new, reusable materials. I'm really not certain why we've waited so long to mass-develop this idea. Rest assured, it does add strength to our economy and the planet is just beautiful!

I'm the manager of our plant, which is how I can afford to send this letter back in time. Of course, it was proofread by the Head Confederate and his Underlings, but I was more than happy to let him. Apparently, there was some debate about whether I should warn you, my dearest ancestor, of some of the great things we have in store, but when I explained to them the sheer harmlessness of it all, they were delighted!

Let me continue. We've managed to cut down on dangerous diseases and horrible resource crunches. This, of course, is at the expense of the unfortunate victims of disease and the pitiful few who can't afford to pay for their heat. Too bad! Did you know, there's a million uses for their human flesh?

How's my English, ancestor? I'm doing my best. Our dialects are slightly different, but I studied yours in high-school. I read a lot of literature of your time: Atwood, Faulkner, Fitzgerald. It's all very interesting. Still, it's harmless, thank goodness. I even read some of that adorable black literature. (There aren't any blacks left, by the way.)

What I enjoy most about the power of being able to write you, ancestor, is that most likely one of these ideas will offend you, and you'll try your best to do something about it. Am I right?

Well, go right ahead, ancestor! Logical deduction on our part has proved that there's only one future: yours! And it's my past. We took the liberty of proving this with our time-machine. Nothing we do seems to change history. Not that we want to. Everything here is just "peachy" for us. Even so, we might have eliminated those silly inevitable delays which brought us to this

state. You know, the Second World War and all that. Unfortunately, for some reason it just doesn't seem possible.

Unfortunate for you too, eh, ancestor? I'm afraid you're stuck with your future as much as we're stuck with our past. If you desire, please try and do whatever you can to change your future. If logic serves, everything you do will be contributing to our society as it is today. As you read this letter, you're throwing yourself inevitably towards my world.

Your descendent,

Brother Sanbuiey

P.S. Write soon!

Herstory

“You wouldn’t believe it to look at me,” said the writer, “but I had power.”

She was right. Teddy didn’t believe her. She was a short, badly dressed woman, in clothes that she probably bought at a thrift store, slovenly, with a lot of weight on her. “What kind of power?” he asked, mildly curious.

“The power of the *imagination*,” she said, tapping her temple with her index finger. Teddy did not want to be rude. He kept looking steadily at her, hoping she would say something else, anything to make that trite reply worth his time.

She did not return his gaze. She knew she had not impressed him. She took another swig of her drink.

“I write historical novels,” she told him. “Do you read them?”

He did not. He read newspapers, occasionally. She sussed this by glancing at him, and nodded her head. “It’s not easy. Not easy to do it *right*,” she corrected, making the point with her index finger. “And I did it right.” She looked at him again to see if he was more impressed than he had been a moment ago. He was not. Still, he was listening. She was fascinating somehow in her wrinkled clothes. Fingering the damp rip around her glass and following it with her eyes, she seemed to have worlds in her, however deeply they were buried.

“If you’re going to do it *right*,” she continued, speaking now to her glass, “you have to really look into your period. You have to study it, make enough headway into your era that you can describe a situation in that place so everyone, expert or idiot, will feel like they’re there. You do that with details, sure,” she admitted, nodding, as if he had asked her a question. “The pointed shoes of the 14th century, the huge woodpile out back of the Montana settler’s home. Most of the people in my field are good at getting some of the details. But if you really want to do it *right*,” she said again making the point with her finger, “you have to get a context.”

She paused for a breath of what was in her glass.

“You have to put those details in perspective. They have to be appropriate to the characters in their world. Those pointed shoes have to be on a noble on his way to a particular meeting. The woodpile has to be the right size given the time of year and your character has to cut it. So you really have to do more than just collect details.”

She nodded again. “You have to know the period inside and out.” She looked Teddy in the eyes. “I was good at that,” she insisted.

Teddy nodded. He was wondering if he should make his departure now before she got too drunk to object, he found it hard to rise. She was an interesting person and he hadn’t anywhere to be until four.

When he had sat long enough without making any motion to leave or change the subject, she took this as permission to continue.

“When I researched,” she said, “I did more than just read. I got into it. I really wanted to feel the period. I used to write out scenes between people that weren’t in the book and act them out by myself. I’d dress up the apartment with some props, draw the curtains, read books on the time, and try to say the lines with the era completely obliterating any thoughts of my own time.

“I was good,” she said, pointing yet again. “I sold seven books. I didn’t even know how good I was ‘til the third made me a couple bills. Then my agent really started taking me seriously.”

She took another drink.

“She wanted me to do a piece set in the 50’s around the south, said she had a buyer for it already, a serious publisher. I bit. I started reading about the south that afternoon. I didn’t stop until the end of the summer.

“I was horrified.” She slammed her glass on the table. “You know about the south then?”

Teddy shook his head.

She shook hers, too. “It would make you sick.” Her head dropped. “I’m not black,” she said, as if it were in doubt, “but ever since I read that first book I wanted to be, just so I could adequately express my horror, you know?”

Teddy nodded.

She held a look of vehemence like she held the empty glass in her hand, uncertain whether to hurl it or drain it of its drops. “I won’t sicken you with the stories I read, the accounts of the lynchings, the way the police behaved, and the worst part, the absolute hypocrisy of the people living in those communities who permitted it all. But I have to emphasize how hard it was for me to admit that it was *real*. It really happened. It wasn’t fiction. I had to come to grips with that. It was just fifty years ago. It could have been me doing that.

“I couldn’t write about it. I tried. I really did. I knew everything about the time. Politicians’ names, protesters, towns. But when I wrote, I found myself writing something else. It became another kind of book. I re-wrote history. In my book, the Reconstruction didn’t falter after 30 years. The gains that black Americans made after slavery didn’t get reversed. No Jim Crow. By 1950, there was a black president.

“I felt strange when I finished. I hadn’t left my apartment in three days – the blinds had been closed. Usually, when I finish a rough draft, I have a habit of taking my library books back. But when I put away my manuscript and went to find them, they had disappeared.

“I looked everywhere. My apartment is cluttered, but it’s not that big. I don’t usually lose library books. What I thought was strange, though, was that I found other books.

“I didn’t remember checking them out. I didn’t even remember seeing them before. They were strange books about the past, history, essay, but they were all wrong. When I looked at the first one I thought it was a joke, like a spoof. *A History of Black Senators Since 1900*. It was a *thick* book. I kind of marveled at how well it was faked – photos and everything. Then I looked at the other books. They were *all* like that.”

She looked at him, now, as if waiting for him to run away. He just waited patiently for her to continue. After gauging his response to make sure it was genuine, she went on carefully.

“When I went outside, what I saw terrified me so much I nearly ran back in. My entire neighborhood had changed. My middle-class white neighborhood had become a middle-class black neighborhood. Same buildings, pretty much. Same streets, mostly. The library had been named after someone I’d never heard of.”

She looked at him again. “Don’t you understand? It matched what I had written.”

He blinked at her. He did not know what to say. Before he could figure something out, she hurried on.

“I couldn’t make any sense out of it. But after a couple of weeks went by and I figured out where everything was again, I was able to confirm what I thought. It all corresponded to my book. Everything I had changed in there had changed out here. Of course you don’t remember. You changed with the world.”

Teddy shrugged. “I don’t really know anything about the Reconstruction,” he admitted.

She nodded. “So anyway, here I am in this new world, and I’m glad. Hell, I’m *ecstatic!* I just *fixed* things. No lynchings, no riots. I was floored. Now I didn’t know too much about what effect those changes had had, but I started looking into it.

“Overall, I was pleased. I did lose my agent. She ended up as a waitress somewhere on the Lower East Side and didn’t know me. But I had a new agent and she still had a willing publisher and the funniest thing was, the book was still historical fiction, *accurate!*”

She burst into hysterical laughter. When it had subsided, there was a glint in her eyes as she fell deeper into the story.

“I was so dazed by the whole thing at first that I didn’t give myself credit. I thought I must be mentally ill. I went for therapy, but the doctor just concluded I had an active imagination.” A sarcastic laugh escaped her. She looked directly at Teddy and eyed him quickly up and down. “You doing anything later tonight?” she volunteered.

“I have an appointment at four,” he replied quickly.

Trying not to look too disappointed, she shrugged and got up to get another drink. When she came back, she straddled her chair. “After a while it occurred to me that I might have *done* this. You know, Philip K. Dick style, changed my world? What if I had?

“I wanted to try it again. I was almost afraid to, but there was a demand for another book from the publisher. So I delved into Indian History. Trail of Tears, five-tribes resettlement. I’d already known about how horrible the relocation was, but to research it thoroughly...you wouldn’t believe some of the stories I read. It made me sick to think of myself as an American. I decided, if I had to change history, this is what I’d change. What the hey. It couldn’t hurt to try. At the very least I’d have me a speculative book to sell or not sell.

“So I wrote it where Andrew Jackson gets assassinated and there is no settlement of Georgia, no Cherokee relocation, and all that. Once again, I kept the curtains drawn and holed up until the draft was done.”

“Did it work again?” Teddy asked, idly, looking at the ice slide around his glass. He caught the waiter’s eye and ordered another one.

“Hell yes,” she said with gusto. “Hell yes. This time my neighborhood hadn’t changed much, but the country sure had. Now we were in a strange relationship with a different south, practically a different country, like Quebec in Canada. Not all good, I’ll admit, not all pleasant. But those atrocities at least were not a part of America’s past.

“I knew it was me, now. You can’t imagine what it feels like to have that kind of power.” She was gesturing wildly now, her eyes in a distant place, her gaze lost and far away. A tight smile curled her lips back to reveal her teeth, dingy from cigarette smoke. “After being powerless for so long? Victim of the injustices of our time? There was one problem.”

“What?” Teddy asked, not seeing any apparent.

“Having changed the past again, I found I had *no* agent and no publisher. I had to make a living. I’m no good at anything else. I puzzled over it for awhile. How could I fix history so that I’d be set up again? I thought on it for awhile. I wrote a number of drafts, each time changing the past just a little bit to get back to some success for me. But I *couldn’t*. I couldn’t figure it out. The world kept changing, but I couldn’t write it where I was successful. I was running out of groceries, getting more and more reckless with each draft. Finally I gave up in despair. But then I figured it out.”

“What?”

“What to do.”

“What did you do?” Teddy urged her.

“I figured out that I had to write my autobiography. I’d write it the way I wanted my life to have gone. Only I’d be a success this time. I’d write that I had gotten myself a contract with a major publisher and had sold a million copies of something. Make myself good and rich. It seemed like a good plan, but I worried.”

“About what?”

“This wasn’t like the other books. This one was purporting to be *true*, not a historical fiction. Would it still work? I thought, what if I change in the middle of my writing and vanish, or make it so I’m nowhere near my book in the present and I can’t finish? Will I disappear? Forget who I am? You have to be pretty careful.”

Teddy nodded in agreement.

“I came up with a pretty good solution. Instead of a fictional autobiography, I’d write a fictional *biography*. I’d write as a biographer who would write my story from his point of view. This way I’d be insulated from the changes to a degree. So that’s what I did. I wrote a story about a writer with my name, as told by another writer.”

She stopped and took a long pull from her drink.

Teddy waited for her to continue. She did not. She sat in sullen silence and pouted over her drink.

“So?” he asked finally.

“So?” she echoed, hardly seeming to hear him.

“So what happened?” he exclaimed.

She shrugged. “I’m doing okay,” she said. “I have a few books in print. I have an agent. I’m doing okay.” She trailed off into her liquor.

“But wait!” Teddy exploded. “You were supposed to be rich!”

“Yep,” she agreed, quietly.

“Aren’t you?”

“No,” she said, shaking her head.

“Why don’t you write another book and fix it?”

“I can’t do it anymore,” she replied.

“Why not?”

“Because I created that stupid biographer. He decided to rewrite the whole thing on his own. He fixed history back the way it was, stuck me back where I was, and took away my power!”

Teddy looked disgusted. “That story’s crap,” he said.

“Don’t tell me, tell him” she said, gesturing at me with her shoulder.

“That’s a great story,” Teddy said, suddenly, signaling nervously for the check.

- The End -

The Destruction of the City of Gelthrunne

And there was a great earthquake. And a cataclysm rocked the world. And the hordes came in from the north and devoured the crops of the people and burned their homes and killed their children and ransacked all that was left. And there was much festivity among the powers of darkness, and the evil side of human souls gained precedence for a time. The darkness and demons spent their night rejoicing in their wickedness, burning off the flame of all that is kind and gentle in humans' souls. Death and destruction walked everywhere, searching for some untouched place, hand in hand, a pair of kingly brothers looking for a place to call home.

I destroyed that city. I wrote about it and it had a past. I decided to kill it because I was angry. *That* is God.

I stood in that city and I felt *nothing*. I stood in the center of the ruins, on the dust, and I looked at the fallen and crumbling buildings around me, and I knew I was God now.

“Death to all who oppose me!”

But there was nobody else to kill. So I killed myself

The Unkillable Man

The stalker knelt in grass the temperature of a toad's back and peered through the weeds at the house of his prey. A bright flash of white illuminated the area, betraying his hiding place, a patch of green on the hill, across the gully from the house. Hardin was there, he was in there, in that house. That was where it was going to end.

The officer in question, Tom Hardin, was now resting from his involvement in the most baffling case in police history. He had requested special leave of the case, and he had been granted it by the Bureau. The case had tried him sorely. After he had apprehended the Unkillable Man, after having been lauded as a hero who had done what no man could do, he had lost his security and the security of the rest of the world when his captive had again escaped. And this time, everyone knew who the next victim might be.

The Unkillable Man had been a menace, a true nightmare for law enforcement. His victims had been carefully chosen, and there had been no way for them to escape. Judging from the autopsies and the investigations, they had been entirely unable to see their predator coming.

Prior to Hardin's entry into the case, no one had been able to attach a motive to the crimes, or even a relationship between the victims. But Hardin, the brightest in his class at the Academy, already recognized for his uncanny intelligence, already had fostered an interest in the case. After only a few weeks, he had managed to deduce a certain pattern in the killings. To the stunned surprise of his superiors, they had suddenly begun to catch the killer in his act.

They had caught him strangling the physicist the first time. But in the time it took them to get into the apartment, he was gone without a trace. Without any trace at all.

No one except Hardin had expected him to return to that crime scene. Upon Hardin's request, they had posted guards at the doors and windows. Perhaps it had been the lackadaisical attitude of the guards that had allowed the killer to slip into the apartment without being noticed. Why he had returned, no one could have said. He took nothing with him as he left, and he had made no changes. He had revisited that sight like a ghost haunting the scene of his own murder. He had bolted past the guards at the door, who had never expected him to get past them to the

outside from the inside. They pursued him around a corner, only to find, again, that he had vanished into thin air.

Several times, several other situations, they spotted him, sometimes in the act of murder, other times in the process of returning to that particular scene. It had become his Achilles' heel. Despite his unearthly vanishings, he seemed to always have to come back to the place of his crime again.

He had been dubbed the Unkillable Man for his inhuman talent, which rendered him as slippery as oil. Bullets failed to touch him. Any physical attempt to capture him met with abject failure. In each instance, his body would simply vanish until the threat was past. On one occasion, he appeared to be all around the room at once, disappearing around one corner and reappearing impossibly at another.

Hardin had taken an interest in the case when, while glancing over the files, he had come to the realization that the physicist that had been murdered was one of the few women or men who might have been able to explain the strange phenomenon of the killer's ability. It occurred to him that, perhaps, in the talent lay the motive, and that the advantages of the talent might also have their corresponding limitations.

Tom Hardin had been trained as a police scientist himself at the Academy. As an officer, he had a reputation for being dogged, relentless, and thorough to the extreme. Once he had sniffed the initial clues of this case, he had become fascinated by it, and determined to be the one to solve it.

He had been discouraged in this by his superiors, who felt that his talents were best not wasted on a case with so little information, that he might best serve his force by working on cases of a more substantial nature. But Hardin had taken in the scent, and the trail had begun to organize in his mind, in the shape of a question mark that must be followed to its satisfying point.

So he had gone along on the hunt for the Unkillable Man. He had corroborated the pattern of the victims, stunning his superior officers by pinning his logic on a leap of faith which had been vindicated in the continual correct guessing of the next victim on the Man's list. It had been a terrifying time for the public. The Man seemed to know no boundaries, could reach anyone, anywhere, any time. But Hardin had led his team to the sites, and each incident brought them nearer and nearer to the killer.

Hardin saw him the first time with his own eyes in the incident with the high-school teacher. Once again, the killing occurred in the home, and the team was there just in time to see the black-clothed man with the ski-mask stepping away from the body of the poor old man as he toppled to the floor with an expression of bewilderment still in his old eyes.

That time, the Man had nearly run straight into them before vanishing like the night into darkness. Other times, he had not allowed them to get so close, vanishing before their very eyes. One time, Hardin was so close he could see the figure's eyes, staring out at him with a terrified expression through the black slats in his mask, before that figure again vanished, leaving no trace, not even a scent behind him to indicate which direction he might have gone.

When Hardin realized that the killer had needed to return to the scenes of his crimes, he began to make headway, closing in ever tighter on the figure in black, who began to reappear more and more frequently in those places, and who seemed more and more exhausted, like a housefly that finally has to land for its inability to keep taking off any longer.

It was in one of these moments that Hardin's team finally surrounded the Unkillable Man and tried to get a hold of him. The first such attempt failed as soundly as the others had. None of his officers could lay a hand on the Killer. Finally, in another choice moment, Hardin, incensed with the seeming incompetence of his people, leapt upon the Unkillable Man and seized him tightly in his arms.

Hardin seemed to be holding him fast, and the figure made a frightful wail as he struggled to break free. At first, no one moved, unable to believe that Hardin had actually laid a hand on the man that bullets had missed. Hardin screamed for assistance in the struggle, and other figures descended upon the masked man, taking him from Hardin and restraining him fully.

Someone grabbed the ski mask and pulled it roughly over the chin of that man, whose lips writhed in agony as he struggled with the bonds that bound him. But as the mask pulled free of the eyebrows and hair, and that face became recognizable in the light, everyone was thunderstruck to see Hardin himself held on all sides and bound. Hardin was looking around at his captors with confusion, crying at them to release him, that the killer had gotten away again.

And, indeed, it seemed that he had. For no figure remained in the room besides the victim, the officers, and Hardin himself. That figure that had seemed to be Hardin had pulled away in the darkness when it looked as though the Unkillable Man had been subdued, and now there was no trace of him.

Now Hardin knew who the next victim would be, and he waited in his house as the lightning flashed and the wind roared, for that figure who would arrive out of the darkness. He knew the scene by heart already. There would be the sound of dry brush crackling under heavy footsteps which there were, even now, outside the window. There would be a low thud at the door as it was tried, as the sound of a shoulder pounded against a weak latch; and there was. The stalker had known which door to try. Hardin saw the encounter in his mind, because he had seen it before, in an unearthly and intense *déjà vu*. Here it was again, that encounter, those heavy footsteps coming up the hall, the image of the Man appearing in the doorway, framed by a sudden flash of lightning which illuminated his features.

The Unkillable Man had foregone the mask. He stared down at his nemesis and victim, seated comfortably in a chair, waiting patiently.

"Now I know," said the Man.

"Of course," replied Hardin.

"I wasn't sure until I touched you, until I proved that I was the only one who could lay a hand on you."

"It was the only way," replied Hardin from his chair.

"You haven't escaped me," said the Man.

"Haven't I?"

"But you've lost the ability," replied the Man.

"Well, it served its purpose."

The Man nodded, and scratched his chin, an older chin than Hardin's, but the same chin. "Yes, you killed anyone that might be able to explain how you learned to travel along your own time line, to switch places with yourself at any given time. Even mine." The seated, the younger Hardin, nodded patiently.

"Yes, those treatises will never be written now," the younger Hardin said, considering the situation with his hand on his cheek, "Unless I write them, which is why you're still here. And until I write them, the Method of Travel which I have perfected never comes into being. The funny thing is," and the younger Hardin covered a smile with his hand, "I got set upon the trail through this very investigation. Isn't that funny?" He stopped for a moment and looked pitifully up at the angry man glowering down at him. "I'd hate to be you," he said, almost smiling. "A ghost, trapped in the past solely because he was already there."

"I'll find a way to make you pay for what you've done," said that ghost, that older figure.

"No you won't," replied Hardin. "In the first place, everything I became, you'd eventually become, so drop that high and mighty tone." He sneered at the figure in the chair, tossing his head. "Who knew you could get so sick of yourself? In the second place, the longer I wait, the less likely you become, until you fade into impossibility."

"I'll kill you," said Hardin.

"In the third place," said Hardin snidely, "I'm the younger you now. So anything you do to me eliminates you. That's why you were able to grab me in the first place. If I hadn't remembered what I'd done, I'd never have gotten out of it!"

Hardin looked down sadly at the figure of his younger self, his lost past. That self, that form stealer with the mind of the future, looked up at him and grinned. "You see," he said, "I really am the Unkillable Man!"

"What else do you remember about the future?" the Older Hardin asked, in a half-hearted, curious tone.

"Oh, I don't know, what's it to you?" the younger Hardin replied, snidely.

"Do you remember how you got out of here?" the Older Hardin persisted. "How I left? How this encounter ended?"

Suddenly the younger Hardin was ill at ease. He rose to his feet. "Time for me to call my backup. I'd leave, if I were you."

"Is that what happened?" the older Hardin asked.

"Yes," replied the younger.

"I don't believe you," said the older. "Something's wrong."

"What do you mean?" asked the younger, dialing quickly on the phone.

"I think you do know how this encounter ended," said the older Hardin. "And you're trying to change it."

"No," the younger Hardin persisted. "You can't change my memories. I knew you'd be here, and I know just where you're going."

"So you remember incarceration?" the older Hardin followed.

"Yes!" cried the younger, shaking the phone as if to make it ring more quickly.

"Yours or mine?"

The younger Hardin looked at his older self with an expression of abject terror.

The older Hardin slammed his fist upon the table. "Yours or mine? Come on, damn it! Yours or mine?"

"Yours!" the younger Hardin said quickly.

"Do you mean in that body, the young one? Or in this mind, the young one?"

Hardin, the younger, had grown confused. "I...I don't know..." he stammered.

"Could it be you?" the older Hardin said, advancing upon his younger self. "Could it be a memory of how the police that I already phoned came and abducted you, pending my explanation?"

"No!"

"So your time jaunt won't do you any good at all!" Hardin said, triumphantly. "You'll just spend the rest of your life in jail while I go on out here in my older body and get on with the rest of my life."

"You'll fade..."

"Oh, no," said Hardin. "Because you'll want so badly to get out of there, even though I'm out here, making sure no harm comes to you. You'll be trying to piece together that method which allows you to slip to another time of your life, and the harder you try to recreate that process, the longer I'll be around. Maybe I'll die of old age first."

"No!" Hardin cried. "You bastard! You bastard!" And he ran at his older self, but not before the tranquilizer pistol had found its mark. The younger Hardin fell, crumbling, into a helpless pile upon the floor.

The older Hardin rubbed his side, and felt the old scar where it had faded through the years. "Take him away," he said to the officers who had crept in. Still looking at the two faces, the uncanny resemblance, the officers complied.

It's true, Hardin considered, watching them take his young body away, he'd obviously have to get out eventually, with his Method intact. But he'd spend enough time in jail to make any knowledge of the future obsolete.

The older Hardin sighed. A hard rap, losing the best years of his life this way. But then again, considering what he'd done, it was a light sentence.

The Jokester

Dedicated to David Dwyer Corey

Among a small group of friends, personal, inside jokes are always welcome. And if they aren't welcome, they're usually still received with a laugh anyway. That's the way it was with Mike and his slam-gag.

Mike's favorite joke was to walk straight into a wall or a pillar as if he had done it accidentally -- Slam! He'd wobble around, look a little dazed, then shake his head and go "wabba wabba wabba."

Rosemary fell for it every time. She would always wince and cry when Mike hit the wall, and then she would make a half-hearted attempt to pound Michael in the chest when he started to laugh.

Needless to say, after a couple of years, the joke wore thin. Everybody knew what Mike was doing when he slammed into the wall. Nobody cared after a while when things got tense or when somebody missed the joke.

But Michael had a need for the attention. So he devised ways to make his "accidents" seem more realistic. He'd topple over his shoelace and scramble over the sidewalk so that even his old friends would stop and ask him if he were all right. Then he'd laugh and laugh and they'd laugh with him until the next time, when the surprise didn't work any more.

Well, Michael just kept pushing the outside of that envelope, painting a faint bruise on his arm ahead of time, then --BAM!-- slamming into the wall again. His friends would all stare agape at the sudden bruise. Rosemary would give a high squeal and put her hand over her mouth until Mike assured her that it was only a joke.

It became a little game, then. Michael would slam himself into a wall and provide increasing effect, not being satisfied until he had at least startled his friends. His friends, for their part, made it a point not to pay him any attention unless they were caught completely off guard. On occasion, they were; Michael's skill at the game was very high and he was getting better with practice. At the same time, however, his friends, with repeated play, were getting harder and harder to fool.

It had gotten to the point where Michael would cut a fake finger off at the dinner table, only to produce it a moment later. His friends were screaming at him, partly in frustration, partly in enjoyment of the extremity of the game. Such a graphic tactic did not work again. By this point, his friends were simply ready for every trick he had.

Michael was well-near infuriated. After seven attempts in a single day to convince his friends he had been mangled or beaten up or disfigured, he finally, in a fit of rage, blew himself up in his car. The explosion shook the block. Even so, his friends refused to come out and look with the other people.

They played along to the very end. They went to his funeral, wept just a little too loudly, if only to let him know they were on to him, and went on about their lives as if he were coming back the next day.

It is uncertain who will win this game in the end. Michael is still in the grave and his friends, who have not forgotten him, still wait for his return. Rosemary is a little worried, but she is always the easiest to fool. Needless to say, no one has been able to do the fake slam gag as well as Mike.

The Storm

I do a lot of driving. More these days than I used to, but I'm going to explain all that. What I really meant to say is that I used to drive around for pleasure. I would drive anywhere I could on any given day.

"John, will you go to the store to pick me up some beans?"

"Sure, mom."

That kind of thing. I didn't care where I was going; it was the driving that made it worthwhile. Something about putting the land behind you while you sit, safe and secure, in relative stillness, against the panorama of the moving world. That's what I like.

But it was my passion for driving...I'd better explain that further. I'm not a stock-car driver or a four-wheeler or anything like that. I don't care about driving along the back-roads of Kentucky or the mountain roads along the Pacific north of San Francisco. I'm talking about driving, well, just from one place to the other. You know? It's just a simple love. Nothing complicated. I told you about that grocery store incident. That's the full extent of it.

What it did was it gave me the opportunity to look around and see things I never saw otherwise. I should have been watching the road...I did hit a dog once, but it turned out okay. The dog didn't die. But you see things differently from the wheel of a car. When you're walking, you're such a part of the landscape. And even running. You've got that heartbeat, that heavy breathing. But a car!

The quieter the car the better, of course. I've got a '79 Chevy, which isn't a limousine, but you can get the idea riding with me. You watch the world go by, almost like you had nothing to do with it. I think it's a nice analogy to life. Anyway, I was going to tell you what I saw.

I went out driving after a storm one day. The roads were wet, but the sun was out and the area looked like it was healing from the weather. As I drove further, the sky began to darken and I realized I was catching up to the very storm that I passed through this incredible storm. Lightning, thunder, winds heavy enough to shake the car. When I got through, my Chevy was shining like it had a coat of wax on it. But I stopped for gas.

And as I looked over my shoulder, that storm was right behind me. The ground around the station was dry as a matchstick, but within minutes, that storm had covered it, and me, transforming the area so that it looked just like the world around my house.

I paid for my gas, dashed to my car, and started driving again. And I got out of the storm, coming to a place where, once again, it was dry. So I stopped and waited, and sure enough, within five minutes, the storm was on me again.

That was the day I got this incredible idea: when you drive somewhere, depending on where you go, you're heading back in time! I mean, you can live through the same storm three times. It stands to reason that the world around you hasn't changed yet, that your bills aren't due until that storm hits. The earth is turning, and it depends on where you are that determines what time it is. So if you travel against the flow of time, you'll travel back.

I thought about this idea a lot, through there weren't any big storms to try it out on for a while. Still, I thought about it every time I drove somewhere. If my mother asked me to go to the store, and I went to the right store fast enough, I could call her and ask her, right before she asked me, what she wanted me to get!

Well, my mother died the day of that big storm not too long past. I sat in the house and watched her bounce around on the rug in a state of cardiac arrest while the wind howled and the rain poured sheets against our thin windows.

I should have called for an ambulance, but I wasn't thinking properly. All I could do in my panic was to drive somewhere. It was the first thought that came into my head. So I drove to the store. I was going to go to the hospital and ask for help, but when I reached the store I realized that the storm had not yet hit the area. The sun was shining and the terrible black clouds were approaching from the far east.

I raced to a phone and dialed home. The phone rang once, twice, three times, a fourth, a fifth. "Hello?" came a voice.

I could hardly speak for the tears in my throat. "Mom?" I managed to cry.

"Yes, John. Where are you? I thought you were right here."

"No, mom, I'm at the store," I tried to say without choking. "Do you need anything?"

"Perhaps some paper towels," she replied thoughtfully. "How much cash do you have with you?"

"About five dollars," I replied miserably.

There was a horrible pause on the other end. I stopped breathing for a moment. A cold wind had begun to blow across the parking lot.

"John," she finally said. "Are you all right?"

"Yes, mother," I said, relieved. "Paper towels?"

"That will be fine," she said. "I'll see you soon." And she hung up.

I raced to my car, started her up, and fled westward, away from the storm as fast as I could. When I had gone about twenty minutes, I called her back. We had a similar conversation, only this time I was more composed.

I realized what I would have to do. Drive west as far as I could go, staying in front of that horrible storm. The faster I go, the further away from that horrible heart-attack my mother gets. If I stop too long, it begins to catch up with her, and I feel the cool wind on my hands. But a day of good driving often puts me hours in front of her malady.

I don't know what I'll do when I reach the west coast. Probably try and get aboard a ship or something. I'll keep heading west. Someday, I'll get all the way back to my mother again and I'll be able to see her, for a little while at least.

Continuous Cities (After Calvino)

In the city of Isolde, there is only one person. She lives within her little house of stone and never ventures out into the street where she never sees a single soul not playing in the yard next door.

And next door to her there is only one other person who similarly has never ventured out to not see the millions of people who do not live in the city which extends as far as they eye cannot see.

Every year, Isolde holds a carnival where everyone who isn't anyone doesn't go. The carnival serves as a much needed opportunity for the only person in Isolde to stay inside instead of going out so as to avoid the complete lack of company she would ordinarily get were she to celebrate without the rest of the city.

I have visited Isolde only once, but as I don't live there, I'm afraid, Great Kahn, I wasn't really there at all. You will have to not visit it for yourself.

Captain Barnabas

Great are the tales of Captain Barnabas, HO and HEY! Great are his voyages, YO, and let me say so. And as I am a seadog shall I chant my shanty to you, HO and HEY!

We sailed on many a sea, and on many a sea we found, ho and hey, many a world, many a land, and there be by my hand no land farther than we have gone.

Ho and Hey!

But I be a liar if amending my statement I will not in ship's time nothing, for I have said in my empty boast of no land which is farther than we have sailed, hey and ho. And yet is this a lie, hey and ho, for there is always one land farther than that we have gone, hey and ho, and when we arrive there then sure as may be is sure there another land awaits us farther out. And did this not annoy my captain Barnabas to no end, ho, I tell you not!

For as far as we may sail, yet there be another land always as far a way as far may be, can this not end, ho and hey? Are we to travel to no end, ho and hey, I say to you, ho and hey!

And as I ask you this, ho and hey indeed my captain Barnabas would of us ask, "Am I to travel to no end, is there no end to my swabbing the seventy seas," and the oceans would quiver with fright I tell you no lies in his ocean might he stood no sailor in his way!

For when Captain Barnabas was of a mood, would there be of anyone to stand him down, I think it not! Leastwise me, and I the first mate of many a voyage. Ho in ho indeed!

So fie upon him that black and black mood of Captain Barnabas which led us from portly safety so far and far away, but who is to nay Captain Barnabas; the King? I think not. The Queen? Not in matters of sailing, so fie ahay and ring aday, weigh our anchor and let us away...

But it be many a land we pass and we know it, aye we have gone far. We know many a land and many a place for a good sailor wherein to stop, a good sailor wherein may find all one desires, hey and Ho! Catch my drift, I say to you? And all this was chaff to my Captain Barnabas, for he'd hear none of it, no sooner would feed the sharks but farther on farther on! and with his pipe ablaze in the orange sunset that's where we be heading, a-hey a-hey, ring-a-ding-down. Who knows where we may be found?

I sail with him many a year a long time and to repeat myself, quite a stop frequent we could have made, will that tunnel-blind Captain Barnabas, for so far ahead, who knows how far, edge

of the world, sailor needs food at least. At least. And ho and ring-a-ding, maybe hour, two at any if at any stop, food only? Alas, Captain Barnabas, be ye mad? And the answer to that one, aye!

For we didn't know what he'd be up to, a hey understand you? It's a wonder I'm to stand to tell you today, in your tower mighty high, so high. And looks to me in familiar quarters so old, so old.

But noneintheless and alas and away, our Captain Barnabas sailed us farther and farther to the ends where the ocean is black and dark and steamy, pass the finest littles of the islands we thought we knew, hey and ho, (there was no stopping there; Barnabas was no dummy, he wanted a crew) and hey and ho, so far out till our little islands disappeared.

What shall I tell you of long journey? Heaven prevail never seen such a long journey, aye that it is. I don't know what prevailed upon motherly grace to save us, hey and ho, and find us in the middle of ice blue where no light dwells and only ocean swells, hey and ho, we were out there long time.

How long, I don't know. Seems I forgotten this long trip where seems we started out from somewhere, somewhere we started out, a home, and straight line we head out, leaving lovely towers behind us, waving goodbye to the Queen, farewell to the King, and I myself don't remember what they looked like, though he has your eyes, your majesty, aye, thataway.

How far, how far, till we all just near about died, but nobody did, for what's the point? You sail a thousand moons and who knows. Aye, a thousand moons! And shouldn't we be dead. Shouldn't we! Shouldn't we? Aye! And so I thought, but nobody died under the spell of that dread and grim Captain Barnabas, till we saw land one day.

And it was your land, reminds me of me own, next to this great ocean as it is on its far east side, though we never had things you had. No flying carpets there, no magic storytellers, just old shanties like me, and I thought I'd never die. And maybe I won't. But that mad old Captain Barnabas's got it in his head again that there's further lands out west, and we keep living, he keeps sailing, know? Aye, and that's where we go and be. Out west. On our cursed ship. First land to be seen in a thousand moons and we all only fuel up and be on our way.

No, I can't stay.

The Experiment

My father called me into his office one day, taking me away from the little experiments I had been running outside in the large lab he directed. I was working with other junior scientists in a lab situation, doing busy work of little to no consequence for my father and the other major scientists in the firm. I had long awaited an opportunity to do something more substantial, but the opportunity had never come up.

"I have a special assignment for you," he said from behind his cigar. He leaned over his desk intently and looked straight at me, saying, "Would you be interested in doing some serious research?"

My heart jumped. I smiled uncontrollably and nodded my head, too excited to speak.

"We want you and a couple of your friends to do a little research for us."

I could only nod again, more slowly.

"We want you to sneak into the Rothschilds' basement and run experiments on their spider."

My heart jumped a little bit. This was a dangerous assignment. The Rothschilds were the chief rivals to my father's firm. What he wanted us to do was no less than espionage. It was illegal, and he probably wouldn't vouch for me if I got caught.

The look on his face only confirmed this for me. He wore a nervous, studying glance as he waited for my response.

"I'll do it," I said.

My father's face broadened into a wonderful smile.

Two other Junior scientists, friends of mine, had been picked for this assignment. We sat around my dingy living room looking at a map of the Rothschilds' lab complex downtown. None of us said much. We were all aware of the danger that was involved. Nobody felt much like talking.

We boarded the back of a pickup truck. The driver had been hired by my father and his colleagues to take us about a block from the building. The last of the daylight was fading beneath the sickly cloud cover in the west.

We rode in silence to the building, in a poor, run-down part of town. The driver let us off on a dimly lit sidewalk and left us with our tools and equipment.

Steadily, we made our way to the alley behind the building and worked our way up to the metal trellis that guarded the basement door of the Rothschilds' lab.

No one was stirring in the streets behind us. No cars passed under the dirty street lights. No one strolled along the blackened and abandoned buildings. No cats rummaged through the garbage further up the alley. We were alone.

We pushed the trellis aside. It gave way with a rusty groan, being not even fastened. We picked the lock to the metal door. In a little time it clicked and swung inwards.

The open doorway revealed a staircase going down beneath a naked bulb that was fastened to the sloped ceiling above us. About half way down the stairs, the ceiling leveled out again, leaving a high ceiling over a sunken and filthy basement.

As we descended the staircase, we saw that the room formed a big L-shape with a table in one part of the L, and a staircase against the far wall of the other part of the L. The staircase looked as if it led to the first floor of the building. We could not see the door at its top without going up the stairs.

Except for the and a group of chairs near the far staircase, the room was devoid of furniture. It was dark, building-brown, unswept and only lit by a few more bare bulbs attached to the ceiling. Another locked metal door with no handle sat against one of the walls, black and covered with rust.

We approached the table, trying to be as quiet as we could. On it was a small box which, on further examination, turned out to be a cage. In the cage sat the spider.

The spider was about the right size to rest neatly on one's palm. Its back was covered in a brown and yellow fur and its legs were black. Its cage was lined with some kind of soiled straw and was not very large.

The spider shuffled restlessly as we approached, as if awaiting our arrival. My friends set up our equipment and I removed the spider from its cage.

Placing it upon the table, one of my friends inserted a sensor, about the size of a small thermometer, into its thorax. The spider sat patiently and did not appear to be in any pain whatsoever.

We began the series of tests that my father had prescribed, our tension increasing with each minute spent in the wretched basement.

At one point, the spider scuttled away, dropping from the table, to escape into the corner behind the table. As quietly as we could, we attempted to chase him back out and restore him to the table so we could complete our tests.

After getting the spider back in position, we resumed our work. The spider sat patiently again, satisfied with its romp.

Suddenly a sound came from above. A door was opened and down the far staircase came a small group of people. The Rothschilds had discovered us!

There was nowhere for us to go, so we sat there as the group of about fifteen descended into the basement. Megan was in their midst, shorter than most of them, neatly dressed in a casual outfit to match her well-kept hair. As usual, her expression was calm but unreadable.

Brian was at her side, tall, menacing, wearing a short sleeve shirt that was slightly too small for his long arms.

They came down the staircase side by side, about halfway into the group of nondescript bodies and faces that accompanied them. I felt a twinge of jealousy as I saw Brian and Megan together. I hoped it would not show on my face.

"So, you've come after all," Megan said in her surprisingly deep, pleasant voice. I had no idea what she meant by this. As she spoke, little more than her eyebrows moved. These were my only clue as to her opinion of our presence here, and at present, these told me nothing.

"You'd better stop that now," she said, gesturing towards our experiments.

I and my friends ignored her. My family and the Rothschilds had no love between us and we had little to no intention of cooperating or making their task an easier one. We continued our experiments as if nothing had happened.

Megan sighed and sat down on one of the chairs that were bunched by the far staircase. "You'd better stop," she remarked in a relaxed tone of voice. "There's little point in going on."

I and my friends continued to ignore her and the silent entourage that had accompanied her.

"Then we will wait," she said. She gestured at the group to sit down. Wordlessly, expressionlessly, they did so. Brian took a seat by Megan, glaring at me the whole while. His anger seemed only barely restrained.

They stared at us as we continued our work. My friends seemed very unnerved by the whole thing. One of them was more unnerved than the other, and, after a short while, shaking, he gave himself up and allowed himself to be escorted up the stairs by a few of the nondescript crowd.

I had thought that at least the other of my companions would be able to hold out, but apparently the desertion of one of us destroyed his composure. He also began to shake and, finally, he gave up and allowed himself to be escorted up the long staircase.

So I alone was left to make a charade of carrying out these experiments with this spider. I knew there was very little I could do alone, but I was determined to continue. It had become a matter of pride now, and my own anger fueled me.

I went on about my "work" for what seemed endless minutes. Throughout, the spider sat, patiently, oblivious to the whole affair. Silence reigned as the remaining group of people, including Megan and Brian, stared at me from their chairs across the room. The only sound was the sound of me fiddling with the equipment for my experiments. It was the loudest sound I had ever heard.

Finally, Brian rose angrily to his feet and strode over to me. "That's enough!" he said through clenched teeth, barely restraining his anger. His hands were balled into fists and he leaned towards me, a little too close, looking me in the eyes as he spoke.

Megan had also gotten to her feet and had gone after Brian. "Brian, I think you need to come back here..." she said calmly, in her rich, relaxed voice. He had not turned to look at her. He was still glaring intently at me.

I was trying to ignore him, even this close, but my own anger was swelling. He grabbed my arm and I yanked it away, ready to fight him if necessary.

"I think we had all better come upstairs," Megan was saying, soothingly but evenly. We could not ignore her tone. Brian pulled away and strode to the chairs, fuming silently.

I held out for another couple of seconds under the steady, unreadable gaze of Megan. Finally, I released my breath, let my arms fall and released the equipment.

Megan allowed some of her nondescript retinue to grab my arms and lead me towards the long staircase. And as we began ascending, a horrible thought struck me. In my mind I saw my father and his colleagues together with the heads of the Rothschild family watching the entire proceedings on closed-circuit TV. They had put aside their differences to engineer this whole scenario. We were the experiment.

Desert

We were all in the desert enclosure, a sort of semi-dry spot between the mountains and the endless sands. A kind of settlement had arisen there. A picket fence ran through it, a few large, dry trees marked the only source of vegetation in the area. The inhabitants lived in the open air, on the sands a dead grass that made up the partial oasis where we found ourselves. We had built a sort of dugout in front of a wall where we took shelter from the storms and the sunlight.

It was around about World War One, during a hiatus in the fighting, between the battles. These people knew nothing of the war, only that the fighting took place around them. We had come back in time to dwell with them and learn about them. To some degree we had become too engrossed in their affairs to leave.

Amanda was the woman I fell in love with. She knew more than the people she dwelled with, though she was one of them, very tan with long, black hair and a narrow, sad face. If her people understood our presence to the extent that she did, they merely kept silent. Meantime, she was the one I found most accessible.

We had sat beneath the trees together, holding hands; had strolled by the fence in that unreal sunset; and had kissed on the dunes beneath the mountains. All was well for me; I could stay there forever.

They were a quiet people. Very little language transpired between them. Amanda was special because she talked far more than they. She told me of their life, simple, and yet far from ordinary. Yet the people lived sleepily, waiting for the day they could be redeemed and stroll elsewhere. As of now, they waited, virtually ignoring us, except for Amanda, and at the very least, humoring our presence.

We felt like gods to some extent, traveling back in time, the pale thin strangers who fell from the skies. We lived as simply as they, only in our dugout to escape the tremendous and constant light that always poured ethereally down on us, giving everything it touched in the sandy haze an unreal look.

There was a problem, if an odd one. Another traveler, a blond man in his twenties, very tall and very broad, was following me around with a video camera. He made many attempts to capture my face on his film, a situation which I felt would be disastrous. My face on film could

change history drastically. I did not threaten him, but I avoided his lens at all costs and I avoided him when I could.

He did not live with us, and we had no idea where he dwelled, perhaps in the sands, perhaps in the caves. He seemed not to notice the heat, dressed as he was in a very nice suit of the 1920's. He was deranged and did not speak very well. He seemed never to know quite how to talk, or what he was saying, but only had this strange obsession with capturing my face on film.

I was making my way across the enclosure, by the fence when, across the haze on the other side, Ellen hailed me. Blake was behind me and she scornfully waved the back of her hand at Ellen, cursing as she pushed past me to the dugout.

Ellen had split from us somewhat and was now at odds with several of our company. She had chosen to remain very separate and distant in her appearance from those we observed, though she was every bit as interested and as dedicated as we were. She had her own house built up across the fields of dead grass on the other side of the fence. Blake hated her. I had made every attempt not to let the split come between us. I treated her just as if she were still tight within our company.

Ellen had good-naturedly ignored Blake's scorn. She smiled at me pleasantly. In her antebellum dress and her stockinged feet she looked very much like a picture. I crossed the fence and kissed one of those lace-gloved hands gallantly. Her smile widened and she bowed her head a bit in courtesy. I hoped my display would set an example for the rest of my company, Blake in particular, so that they would be ashamed of themselves and stop treating Ellen like an evil outcast.

Ellen was cordial as always and exchanged pleasantries with me for a moment. After this, she said, quite seriously, but no less pleasantly,

"Something is coming, something very serious."

"What?" I asked her.

"A change," she replied. "I'm reading the signs and we're due for something dangerous and important to occur. Have you noticed anything?"

I shook my head and responded in the negative.

"Well, keep your eyes open," she replied. I took her warnings very seriously. We exchanged pleasant goodbyes and she returned to her set-up.

The haze was as bad as usual, everything being seen through layers and layers of sand, but a darkness was encroaching, a decrease in the light. The sky, what could be made of it, indicated a storm was coming.

"Come," said Amanda, appearing from behind me. "We have much to discuss."

I followed her to the wall behind our dugout which formed a kind of closed alley. She began speaking in her deep voice as the darkness slowly increased above us.

"There is something coming," she said, confirming what my friend Ellen had suspected. "We will be moving with the change."

"What is it?" I asked.

"A difference in the weather, in the climate, a return of the fighting which we have not seen for a while, the other half of this storm whose eye we have dwelled in. My people will weather out the storm, but you may not be able to."

"My people can handle it," I replied.

Then she kissed me and we caressed each other by the wall as the sky grew incredibly dark and the wind began to moan.

"Mannatika!" cried a mad voice from the head of the alley.

"No!" I cried in alarm. It was the large blond man, still dressed in his wrinkled, dark blue suit, carrying his camera on his shoulder. "I am free of the town thing!" he cried, approaching me with the video.

I covered my face, backing away from him. "Where are you from?" I shouted over the rising wind. "Where are you...do you come from?" I realized that if I asked him the right questions in the right order, he would become confused. I would find a way through to his mind, he would stop.

"What year are you from?" I cried again, backing away from his tall frame, trying constantly to keep my hand between my face and the lens. He stared at me blankly, his mouth hanging open, still trying to capture my image on his VCR.

I realized that he had never been able to recite certain numbers in order. I screamed at him, "1920! 1921! 1922!"

He screamed back at me with equal force, trying to say something but meaning nothing. "...1920! 1923! 1926! 1931! 1924!"

"1921! 1922! 1923! 1924!" I insisted on getting the years in order. But he couldn't do it. He screamed back his jumbled years. And I realized the problem.

Amanda backed away and watched all of this in the rippling wind and black-marbled sky. She watched, expressionless, perhaps comprehending, perhaps not.

I was still avoiding his camera lens, but I finally remembered that in my impression of time, there was nothing I could do to screw up history. All would progress as it had, as it was going to, and nothing I could do would change that. I let my hand drop, exposing my face to the camera. Simultaneously, the blond giant felt the camera break and let it drop upon the ground. Stuck on the little screen was my face staring back at me. The machine would affect nothing now.

The wind was blowing tremendously now, and a few drops of rain were falling, mercilessly pegging us upon the shoulders.

Amanda stepped between myself and the man, talking to him. From behind came the voice of a younger man, slightly shorter than myself and wearing a press-uniform from the early twenties. I realized that this was the man as a younger man and that he was about to get himself into great danger.

My back against the wall of the dugout, the wind tearing through my hair, I let his senseless questions blow by me. This man in his younger body seemed not to care what was happening at all, a fit prelude to his madder, older self, who Amanda still reasoned with just behind his back.

"You've got to go back!" I shouted at him.

The young man did not understand, only attempted to write some of my words down on a small pad of paper.

I grabbed him by the lapels, screaming into his ears over the raging storm which was just about to break. "You've got to go back to your own time now! Otherwise you'll get lost and drift in time forever!"

About the Author

Adam Cole is a music educator and *Guild Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner*® who lives in Atlanta with his wife and children. He has written the music and text for the unique *Ballet Music for the Dance Accompanist*, and has completed one other novel, *Myth of Magic*, as well as the short-story collections *Hofstadter's Grandchildren*, and *Seven Ways the World Can End*.