

Extra!
Extra-
Terrestrial

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Sci-Fi Prose

by

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with illustrations by

Jared “Flaco” Martinez and Martin Muster



2009



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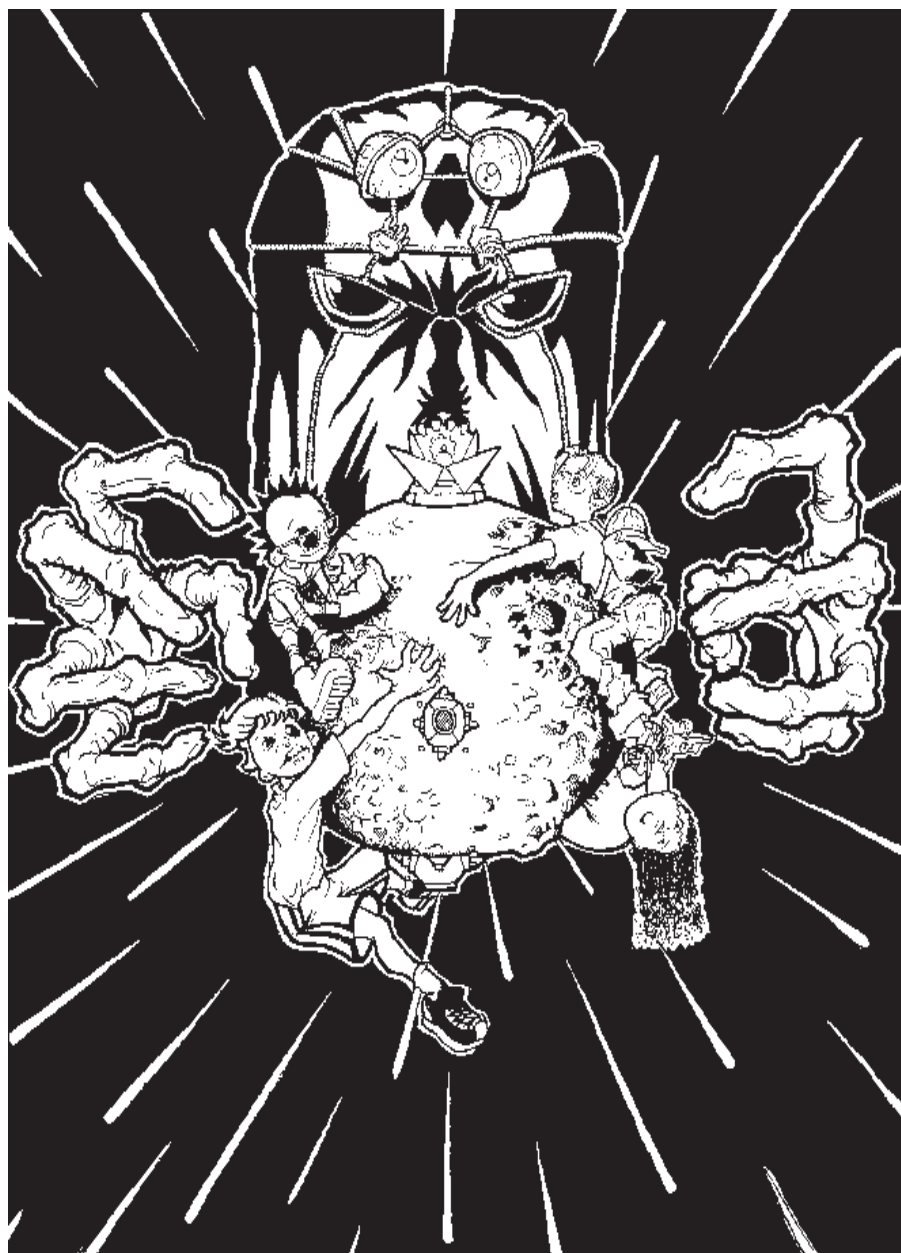
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GREENMYN MOONS IN THE WORMHOLE POCKET :
The Time-Traveling Misadventures of an Alien Mad-cap Inventor
and His Trusty Earthling Side-kick
by Ron Baxley
Greenmyn Moons in the Wormhole Pocket Book I: Cycling the Moon



Chapter 1

When Marty started seventh grade, all of his peers made fun of the fact that he still wore a watch with Tempus Fugit Greenmyn, the little turquoise time-traveling alien cartoon character, depicted on it. Little did he know that a real-life Tempus Fugit was actually in an intergalactic prison in his watch...

The whole fiasco with Tempus Fugit's imprisonment began because, in another galaxy, on the Greenmyn Moon, the Greenmyn Monarchy lived in fear of

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being over-thrown. All the rest of the Greenmyn needed do was storm the moon rock castle, and it would all be over for the lot of them. From their height on a tiny moon, the Greenmyn Monarchy thought they owned the whole world “below” and probably the whole galaxy. But they felt very threatened, especially by Tempus’, at the time, new plan.

Tempus Fugit Greenmyn, soon-to-be-time traveler and long-time inventor, devised a plan to create special engines that fed off the mineral rich deposits of the Greenmyn moon itself. Having a near-never-ending supply of the appropriate fuel-source, these engines would turn the entire moon itself into a time traveling device via a nearby wormhole. The engines would be immense, rivaling the moon rock castle of the Monarchy and the Monarchy Monuments. (By the way, the Monarchy Monuments were enormous statues of King and Queen Sceptus, rulers of the Greenmyn Moon, with the King looking much like a marble ball and the Queen looking much like a marble stick as far as their body frames.) Using the engines that exceeded the size of these monuments, the moon would spin around and around the planet Cragney, the craggy, rocky planet below that few common Greenmyn knew was really a planet, until it finally built up enough centrifugal force to be released from Cragney’s gravity until upon this release, the energy built up would kick in, causing the moon to reach even greater speeds, the engines constantly feeding and re-feeding off the moon’s fuel deposits, the great force of the release causing it to exceed the speed of light into a worm hole and go in the past. All of this depended on the revolutions Tempus wanted to put the moon through.

Of course, none of the common Greenmyn aliens on Tempus’ planet thought that Cragney was even below. None of them knew that the moon even rotated around the planet. The commoners didn’t theorize an apt conception of the universe, and the Monarchy liked it that way. Tempus Fugit finished explaining his concept before the nonplused Monarchy and why it wasn’t intimidating. In their rocky chamber that was decorated with regal purple and chiseled out of moon rock and moon sand, Tempus Fugit Greenmyn said, “I call this in my slang, cycling the moon.” His usually soft voice echoed and reverberated throughout the chamber as he got excited. The turquoise-colored King, adjusting a form-fitting crown that looked like an aerodynamic bicycle helmet with the crown-spikes sticking out it back as if palmetto leaves pummeled by a hurricane, cleared his throat upon the presentation. He fidgeted in his chair. The Monarchy had called this audience, for they were the last to hear of the time traveling plans. They were not amused at this. King Sceptus looked upon Tempus from the height of his throne, his eyebrows descending in patriarchal disapproval.

Above his throne hung a gigantic tapestry with the crest of the Monarchy emblazoned on it. The crest depicted the first Monarch donning a gigantic bi-

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cycle-helmet crown with spikes atop it. In the tapestry's woven illustration, these spikes collected a bunch of debris that appeared to be pieces of a starry night sky. -Below the first Monarch stood a crowd of commoners.

According to legend, the first Monarch had protected the commoners when their flawed concept of alleged hollow sphere universe that spun around the moon had started literally falling to pieces. They had actually been attacked by a meteor shower, but the Monarchy, at the time, referred to the legend of the hollow sphere universe that surrounded them, the Greenmyn Moon at the center of the entire universe with the Monarchy ruling it. They, as virtual gods, were to protect the populace with their quasi-magic bicycle helmet-style crowns. The current Monarchy never questioned the legend nor did they want the commoners thinking beyond it. Tempus' ideas shattered everything.

King Sceptus Greenmyn said, "Your keeping this from the Monarchy for this long is treasonous. Your plans are dangerous. You could have gone back in time and ended the Monarchy. Studying the history of the Earthling idiot-peoples, though we would not be as apt to do this, we have discovered revolutions. If people can travel as they wish between times, how can the Monarchy rule them? They could go back, start a revolution, and that would be the end of us. It's, it's... treasonous... possibly blasphemous." (Below King Sceptus, in the bowels of the castle, the sounds of hundreds of wheels spinning could be heard. Tempus and the Monarchy knew the sound well and ignored it. Just what made the noise would be revealed later.)

Tempus Fugit Greenmyn adjusted his glasses. He had wrap-around glasses that were somewhat thick but beneath them he had hazel eyes, complete spheres of hazel with no whites (no Greenmyn had whites) only corneas that glinted with life as they did now. Tempus, ever the optimist, did not realize the gravity of the situation. As much "gravity" as has ever been felt on a moon. He conveyed the cheerful, devil-may-care attitude of Einstein explaining an idea. He shrugged, chuckled slightly, and said, "Even if I did travel back, why, you would have the entire other moon, the one we're taking with us, to yourselves. Only the past moon would change if people started a (he paused and grinned before he said this part) revolution. The present moon in the past would be, eer, parked, like a satellite, in orbit of Lonestum." Lonestum was a nearby mining planet that would have to serve as the parking spot if the moon were taken back in time, for a double moon would exist in that present time as well, and the double Greenmyn Moon, being larger than the Earth's moon, would take up much of the space in its orbit. As there would be no room for a new moon, another planet's space would have to be borrowed, which would be no problem since they had such close trade ties with the mining planet. Tempus' pontificating about all of this did not receive a good reaction.

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King Sceptus muttered loudly, clenching his teeth, "Evidence! You mentioning that proves you have given it some thought. Your flippancy puts the seal on the morbid-chamber for us."

Tempus said, "But, your Excellency, please be reasonable. Think of the wonders of this... I mean you know harm. I have explained that. I have shown you that everything is in order. Would I give you a plan to still rule another moon if I had any malice toward you? No, I'd probably take both!"

"Enough. We have made our decision of treason. Your punishment will fit the crime. The Minister of Poetic Justice has deemed that you be confined to the most primitive of time devices. You shall be confined to what the Earth Idiot Peoples call a watch. Your arms will point the correct, primitive earth numerical time to a mere Earth youngster," said King Sceptus.

"But," said Tempus.

King Sceptus muttered solemnly, "No buts, but only if but you had never had this dangerous idea cross your mind."

The Minister of Poetic Justice, wearing an Executioner-style, leathery helmet with a crest with an eye beside an eye and a tooth beside a tooth depicted on it, came to collect Tempus. Each eye and tooth, separated from each other on the leathery helmet by a red sash and tied down to its slick surface with a kind of rope or twine, could have been sculpted into the helmet or could have been (more alarmingly) a real human eye and tooth. 'The Monarchy and their ministries,' thought poor Tempus, 'ridiculous bureaucracies set up to do the tasks they considered themselves too good to do yet condone.' The Minister of Poetic Justice, nearly like Tempus, resembled a short person on Earth but with a more rotund face and a large mouth and, of course, that aquarium-like striking color. He struck one as very much the humanoid and with a few slight exceptions. They were all Greenmyn and they all preached the equality of the Greenmyn last name with no family distinction. But the Minister of Poetic Justice's uniform was a greater distinction than family names had ever been.

The Minister of Poetic Justice took him to the shipping chamber, where they usually used a device there to shrink down minerals and other, secret materials so they could export them in large quantities. There, after rubbing his elongated fingers slightly, the long, nimble fingers of one used to sadistic instruments, the Minister of Poetic Justice threw the switch. He chortled. Tempus Fugit Greenmyn was shrunk down. Even his attire was shrunk down. He wore the springy attire of the Greenmyn moon, like the cylindrical yet expandable pancake-like layering one saw on robot joints on old science fiction programs.

The Minister of Poetic Justice procured the watch from the Minister of Primitive Earth Objects (set up entirely for the amusement of the Monarchy). He strapped Tempus Fugit to a little silvery watch with a black band. He hooked

his arms to the “hands” of the watch.

The Minister of Poetic Justice said, “You and time go hand in hand.” Tempus said, “Spare me the bad puns.”

The Minister said, “I deal in bad puns. In many ways, it is part of my livelihood.” “Don’t you mean, deadly-hood?” Tempus spat.

The Minister of Poetic Justice produced a can of something from his leathery attire.

He sprayed Tempus’ face and said, “That’s enough talking for you today. You said too much to the Monarchy. You have a flaw about giving too much information.” The chemical he sprayed Tempus with froze Tempus’ face with its smile.

Tempus had smiled because he had retorted well. The Minister of Poetic Justice shut the little glass top to what would be Tempus’ miniature cryogenic chamber. And he sauntered over to the side of the shipping room, (he had an “outgoing” porta-transport there) where he printed out a résumé for Scribanim Greenmyn on a laser jet printer that he also got from the Minister of Primitive Earth Objects.

Tempus was set up on a little watch-stand where he could see everything the Minister was doing. His ear holes weren’t capped over with chemical ice, so he could hear everything too.

The Minister said, “Sometimes this job has its boring routines. Ah, paperwork.” He gave the résumé to Scribanim and pushed the transport button half-way. Before sending him, he wanted to relish Scribanim’s expression. Scribanim was held in treason for drawing the Monarchy in caricature, the whole Monarchy wearing their bicycle-like crowns in the Tour de France in the land of France on Earth all placed under protective glass bubbles, their noses pressing against the glass. The separating yet confining bubbles were what they found disturbing. They were so surreal and telling about the confines and isolation of the Monarchy.

For his painted political, satirical caricatures, Scribanim was considered the Picasso of the Greenmyn’s moon. Yet he was more of a snob than Picasso. When he saw the résumé, he screamed.

The Minister of Poetic Justice said, “Yes, that’s right. -Pretty boring task this time.” He yawned, putting a leather glove decorated with quills over his mouth. Scribanim said, “Anything but this. Please.”

Though by all means artists and by all means, talented and creative people, animators to Scribanim were the lowest of the low — the untouchables of the visual arts community. Listed under his faux résumé’s OBJECTIVE was, “a career in cartoon animation that reflects my skill areas and my education.” According to Scribanim’s past, invented by the Minister of Poetic Justice, he worked for

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the now defunct Filmation and attended college at the Savannah College of Art and Design. The Minister of Brain-washing had already handled the appropriate human contacts for both the Earth business and school. Scribanim was to start a new series for “Hannah Barbara.”

The Minister of Poetic Justice, somewhat clueless about earth culture, said, “Come now. Surely this Earth woman Hannah Barbara will not be that bad. Chow now.” He pushed the button down all the way, transporting Scribanim to earth. The Minister almost laughed, but his voice produced a hoarse rumble as joy never resided in him. Again, he chortled more than laughed. Before being whisked away, Scribanim had seen the whole injustice of Tempus Fugit’s exile. Any torture that still involved exile to Earth would be bad to the Greenmyn.

In short, the Earth had bad public relations with them. The Greenmyn Monarchy, via the Minister of Space Travel, tried to contact Earthlings once. They obtained a lot of history records about Earth and other information, but they did not stay there too long. They dubbed the Earthlings the idiot-people because of the history tabulation that they made in response to their visit. The next day, in an “Earth record” it was reported in the headline, “Little Green Men from Mars Fly in on Saucer.” True, the Greenmyn were diminutive, but they told the so-called reporter they were “Greenmyn,” not green men. They weren’t green at all, shaded more like New Mexico turquoise beads than Emerald City ones. The American popular culture dictated that the little green men came from Mars. They got it all wrong. That was the one honest mistake. In Greenmyn dialect, when they try to speak English, “oons” is pronounced “ar,” so when they said they come from moons in outer space in their dialect, it sounded like they came from Mars. Given that the Earth’s, as the Monarchy said in a speech, “Most Ignorant Court History Ministers” (or tabloid journalists as we know them) got the story all wrong, the Greenmyn deemed the planet inept. And it became to them like Australia once was to England.

Once on Earth, Scribanim too had felt injustice with his own exile. So he created a kids’ cartoon show based on the adventures of a time traveling, eccentric inventing alien named Tempus — the one he had seen sentenced the day he was. In his show, Tempus travels through time, following a corrupt tyrant who wants to keep control over the people. Earthling kids loved the show. Some said it was because it questioned authority and kids have to deal with more authoritarian rule than any other ages. Kids just thought it was cool. As one teen kid, the aforementioned one named Marty, who had no idea what was to come in time with his watch, did.

Chapter 2



Kids thinking Scribanim's show was cool was how the merchandising kicked in and how Tempus watches were made. The little watch sent from the moon with the "real" Tempus fell to Earth safely in its transport and was discovered by a pawnshop owner. The pawnshop owner looked to the left and the right. Seeing no owner, he greedily squirreled it away in one of his glass cases. Marty, a misunderstood teen kid of parents who were moderately middle class but did not believe in buying their kid "mindless crap," serendipitously discovered the watch in the pawnshop window. He had discovered it and purchased it cheaply during the last part of sixth grade when such things were cool. All of the rich kids had picked at him for not having one. But it was almost unnoticed as school ended last year. But now that they were progressing in seventh grade, and he had a chance to show it to everyone, boys who still liked Tempus were called "immature." They were made to feel badly.

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Jason said, “Look at him with that kid watch. Bet he still wets the bed.” Another said in earshot, “Heard his parents don’t let him go to camp-outs or sleepovers cause he wets the bed.”

Marty suddenly felt very badly about owning the Tempus watch. But he felt like Tempus in some ways. He wore glasses. He was very short, like Tempus. He sometimes did not fit into the world around him, like Tempus. And he liked to sit down and sketch all kinds of neat devices. He did not have great engineering or mathematics skills, mind you, but he could come up with some very out-there inventions. He composed an idea to create a disc that would hover above the moon that the cartoon tyrant would cycle through time with. This disc would be attracted, via magnetism, to the mineral deposits there. It would follow the moon and come down at the last moment to create torque or drag and stop the moon from reaching the speed necessary to travel through time. Sometimes kids called him star-face. Marty had some zits on his forehead. They made a constellation, the Big Dipper.

Some may not know it, but rumors abound that the sun of the galaxy of the Greenmyn Moon is one of the stars Earthlings see twinkling in the Little Dipper. This Little Dipper is also called the Little Bear by Native Americans. The Little Bear follows the Big Bear around. Sometimes, other geeky kids noticed the resemblance and would strike up a conversation with Marty about this. He was happy to discuss the stars with them, a subject of infinite fascination for him. And he also did not mind them pointing out something he was self-conscious about – just so long as they didn’t make fun of him because of it. The zits coupled with his love of science fiction made “Star-face” his permanent moniker. So Marty went in his head a lot and paid a lot of attention to the small details around him. He was forged through this act as a very creative person – a kind of hybrid of a writer and cartoonist. Per writers and their breed, his English teacher said that a Southern writer they were studying (he couldn’t remember her name) said, “A writer should not be afraid to stare. There is nothing that should escape her attention.” At this precise moment, he noticed Tempus’ hands on his watch moving on their own again.

The first time he noticed this was at the only party he had been invited to before school started, and people were starting to act differently. He had noticed this too. Marty had noticed the change towards apathy and cruelty amongst his peers. The watch gained his attention more than his peers, though. The watch hands moved around slowly of their own volition without Marty pushing buttons or turning the tiny knob. First, big hand to 8, then to 5, then to 12, then the digital military time (on a little metallic “console” on the side) to 16, then the digital time to 13, then finally, the hands to 5.

Nida was cooking out (she wanted to do all of the cooking to show her

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independence from her parents), but she was too busy playing social butterfly so she let he who was in the social cocoon mind the sausages. Nida said, "In fifteen minutes, okay?" She smiled and Marty smiled too, looking down. Had she been able to stare through his glasses she would see the glittery qualities of his hazel eyes. He watched the sausages for a while. And then his mind started wandering to outer space and strange alien cultures. The sausages were plumping. He was supposed to remember something. He rushed back to Nida who was talking with a nervous group of boys among girls — the two separated into camps that sort of sent messengers between the two. Marty tried to tiptoe over.

"What's up, Star-face?" asked the wise guy named Jason. Marty rolled his eyes. He pointed to his Tempus watch. "Man, those things are starting to get old," said Jason. Marty tried to be cordial with Nida. He played up the whole childishness of his watch.

He said, "When the big hand is on the six, the sausage will be ready, right?" Everyone laughed. Sophomoric, bawdy *entendre* was snickered about. The line was thrown above their heads and scattered like confetti. Some of Marty's peers held certain parts of their anatomy. Marty turned a shade of crimson that made them laugh further. As they laughed and laughed about the sausage remark, falling over each other., they were oblivious to everything going on around them. Smoke started rising up from the grill, billowing around. Brimstone had little on the odor. The sausage charred to a black beyond charcoal.

The Minister of Poetic Justice would be amused. But not Marty. That ended Marty's socializing for a while. The rest of that particular party he kept looking down at his watch, hoping for the exact minute when his mom was supposed to pick him up. Before going to the right time, his Tempus watch did the same thing then that it did now in English class. First, big hand to 8, then to 5, then to 12, then the digital military time to 16, then to 13, and then finally the hands to 5. And at the time, all Marty could think about was his embarrassment at the incident with the sausage.

In English class, when the watch did it again and almost got him in trouble for not paying attention, Marty scribbled the number sequence down on a piece of notebook paper and shoved it in his pocket so that he could look at in the privacy of his room. And he started paying attention to some story about some lady who wanted to live at a post office, away from her family and away from everyone who did not really understand her. "Why I Live at the Post Office on Another Planet" is more what I want, thought Marty. He wanted to be away from his dad because he often harassed him about his creative interests. He'd bought him a lot of computer equipment, which Marty mostly used to make up little stories or draw pictures of aliens. His father wanted him to do something practical.

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Marty's father, a supervisor, would say, "You're just up there in the clouds, cycling the moon." Cycling the moon to Marty's father was something suspicious. He'd say, "There's a certain order to things. You've got to listen to me. I say how things are around here, and I say you've got to drop all this nonsense."

That afternoon, Marty would explain all his ideas about the saucer that could stop the time-traveling moon. —Not even what his father alluded to when he said cycling the moon. He meant it more in the sense of, "Get your head out of the clouds."

"More of that cartoon, son?" he'd ask.

"No, dad. New stuff. I read a lot of sci-fi, Dad. I've kind of taken things beyond it."

"Sure. Sure. Well, how about taking things beyond by studying your math and computer programming?"

"Okay, Dad," Marty would say, resigned. As he left the room, he heard his father say, "Damn cycling the moon."

His mother was a children's librarian and would encourage all of this creative activity. She would "give him the moon." But she also had her qualms with what he read. She would say, "Don't you want to expand your horizons to more realistic literature?" But she at least encouraged the creativity. Marty went to his room and worked on homework with numbers of a different kind. He had to figure out why his watch was doing that. He thought it was just beyond a malfunction. His imagination would not allow it to just be a malfunction. He tried to see what significance might be in the numbers, but he didn't think there was any. Then, he tried to use a classic coding sequence, using the letters of the alphabet that corresponded to the numbers. "Nah, it's too easy." But that was it.

Tempus did not want the earthling getting this wrong. —Unlike espionage, where cryptographers worked night and day to create the perfect codes. Tempus wanted simplicity. After all, he was dealing with a youth of an Earthling, though he did not share all of the biases against them. Marty figured it out pretty quickly, though the message sometimes came through a number or two off. Marty memorized numbers about as well as he did math. The message was, "Help me." 'Help me?' he thought. Who could be asking him for help? -A spy in the U.S. with remote control capabilities? -A strange apparition moving the watch hands? His imagination ran the gamut. He decided to sleep on it. After doing this, the next morning, another number sequence came through. The next morning, Tempus' eyes seemed to glint, though he was frozen, and his smile had a little more luster as if it were defeating the chemical freezing. He knew that Marty got the first message because he said it aloud during the night. Tempus pantomimed via the watch hands – really with his hands — a second message, "19,3,18,9,2,1,14,9,13,19,8,15,23" using his hands and the military time capabili-

ties of the watch (just within reach).

Marty discovered the answer quicker this time – even with only near-correct number sequences remembered. He said, looking at the watch above his Tempus Fugit: Intergalactic Time Traveler sheets, “Scribanim Show.” Marty got on his IMAC and got on the Internet, doing a search for Scribanim. Suddenly, one of the top selections that came up was the Hannah Barbara Tempus Fugit site where he learned that Scribanim was the last name of a guy named Tom.

Scribanim had adopted an earth name when he started working there. “A message straight from the show!” screamed Marty. He had to figure out a way to get out to the studio in Atlanta where this cartoon channel was located. He could always take the bus there. He had money saved up from doing odd jobs. He could do it over the weekend.

“Maybe it’s some kind of contest,” said Marty. But then his imagination kicked in. “Maybe it’s a message from Tempus Fugit himself.”

Then he felt depressed. ‘No, what am I — a little kid. . . what kind of teenager thinks this way? . . . no. . . it’s probably just a secret message for a contest. I’ll talk to the animator at the studio, and he’ll give me a free tour for winning and all sorts of Tempus Fugit stuff.

Regardless of what lay ahead, Marty had to get to school. The road-trip could wait until early Saturday morning. He hoped that the animators worked over-time.

Chapter 3



The next morning, Saturday, Marty rode to the Greyhound bus station on his bicycle, double-locking it to a rack outside. He had told his mother the evening before that he was sleeping over at a friend's house. As he had little or no friends, his mother did not really know whom to call to check up on him. He knew this. Marty had one hundred dollars saved up in a jar that he used to use to catch fireflies.

As he was heading to the ticket counter, an odor filled his nostrils. The odor was bad body odor masked by a very cheap perfume that smelled like a magazine ad freebie. The woman who owned said odor was suddenly "in his face."

She donned a mat of black hair that made hags' hair look like a model's. She filled sweat-pants and a striking red T-shirt that read, "C.N.N." Marty wondered if she had gotten it as a freebie too.

She carried a Chihuahua that was hairless save for yarn-like strands on its head. She carried this under one of her arms. She said, "Where are you going to?"

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“Atlanta,” said Marty. The woman jumped up and down. Her dog yipped. The dog, whose name was Enchilada, was probably more scared by her slightly obese frame jiggling than by being excited at leaving.

Marty asked, “Um, why are you getting so excited?”

The homeless woman in the C.N.N. T-shirt said, “Cause I’m going with you. It’s a free fare deal if you take me with you. By the way, I’m Sarah.”

Sarah stuck out a hand with fingernails jabbed underneath with dirt darker than a bait cup Marty sometimes picked up to go fishing in his rural Southern town.

Marty shook it anyway. He’d read about beings with bad hygiene before. But he’d never, in his middle class background, encountered the homeless and their inability to get a good bath. Marty, a little naive yet a little adventurous, agreed to have Sarah come with him.

She said, “Don’t worry... you won’t be sorry... by the way, where are you going to anyway?”

Marty said that he was going to the Hannah Barbara studio in Atlanta, near a network devoted completely to cartoons.

Sarah said, as they were boarding, hiding Enchilada in her backpack, “I know that place. I know all the places in Atlanta. -Been on all of the tours.” He looked at her shirt. As they took their grayish dotted seats and propped up their feet on the little metallic stirrups beneath the seats in front of them, he asked, “Did you get that C.N.N. shirt on one of those tours?”

“Yes,” she said, “I used to be a tour guide till a ‘bunch of us lost our jobs — something about cutting costs. I wasn’t a C.N.N. tour guide. No. But I did take the tour. -Took all of those tours.”

Marty was glad she was not a washed-up C.N.N. reporter or something like that. Yet she was in a sad state. Marty asked, trying not to hold his nose, “Didn’t you find a job when you came to this city?”

“This city,” she spat, “This c-c-ity is dry as far as work goes. What am I gonna give a tour for in this city — the zoo? Local park?” The Southern town they lived in did not have the many tourism amenities of Atlanta. But it seemed strange to him that she thought all she could do was give tours and that she even came here if it was so “dry.” Marty nodded.

He asked, “Why’d you come here then?”

Sarah said, “‘Cause they ran me out. I found out something they did not want me to know. In one of those tours, I found out something secret. Always did like tours... liked to take other peoples’ tours, learn from them.” Marty tried to imagine her in her crisp tour-guide uniform and badge, her hair meticulously combed . . . it was hard.

Marty asked, “What was it that you found out?”

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Sarah said, "It's a secret." Marty just sort of nodded. He looked at his watch. It was getting close to 9 a.m. They had been traveling a while and it would not be too terribly long. They had already crossed the border of Georgia. Since Sarah did not seem to want to talk about anything else, he started dozing off, being sure to clasp his hand tightly around his wallet. Trust with Sarah would have to come much later.

The two had one stopover in a rural Georgia town with ville or burg on the end of its name. It was that unmemorable. A rural kid with messy blonde hair and dirt on his face was selling watermelons for his grandfather beside the Greyhound station. He held up a watermelon. "You wanna buy a watermelon?"

Marty said, telling a little white one but needing to save his money, "No thanks. I'm pretty much broke."

The boy said, "I'll still try to get ya one." He ran to his grandfather and returned a little downcast.

He said, "I was gonna try to get ya one for free, but Grand-daddy s'es that it'd come from my paycheck."

Marty said, "That's okay." Then, he had an idea. He pulled out a copy of *The Hobbit* from his book-bag. He had more than one copy. This one was a paperback. He said, "How about a trade?" The boy nodded. He gave the watermelon to Marty, which Marty stuffed in his book bag that was mostly empty. With the watermelon stuffed in there, Marty looked like he had a hump in his back. He thanked the boy and ran to the bus before it set off to Atlanta. Marty resembled a hunch-back with his new addition, and he had often been treated like a hunch-back or freak at his school anyway. He felt like "Quasi-middle-schooler."

They arrived in Atlanta at noon. Marty was hungry. But he decided to save the watermelon for later. He was sure that Sarah was hungry too. His ticket was round-trip, and he still had \$40 left over — plenty to treat her and have a good bit left over for the tour of the Animation Network. Marty bought her a Chick-fil-a sandwich and a lemon-aid from across the street. He had the same. Opening her book bag all the way from the pucker-like hole Sarah had made for Enchilada to breathe through, Sarah let him out. Marty bought Enchilada some waffle fries, and he ate them out of his hand. The manager complained about having the animal in there. Marty told her they would soon be out. Some people stared at them in the restaurant. Marty recommended that Sarah wash her hands and face in the sink there. She did and came out smelling like a rose with just a tinge of the manure from its garden-space below it. After this, they traveled side-by-side, walking to the Animation Network downtown that was only about a fifteen minute walk from the bus station.

Marty did not question Sarah why she was following him around like this.

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He just presumed that she did not have anything better to do. She had not threatened him in any way. Plus, he didn't really think that she was bright in the traditional sense. Sometimes, with his zany creativity, he did not feel bright in the traditional sense either. And who better to constantly point this out than his father. Marty walked with his temporary, surrogate parent down the road. He was a little too clean to pull off the urchin look that would have matched her. However, he did wear clothes that he'd worn once before, so they had the appropriate stain here or there. He could pass for homeless.

People looked down their nose at Sarah and him. People stared at them going into the Animation Network. Marty and Sarah, who stuck out in her bright red attire with its Scarecrow-straw-like bulkiness, looked like travelers in the land of Oz, people whose lives would not have crossed except for a common mission, a common goal. Marty was thinking all of this as they walked down the road. His mother had brought home each of the Oz books for him to read, and though he'd read other quest stories, they were the closest to what he felt like right now.

A guy who looked like a "gangsta" rapper, replete with lots of gold chains and baggy clothing, chortled out, "Looks like da cartoon characters is going back in." His friend laughed, and they nearly "fell out" as they left the motley crew to stumble in.

The tour cost them both twelve dollars. But they did not stick to the tour path. Sarah taught him how to take back doors to other areas. She had done this before and with ease, they found the extended drawing table and cubicle of Tom Scribanim. Enchilada glowered at a clay model of a cat that some animators were using and growled a little. Sarah shushed him in her bag. Then, she looked around.

Sarah said, "Animation — a process perfected in the 1920s during the time film was first becoming an industry."

Marty pushed his glasses up his nose and said, "Hey, you sound like a dictionary... will you stop?"

Sarah said, "Not a dictionary... the Encyclopedia Britannica."
"Whatever. Look we've got to meet this guy, okay?" Marty pleaded.

Behind his cubicle, Tom had prosthetic make-up to disguise the turquoise hue of his skin. He was busily scribbling some eye expressions for Tempus, looking at his own eyes in a miniature mirror nearby. Tom Scribanim wore whole-eye contacts with holes cut out for the iris and cornea to disguise the fact that he did not have whites in his eyes. To draw the proper swirling and shininess of the Greenmyn eye, he had to take these out and soak them in some solution and look at his true eyes in a mirror. When he heard footsteps behind him, he quickly put the contacts back in.

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Marty decided the blunt approach was best. He stomped up to Scribanim and said, pointing to his watch, "Look, my Tempus Fugit watch is sending messages to me, telling me to come see you-" Tom Scribanim decided to trust them. If Tempus was sending them a message, they could not be that bad. Scribanim said, "Ah, yes, the one part I never put into the cartoon series — mostly to protect Tempus Fugit from those who would destroy him for his information. Then, they started making those merchandising watches. And I didn't really have anything to worry about. It is, as you people say, the proverbial needle in the haystack."

Marty kind of laughed at first, went along with what he thought was the animator's joke. Sarah did too. Scribanim was not laughing.

"Look. . . he sent you to me, right?" Scribanim asked.

Marty asked, "He?"

Scribanim whispered, looking around, "Tempus Fugit there. . . he's trapped in your watch."

Marty said, "Sure he is. Look . . . do I get my prize now? Do I get a lot of Tempus Fugit stuff?"

Scribanim said, "Maybe . . . if he invents it."

Marty had pushed the juvenile thought away early. Now here was an adult presuming that it was true. This was unreal. This was extraordinary. In all of his reading, Marty had always hoped for something like this. He didn't really fit in here. So why not way out there?

Scribanim said, "Come on. . . I'll show you something." They followed Scribanim to a dark projection room. He had brought his desk lamp with him. He plugged it in to a nearby socket, cracking the door to see. Then, looking around to make sure the room was empty once he shut the door, he peeled something back. They could hear the peeling noise in the dark, like a Band-Aid being pulled off of a scab. Suddenly, they heard a "Click!" Sarah saw the turquoise skin and yelled. Marty sported a quick, disgusted look but softened.

Marty said, "You are from the Greenmyn moon!" Scribanim quieted them down.

He said, "Yes, kid. But unless you got connections in NASA, me and the little guy in the watch there are never getting back. Oh, to be back there with all of my drawings... I'll take all of these too . . . as a testimony to how he has been treated

. . . animation can tell such a great story!"

Scribanim had changed his once monotone tune about animation. Snobbery had been stripped from him like a constrictive cocoon. At least one good thing came out of his exile.

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Sarah said, "I have some international space program connections."
"Sure you do. And I'm an agent handling the X-files," Scribanim stated dryly.
Marty retorted, "Well, she did tell me on the bus trip she had a secret. . . she actually snuck me around and helped me find you."

Sarah said, "That's right. . . I do tours. That's all I do. My mother told me what I was. . . I've been called an idiot savant. She used to get me to read the Encyclopedia Britannica all the time. I know all that stuff in there... know how to talk about anything.. That's all."

Scribanim shook his head. He said, "Only on the Earth could such a human storehouse of information be deemed an idiot savant, dismissed by the society at large and find herself homeless."

Marty asked, "What's the secret?" Sarah told them she'd gone on a tour of an aerospace manufacturer right outside of Atlanta and wandering off, that she had discovered what could only be a space pod, capable of traveling many miles and even at the speed of light. The government had been keeping it a secret.

Sarah said, "I tried to tell C.N.N. -Told them their Vietnam story was all wrong too, but they wouldn't listen. -Quoted the information right from the Encyclopedia Britannica. Told them that the story they were going to run could not be right. -Saw it all there on the tour."

Scribanim shook his head. He said, "The Most Ignorant Court History Ministers."

"That's Greenmyn moon dialect!" Marty squeaked a little.

Scribanim said, "Ya think? What else would I speak?"

Marty scrunched up his nose at the sarcasm but shrugged it off. With boyish enthusiasm, he said, "Wow, Sarah. I can't believe it. A space pod... no wonder...all those millions of dollars go to the U.N.A.S.A. (United Nations Aeronautics and Space Administration) from all those countries. For research like this!"

Sarah said she knew how to sneak them in. Scribanim gathered his paints. "Camouflage," he said, his eyebrows raising so far he almost revealed his turquoise face beneath the tight mask. Marty said, "Hey, before we start a military mission, how about poor Tempus?"

As if on cue, the Tempus Fugit watch chimed the hour with a digital voice (not Tempus'), "Time to Cycle the Moon!"

Scribanim said, "I suppose I could always paint a movable mouth on him."
Marty squeaked, his voice cracking sometimes, though getting lower, "Scribanim! (He had immediately dropped Tom when he realized the pseudonym)" Scribanim said, "Okay, okay... such flippancy is what got us kind of in this mess. . . and certain aliens without a sense of humor." He glanced at Marty.

Marty said, "I have a, a... what's the word... whimsical sense of humor. I'm with you sci-fi kooks, aren't I?"

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“True enough. As hard as this is to believe, I am at a loss for words,” Scribanim said.

“I’m no-’yet,” Sarah drawled. Enchilada stuck its little head from the bag. She said, “Isn’t that right, Enchilada?” Enchilada whimpered, albeit happily. Sarah said, “As in most manufacturing places, they got all these chemicals in there. They got these kits that they put up at different places, kits of first aid for chemicals. They have to because of government regulations. –Something called O.S.H.A. Maybe some of those first aid chemicals, the ones for chemical burns and the ones that remove that stuff, will take the chemical freeze off.”

Marty said, “And I bet you know just where to find one, don’t you?”

“Tour guides have got to know where everything’s at — even first aid.”

Scribanim said, “Let’s go then. It’s time to . . . cycle the moon!” They had to take a taxi to a patch of woods just outside the facility on the outskirts of Atlanta. After several loop-de-loops and other convoluted freeway turns, they became lost. They ended up in some area called Peachtree. Scribanim said that it was funny; he didn’t see any peach trees. Marty shushed him and stopped to ask for directions for the taxi driver, one of the many new arrivals to the New South hub of Atlanta. Finally, they arrived a little distance from the facility and walked the rest of the way. They all put on a lot of black makeup and other camouflage hues and went through the woods. Sarah still had her tour guide badge. They just hoped the guard was inept enough to be ignorant of the fact that they no longer had tour guides. And that he would, with Sarah’s changed looks, be ignorant of the trouble she was once in for seeing too much. He was. They made their way through the facility and found the kit Sarah described. Scribanim removed his prosthetics completely so that, no matter what glimpses he might have already had from the non-vantage point of a kid’s arm, Tempus would be sure to recognize him. He then took out the skin clean-up kit for exposure to chemicals. Marty opened up his watch and took Tempus from his swinging shackles. Scribanim then took the diminutive Tempus and swabbed his face with a special pad from the kit.

Tempus said, moving his jaw around to test it, “The Tin Woodsman I’ve seen you read about, Marty, had nothing on that!”

Marty said, “Tempus, you’re moving now!”

“Yes, and I’ve heard everything you all have said so there’s not a second to lose-” the shrunken Tempus said, stretched, and jumped out of the watch to their feet.

Scribanim said, looking down at him, “Surely you are not concerned about finding seconds you’ve lost. You’ve kept them for so long.”

Tempus shouted, “Very funny. You know that dry sense of humor reminds me of the Minister of Poetic Justice’s.”

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Scribanim replied, “No, anything but that. That’s about as bad as I thought being an animator would be. But it wasn’t really.”

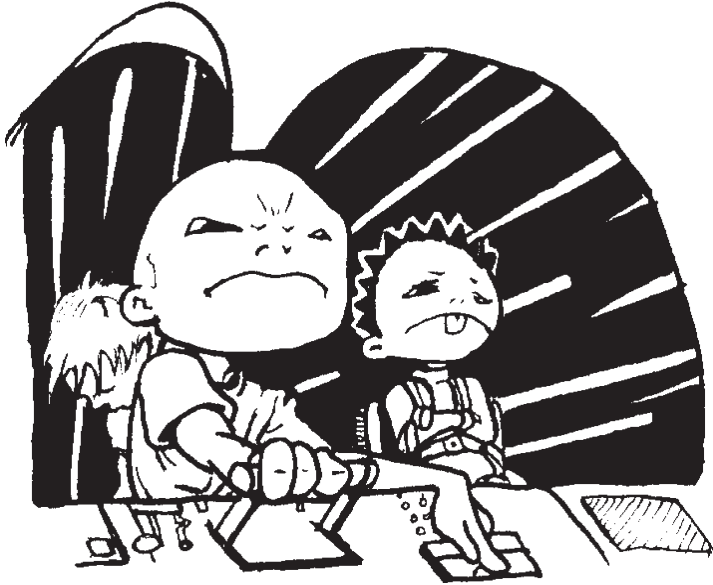
Tempus yelled up at them, “Yes, you have been a knowledgeable court history minister in your interpretation.”

Scribanim said, “Well, thank you. Shall we go to the pod now?”

Tempus screamed, sounding squeaky to the rest of the party, “Yes. But first we need to collect some space station panels, some connectors and some other things that will help me with the engine construction.” His neck stretched here and there with the stretchy material as he looked around wildly.

Scribanim asked, rolling his eyes, “You still want to make those engines?” Tempus said, “With the way the Monarchy has treated us, I see that they are no longer effective for the likes of us. Revolution they suspect... revolution they get!” With this he flung his glasses off his face and the rest of them could tell, though his eyes were shrunken, they got really wide and intent.

Chapter 4



So they, under Tempus' leadership, loaded up the space pod (a guard had collapsed after eating a filling yet soporific pizza) and took off to the Greenmyn moon and the planet Cragney in the same system as Lonestum.

Just after they had reached lift-off, Enchilada vomited in Sarah's bag, so she had to toss the bag in the onboard garbage incinerator. The Chihuahua whimpered a little after that but seemed fine. The rest of them turned a little green and... the Greenmyn finally did look like the little green men they were rumored to be, but they recovered quickly.

With a few flips of dipswitches by pushing his weight against them and the push of a button by stomping on it, Tempus had figured out how to take them past light speed to the galaxy that the Greenmyn Monarchy put their label on.

Marty glowed in the company of his new friends. Though they were "charting the stars" not one of them mentioned anything about his "Starface." None of them glanced at his forehead and then pointed to a distant constellation. Everyone possessed unique qualities like turquoise skin, ratty hair, springy cloth-

ing, and quasi-decent hygiene, so his oily adolescent skin was of little consequence...

When they arrived, hovering around the moon, Tempus pointed out the starboard window. They all looked down. Someone had constructed the engines necessary to cycle the moon! They, like the pyramids, were visible upon entering the atmosphere. Tempus said, "How do you like that? The Monarchy used the idea despite it all . . . let's zoom in a little closer . . . the Monarchy has poor surveillance equipment, never been attacked by outsiders."

Scared only of their own people more, thought Tempus and snorted.

When they arrived they saw the Minister of Poetic Justice overseeing a group of common Greenmyn. He was answering a question by one of them, folding his leather-clad arms and adjusting his hat with eye-for-an-eye-tooth-for-a-tooth depictions, "Yes, we must do this. How better to truly punish Tempus than for his technology to end up in the hands of the Royals."

The group heard him say, using a mike that could be sent out to planets for tests, "But that little Tempus said far too much to them under trial. Far too much." The Minister of Poetic Justice had his own vehicle set up for deployment upon arrival. They heard him say, out of earshot of the common Greenmyn, "Not in the Royals' hands, in my hands. I am the perfect-er of poetic justice. I am the one who keeps the order around here, not the Monarchy. They leave me to do their dirty work without having their full prestige. True, I am prestigious but not as prestigious. Soon that will change." He had a small porta-digi-screen on which he had written his schedules and plans for poetic justice for each so-called criminal kept in a special building near the castle.

The M.o.P.J. had King Scepclus and the Monarchy written down there with the phrase, "For their ineffectiveness, they will be punished and brought to justice. They will be stripped of power and watch as I take control of the Greenmyn moon."

The Minister of Poetic Justice turned the button off. He said, "Thank you, Tempus. I'm so glad I banished you, so I could use your ideas."

Scribanim said, "It's too uncanny... the tyrant that I designed in the cartoon was present along. Maybe I knew it somehow from dealing with him before." "Yea, and Tempus will fight the tyrant!" said Marty excitedly, nearly flinging his glasses off as he jumped a little.

Tempus gulped. His springy-suit started jiggling a little. He wiped sweat off of his wrap-around glasses. He said, "I'm not sure inventors and scientists are so good at war."

"Scientists have been used in every major war since World War I," said Sarah, "according to the Encyclo-"

"Yes, we know, the Encyclopedia Britannica" said Marty. Around Sarah, he

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was starting to feel a little like he was in school, though he did feel sad that she felt she could only serve one purpose in life. This wasn't school, but life and observations about it could become a good educator.

Tempus said, "I don't know what to do really. . . I was going to come back and build my magnum opus, the engines to cycle the moon. But that has already been done for me."

Marty had brought his blank, unlined pad with him, the one he used to draw on and scribble all his strange ideas on. He started thumbing through it absently, for the situation seemed at a stand still, and he thought he could start writing all these adventures down. All of the sudden he made a discovery, the moon-stopper device that operated on magnetism to the minerals... the one he had invented after reading so much science fiction and watching the Tempus Fugit time-traveler cartoon. He flung the pad in front of Tempus.

Tempus said, "M'boy you're a genius." Marty smiled a wide smile that could have been transplanted from Tempus himself.

Tempus said to Scribanim, "I want you to draw blue-print quality drawings of Marty's designs here . . . I'll work on gathering the other necessary equipment. . . we can use the space station panels that I was going to use for the moon-cycling engine covers..."

Scribanim nodded and brought out all his drawing equipment. Tempus first snuck in the moon rock castle and restored himself to his former size. Then, he and the others took an included hover-scooter out on to the moon's surface to Tempus' old invention room (it was boarded up, but they had not cleared out his equipment). And what an invention room it was.

Tempus' workshop resembled a postmodern marionette puppeteer's with every conceivable thing that he needed, on voice command, coming down from the ceiling on string-like titanium wires. —Perfectly balanced boxes of snap-bolts. —The circular hinges. -Solar panels. -Rocket boosters. The boxes on wires gave the lab a sense of messy order. Old inventions sat in disrepair or in various stages throughout the laboratory. Micro-robots crawled around in something resembling a micro-robot ant farm based on the human body. Vehicles that could sustain themselves in all temperatures and environments sat waiting for finishing touches. Something resembling a human brain gurgled in a big vat a la mad scientist decorum.

Marty asked, "What is that? A HUMAN BRAIN? I thought you didn't experiment on humans."

"Oh, that," Tempus said, "That's my little joke. It's a novelty. The brain is a fake and the gurgling is caused by an air pump and a hose. I based it on old Earth science fiction movies. I consider it a work of primitivism. Do you like it?"

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Marty nodded a little and gave a nervous laugh. Then, he finally relaxed a little, got the joke, and truly laughed. Among other things in the lab, on those wires, down came a perfect safe-like cube that popped open to reveal cafe-candy, the sweet candy with the caffeine and sugar of a well-creamed cup of Greenmyn bean-root coffee.

Tempus explained, popping one in his mouth, “Got to have a little extra kick for my inventing. My only vice.” He smirked.

Tempus said, “If you don’t mind, I’ve got to get a quick shower. I have been gathering soil in that watch for many, many years-“

Marty panicked. “Tempus, you don’t have time for one, do you?”

Tempus pointed toward his shower. It had 30 robotic nozzles protected by fiberglass covers. He also had a small waterproof vice that one could take old soap chunks, place them in there, and recycle them by squeezing all of the old soap chunks together. Tempus grabbed a recently created chunk out and put in on the shower shelf. Tempus closed the door and was done with his shower in three minutes tops. He returned fully dressed in attire that was steam and laser cleaned.

Marty said, “I guess you do have time. –Seems like you always have time.” Refreshed, Tempus nodded at Marty and gathered together what he needed and had the gravitational magnetism attractor built within an hour. Now all they had to do was put the snap-able panels together in a gigantic satellite-dish-like formation that would help slow the speed of the moon down so that it could not exceed light-speed. By the time they arrived back, Scribanim had the drawings that would facilitate this. He said he had looked at enough Tempus Fugit toys to know about “some assembly required.” The way he had the plans set up was just like that too. He had written, “Snap piece A into part A on the other side” and that sort of tedious process that adults curse over before birthday presents are put together. Well, most parents except Tempus’ who did not buy that sort of “crap.” By the time they got it finished and the disc hovered, using solar power and rocket boosters, above the planet, the moon was taking off.

Cycling around and around... faster ... faster . . . buildings started to almost float off the surface. . . faster ... faster — everything a blur of stars. . . until finally, a noise that could not be matched by the invisible giants of another planets’ Tupperware opening with a pop ensued. . . And the moon almost escaped the orbit. But try as he might the Minister of Poetic Justice could not get the moon to escape. The disc caused the moon to drag slightly. The Minister of Poetic Justice stood there, jumping up and down on the hovercraft, making it swerve a little in its orbit. The vehicle verged on plummeting into a crater with his tantrum.

He screamed to the attendants, “Let the fuel deposit retractors work dou-

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bly!” They tried this but still the hovering disc, through its magnetism, kept just enough resistance going to keep it from escaping.

He screamed, “I shall throw all of you into the engines fuel burners as soon as I become Ruler of the Greenmyn moon. -Perfect poetic justice for this incompetence with the boosters. Faster! Faster!”

Some of the Greenmyn commoners looked at each other quizzically at this, but he was above them in station, so they did not question. They continued. The Minister of Poetic Justice was throwing things off of the hover vehicle at them and calling them various nasty names by this time. The last jolt, the last attempt to escape the gravity, caused such a backlash that the Minister of Poetic Justice’s hover-pod was thrown way off course. Given his temper tantrum, he was not expecting this and it threw him for a literal loop. He clung for dear life but the vehicle starting spinning uncontrollably. And beneath his helmet, the Minister of Poetic Justice’s eyes showed fear. If there was one thing that he could not stand it was a lack of control. A brief moonquake ensued and he was close enough to the surface that his pod was affected. With of all of crooked flying it had done, it jolted over. The mechanism that kept it hovering got disturbed and it moved in a crooked path, the Minister heading toward the Building of Administration of Poetic Justice. He had been thrown so off balance that he was unable to straighten the path of the vehicle. He had embellished each phrase with an angry fit and was in no state to think clearly. “No—o-o-o-o” he screamed.

The vehicle completely out of his control, he crash-landed in the cell of a group of Greenmyn citizens, who were being punished in various ways. An exhibitionist was covered in five layers of clothing. A murderer was brought to flat line through the use of an electric chair and revived again and shocked again. All of these very bitter people, made even angrier and more antisocial by this hell before hell was necessary, before all the choices had been made, grabbed up the Minister of Poetic Justice. “What will be a good punishment for him, eh?” asked the murderer. “Let’s ‘ave him go through all the same poetic justice he put us through! His poetic justice will be to experience just what he put others through.” “Yes!” they screamed. And by the time they were finished with him, the Minister of Poetic Justice, covered in tar, stripped, made to look like everyone else and various and a sundry tortures inflicted on him, went crazy. He would go up to people on the moon rock-cobblestone-streets and yell, “In my former life, I was a whip!” The Greenmyn could hardly believe that the mad, dripping, scarred, blackened creature before them could have once been the awful torturer of all their nightmares.

As for Tempus and the rest, they went ahead and cycled the moon. None of them really wanted the Monarchy in control, they just did not want the Minister of Poetic Justice in control in their place. King Sceptus and the others were as

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responsible for the Minister of Poetic Justice's actions as he was. They, in their fear, their need to be such control-freaks, had allowed him to continue with his methods. The Monarchy was as great an evil. So Tempus' party traveled back in time, causing a revolution of the past moon. Had the Monarchy not treated Scribanim and Tempus the way they did, time traveling would have been used for other purposes as Tempus had said those years ago. So they took a lot of the present-moon's population, 10 at a time in the pod, back to the "past-moon" and had them lead the others to overthrow the second set of Royals that existed because of the time travel phenomenon. They did this by hiding all of the people in the huge busts of the Royals, the monuments that the engines exceeded in size, and coming out to attack during the evening.

King Sceptus said, wringing his bicycle helmet-like crown in his smooth hands and knowing about cycling the moon because of their arrival time in the past, "But, Tempus, you said that if you took one moon, that you would leave us to rule the other."

Tempus said, "That was before you showed yourselves to be unjust, unworthy to even look after one little moon, much less two. The time has come, actually we have come to the time, for you to be one of 'the common Greenmyn'." Tempus said the last bit in the surly tone that the King had used before.

King Sceptus attempted to lead the people against Tempus. "People of the Greenmyn Moon, this usurper, this heretic has questioned the very fabric of our reality." Tempus and the King Sceptus from Pastmoon were on a small veranda on a small tower of the moon rock castle. They both had to be there and present a symbolic hand-over of power to the new government.

A gigantic crowd of nearly every Greenmyn Moon citizen crowded by the castle. Orb-bots, an invention of Tempus', hovered around and not only viewed the distant King and Tempus but had small screens on their posteriors. These small screens gave the great crowds a view of what was going on. Amplifiers brought them the sound of their king.

King Sceptus said, pointing below himself to an open window. "You know that the chosen cyclers keep the moon going. They keep the view outside rotating around our moon. They keep the stars rotating around us. They do this upon our command and powers." Via the technology of the Orb-bots, the citizenry was able to view moon cyclers. These were people chosen by the Monarchy to ride on what appeared to be stationary bicycles. According to legend, turning the wheels on these stationary bicycles caused the universe itself to turn around the moon. Only the Monarchy could lead the bicyclers in how to cycle the moon. One thousand two hundred of them lived in the inner chambers of the huge castle, barred from ever talking with the commoners, eating all of their meals in the castle itself. They were given little hovels within the grounds in which to live.

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600 of them, on the day shift, pedaled furiously and sweated profusely beneath their bicycle helmets. Their helmets had no spikes. Why they wore helmets on stationary bicycles was an enigma, but some thought it went back to a time when the Greenmyn thought the hollow sphere that encircled them was crumbling and that pieces of it might hit them in the head. The commoners still believed all the above to be true, though the Monarchy and Ministers had been traveling throughout the galaxy for hundreds of years incognito.

King Sceptus yelled, "This heretic has questioned the fact that we are in control of the universe, that we are the ones who turn it."

Tempus said, "Untrue. How did I bring the other moon that you have seen here? How did I do that then? Does the other moon exist in that universe that is supposedly spinning around this moon or is the universe a vast place full of many moons and many stars that have planets just like Cragney around them?! Do you really think that Cragney is just a painting of what the Greenmyn Moon used to be that circles around our moon? Do you really think that?! This man is lying to you. OPEN YOUR EYES! The Great Unseen One gave you eyes. Use them."

King Sceptus, "Don't you dare speak of The Great Unseen One. WE are the ones who rule here. We are the ones who control our destiny. We control the way the universe runs. We are masters of our own reality!"

Tempus said, "There are more than just us in the universe. Other planets exist that can sustain life. Your own Monarchy sent ministers to investigate these planets years ago. The information was sadly kept from you. I would like to introduce... Marty, an Earthling."

Marty stepped out and waved. The audience gasped.

King Sceptus said, "Well, well... it's a trick. He's in a disguise."

Marty tugged at his skin. He gave a little, "Ow."

The people then knew that his skin was real. King Sceptus started to talk again but was booed off of the platform.

"Tempus, truth teller. Tempus, ruler of the people!" the crowd chanted. Tempus said, "I do not wish to rule alone and dictate truth to you. Rather, I ask that you allow those of us who changed things here to rule over you in a group, a small group that will make decisions for you!"

The people agreed, and Tempus knew he could hash out the details later. For now, the Pastmoon Royals had to be moved out of the castle to live as common Greenmyn. Tempus' committee would live outside of the castle too as common Greenmyn and only use the castle as a meeting space. Tempus had other problems, though. The Presentmoon Royals had escaped while they were busy prosecuting the Pastmoon Royals. The only vehicle King Sceptus could afford was a bicycle, so his helmet-like crown was put to good use. They had all

worn bicycle helmets as symbols of their power in cycling the moon, in allegedly turning the wheels that allegedly kept the universe going. Now, they used these symbols to protect their heads on simple bicycle rides on the ground.

As for the moon cyclers, they were released from their daily labor. And the Greenmyn came to trust Tempus even more. For the universe did not stop “turning.” In fact, the moon did not stop its cycle around Cragney. Cragney did not stop its cycle around the sun. Their entire conception of the universe was changed in just a day. And they marveled at it all.

The common people selected a Council, including Tempus, Tempus’ apprentice Marty, Sarah, and Scribanim. Tempus was responsible for creating new methods for new Council fisheries to produce more blindfish for all the people instead of their living off roots. Marty aided him in coming up with new technological or just plain creative ideas to better the lives of all Greenmyn. Sarah was deemed the Councilwoman of Earth History Tabulation, enlightening all of the people there with her vast knowledge (not as a tour guide — the only thing she thought she could do) as a professor giving daily lectures in one place of another, being happier than ever, Enchilada was a national curiosity and the Greenmyn came in droves to pet and feed him, and Scribanim was responsible for caricaturing via animation the whole lot of them as Councilman for the Arts (he also encouraged the Greenmyn commoners to do the same and to participate in other arts), lest they all take themselves too seriously.

Sarah said, “According to my encyclopedia, in the Middle Ages, people were thought to be affected by the Earth moon. That is how the term lunacy came to be. I think we’re a bunch of lunatics.” She laughed.

Marty laughed too. He said, “The people who admit they are crazy and still continue on doing great things — these are like the best people to be around. I’m so glad I met all of you.”

Tempus said, “And we’re glad that you could cycle the moon with us. Cycling the moon takes a group of crazies like us. We’re willing to think about things differently.”

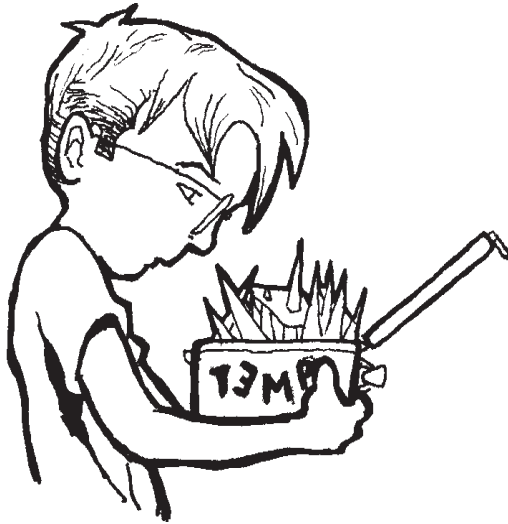
What Tempus called cycling the moon was spinning the moon faster and faster until it released into a worm hole, not the old definition of moon cycling, which was supposedly pedaling the wheels that kept the universe in motion. He also looked on cycling the moon as a state of mind. Asking for the moon is often the proverbial equivalent of a pipe dream. Yet Tempus embraced this idea. Putting one’s head in the clouds and thinking of out-there ideas was a part of cycling the moon. He would look upon that idea that way for the rest of his journeys with Marty and the others.

Marty slapped Tempus on the forehead — the Greenmyn equivalent of a high-five. And Tempus returned the thumbs-up.

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Marty thought about having his head in the clouds, just staring at the moon as it cycled, what his father called cycling the moon. He didn't feel like a letdown now. Marty could wear his Tempus watch (replaced by Scribanim with a plastic-cut-out of the little alien) without anyone making fun of him. He could retain his mind of wonder in this place. A mind full of new, creative ideas was actually respected on the Greenmyn moon. He had plans to allow his parents to visit him there occasionally. Despite some of their faults, he missed them. He was not sure his dad would come or would even believe it. His mom might. She had always taught him with such things as the Oz books she brought him home the value of having a group of friends that were dissimilar yet had a common goal. Yet Marty thought he had finally found a place that felt like home, a place where minds were not closed to the extraordinary and a group of friends who understood his ever-youthful creativity and appreciated it.

Chapter 5



Yes, Marty really enjoyed his new home. But be it ever so bungle, there's no place like home, and bungling caused Sarah to turn up missing. The Council bungled by living in the Presentmoon, what the moon from the one-time present was still called, and stopping going to Pastmoon.

Pastmoon was hard to govern because of the distance between the two planets that now held their respective orbits. Ship travel back and forth became tedious to the Council. They were content in Presentmoon, content with the ways they had formed, their decision-making processes. And given the tumultuous nature of the transport, no one wanted to return this Presentmoon to its exact moment in time in the future. The Councilmembers liked living in the past. Meetings started to occur more and more at the new Moon Round Table — a round table that looked like the moon from a distance, painted with craters by Scribanim. The Moon Round Table became idealized, for it allowed everybody a say. But their contentment should not have allowed for this. At the Moon Round Table, the Council always consulted with the common Greenmyn when making decisions. Even banal decisions like putting hover-benches in the new park on the tiny moon were brought before the Common Greenmyn. To them, it was

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utopia.

They found their contentment was a mistake when Sarah and Enchilada turned up missing. In Sarah's room, Marty found an earth lunch-box decorated with the Tempus Fugit cartoon character. He opened it and discovered that had he reached in it, he would have maimed his hand on spikes that had been placed within it. The monogram emblazoned on the top, near the latch, read, "M.P.J." Marty ran to the moon-round table with the Tempus Fugit lunch box.

Scribanim, who was painting a group portrait of the Council from his imagination, not poses, said, "Marty, really, you know we don't eat lunch at the Moon Round Table."

"Drop the sarcasm please," said Marty, "This is serious. Sarah's missing and someone's left this behind!"

Scribanim at this nearly blotted up Sarah's portraiture.

Marty starting squeaking his voice a little, getting faster with his speech and movements, "Who is this M.P.J. jerk anyway? What could that stand for, 'Malicious Peanut-butter and Jelly?' "

Scribanim raised an eyebrow and said, "Yes, a huge B movie peanut butter and jelly sandwich has added Sarah to its toppings."

Marty asked, "Then who?"

Tempus Fugit suddenly descended from the ceiling's rafters, his new inventing spot, coming down using two or three of his special wires that he normally hung things on. He said, "Who wants to do me harm, Marty? It's no other than the Minister of Poetic Justice. MPJ for short."

Marty shuddered. He said, "But he was taken care of by all of those prisoners. He went crazy!"

"Exactly. That is why he is so dangerous. He has abducted our poor Sarah for some hideous purpose, I'm sure of it," said Tempus.

Scribanim said, rolling his one-color eyes as best he could (a habit he learned during his brief period as an earthling but one, nonetheless that was facilitated by his sarcasm — a trait he always had), "I can see it now. For being such an informative person for us, helping us overthrow his tyranny, he has something sickly special set up for her. He's draining her brain of all knowledge or something like-

Marty said, "Scribanim, you've been working on too many cartoons."

"Mind you, boy. I am a great artist. Need I remind you that my cartoons are a great record of events on the Greenmyn moon. A testament to-

Tempus said, "Okay, okay, leggo your Egos." Marty laughed. Tempus whispered something about having see the commercial during the cartoon about him that Marty watched – all from the distance of his former watch prison.

Scribanim said, "So what are we to do, Great Time Traveling Alien?"

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Tempus jumped out of his vehicle on wires and said, "We are to go to the Pastmoon. He's left a lunch-box with me on it. It's me he wants. Sarah is just the bait." "But if he gets you, he'll simply torture you until you invent things for him, things I don't even want to think about...there were spikes in the lunch box," Scribanim whined. Being artistic, Scribanim could spot a visual symbol quickly. Tempus said, "You know... invention is not always a good process. While I was on earth, I read something very interesting as Marty had his watch on beside a book... something about inventing.

Marty said, "Oh, yea... I had forgot about how awful it all was-"

"What are you guys talking about?"

Marty said, "Thomas Edison-"

Scribanim said, "Oh, yes, I believe I heard about him in one of Sarah's lectures."

"Well, I found this little-known book that had some research about Mr. Edison. Seems like he killed cats and dogs in public to test electricity-" Marty said.

"And used electric current to kill an elephant," said Tempus, "That ran amuck through the city. But this dark side of inventing will not happen with me. We won't let it happen."

They all decided to take the U.N.A.S.A. space pod to Pastmoon that evening. In the cloak of darkness, they would search the Pastmoon moon-rock castle for signs of The Minister of Poetic Justice and the damsel in distress

Chapter 6



“Damsel in distress” was appropriate, for poor Sarah was involved in a very storybook-like situation. She was being held in the tallest tower of the moon rock castle. Yet “damsel in distress” was inappropriate because she was not going to stand for this for long and started scheming. Beside her were piles of books with the stamp of the Ministry of Primitive Earth Objects on them. She had one open and was reading it to the Minister of Poetic Justice (who she had taken to calling MOPJ (pronounced mop-ja) since he would not give her his real name). The supposedly awful thing that MOPJ had Sarah doing was reading tales with morals throughout history from the Bible to fairy tales.

Sarah sat upon a tall primary colored chair with a very comfortable cushion. MOPJ had her reading such tales, for they were not very fact-filled. At least,

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that's what he told himself. This was her poetic justice for helping his enemies with information. She was to read the most non-information-based works, the most mystical, to him. MOPJ had not changed. Yet deep inside him he had another reason for Sarah reading these tales to him. Sarah had yet to guess why. She was busy plotting her escape. She thought of all of the great escapes from castles throughout history. Which would she utilize?

She wondered if the moon rock castle contained secret passages for the common Greenmyn to escape. A nice little side passage where the kings and queens of old kept escape Shetlands would be nice, and the equivalent here was probably some form of robotic, non-hairy horse. But she had little time to plot, for MOPJ had her reading tales and Biblical stories for most of the day as he pillaged what had been left behind in the store-houses of the castle, snacking and becoming quite paunchy.

She had just read the Biblical tale where King Solomon has to make a just decision about the ownership of a baby. The king says that he will tear the baby in half. The woman who is the real mother screams and tries to stop this. The non-mother seems resigned to it.

MOPJ said, "Oh, I see how this will end. He'll tear the baby in half to prove a lesson to both of them. Most apt poetic justice."

Sarah nearly screamed, "No! . . . I mean, no, um, he is going to give the child to the mother who cared the most, the one who would not have her baby killed just to prove something."

MOPJ said, "Well, that is a different approach." Sarah was becoming a bit bored with some of the tales. They always had the same just ending. As somewhat of a historian, she knew that life did not have such good endings. She had become a typical academic, skeptical, wary of tales with morals and trying to deconstruct them at all cost. Academia, the University of the Darker Side of the Moon, had improved her self-esteem, however, and she started improving her appearance and mind. But it had done nothing for her morality. Soon, she might begin to look at the transcendent works a little differently. MOPJ was being typically gruesome, though. And this was enough to unsettle her to have her not give this much thought. His need for torture and poetic justice as the only answer had become a form of spiritual ignorance. She felt dragged down by it. Sometimes, she would read "Beauty and the Beast" or "Rapunzel" as some solace to her as she sat in that tower. And towards these trapped women, she felt no cynicism.

* * *

Back on earth, Marty's mother, Maria, felt no cynicism or malice about tales that were moral, tales with definite good and definite evil. She did not like preachy tales and would tell her young children's librarians this while training them. She

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was not quite the old school marm-like librarian nor was she the young upstart with ideas that were so radical that they tore absolutely everything down in sight. Maria almost hourly wondered what happened to Marty. She soon had his picture posted on various milk cartons and in local Wal-mart stores. It had been almost a month since Marty had simply vanished. Poof. Down the rabbit hole, through the tornado, through the tunnel, all of these were tumultuous beginnings of modern fairy tales that Maria knew too well. She only wished that somehow something miraculous had happened and not the worst.

Her husband said that Marty probably ran off half-cocked to the city, trying his hand at drawing caricatures on the street. Maria asked him to refrain: "Look. Our son is missing! And you want to sit there and make light of this!"

Her husband said, "He never did have a sense of reality is all I'm trying to say. I'm worried about him out in the city or wherever he's ended up."

"Me too. I'm worried about him too." Maria adjusted one of the primary color scarves that she always wore during storytelling so that she could embrace her husband. The old tensions still existed between "her boys," but she knew that her husband cared about their son, at least. Yet she released her embrace quickly when a noise slightly below the register of a sonic boom echoed from their driveway.

Marty had sent the U.N.A.S.A. space pod, but Maria had no idea of knowing this at first. She ran outside with her husband. There was not much time before agents would track them all down. But she, again, knew nothing of this.

However, when she saw a small sign in Marty's handwriting that read, "Enter," she said, "It's happened. You've finally done something fantastic. Something that you've always wanted to do." His father was stunned. He ran his hand through his mustache and tall, bouffant-like hair.

Maria tentatively entered the space vehicle. She knew that this was a message from Marty, not only because of the hand-writing, but because he knew how much she liked Alice in Wonderland and duplicated the little signs that were in that book.

Doug, Marty's father, said, "No, wait."

"Marty has sent this to us. Come on."

"Are you crazy?"

"Yes," said Maria, "I am crazy. But I'm not stupid. I'm not about to not experience something this incredible!" She threw her scarf behind her neck and entered the pod. Her husband begrudgingly followed behind her, dragging his dress shoes on the loading dock.

Another sign beside a single button in the helm read, "Push me." Tempus Fugit had rigged this auto-pilot button and micro-micro-circuitry up in moments per Marty's request. Marty wanted his parents to visit, even his father, and

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he felt he could use their help. He had the escape that he wanted, but he realized after a while that he still needed to be near them on occasion.

Maria was about to push the button when Doug lunged forth and pressed it, saying, "Well, if my son's dreaming has finally got 'em somewhere, I want to see where that somewhere is-" And with this, the vessel lunged forth into the stratosphere and beyond to its destination on Pastmoon, where Sarah was held captive in the moon rock castle and the Greenmyn Moon Council awaited them.

Chapter 7



Tempus Fugit Greenmyn was the first to greet Marty's parents, and he greeted them with some contempt towards Doug. Marty has explained to Tempus how his father felt about his musings and imaginings.

He said, "Your son has proven to be quite brilliant here. His moon disc plans helped to save us all-"

Doug said, "Well, I never meant... du-I, um, see, of course, it worked up here on this moon on another planet. But that kind of thinking doesn't work on Earth, you see... it-"

"Creative thinking doesn't work on Earth... well, I would say that is true for the majority of the Americans that I saw, but I'm not so sure historically everywhere that has been true. If only Sarah were here to regale the history-" muttered Scribanim.

"Which is exactly why we have brought you here. For some odd reason, Marty thought that you would be of assistance to us. The Earthling Sarah has

been kidnapped by the Minister of Poetic Justice,” Tempus explained breathlessly. Marty had ran up to his parents, hugging his mom and patting his father on the shoulder.

Marty said, “Mom, I hope you brought some books with you!... Oh, and I missed you!” She had, indeed, before rushing out to see the pod, picked up an enormous green canvas briefcase that could have doubled as a carpetbag for 19th century travel. It was stuffed with children’s and young adult books with some for older ages and was nearly as overstuffed as Marty’s bag with the watermelon from Earth. She patted it. Marty smiled.

He said, “Whew. I hope there’s some science fiction and fantasy books in there. I’ve nearly read through everything in the Minister of Primitive Earth Object’s library that he abandoned.”

“Abandoned?” asked Marty’s mother.

Marty said, “Yes, the Ministers were disbanded after the Monarchy was overthrown. Mom, you’re looking at one of the Council people of Presentmoon and Pastmoon... only, we’ve been governing Presentmoon a little better.”

Tempus Fugit explained, “Which is how we’ve gotten into this mess. The Minister of Poetic Justice has kidnapped Sarah and has her, probably in the moon rock castle of Pastmoon. Goodness knows how many Ministers are running around amuck now that they’ve disbanded.” (Well, little did they know the Minister of Primitive Earth Objects was in cahoots with the Minister of Poetic Justice, supplying him with the books he had taken out of the primitive Earth library and other choice objects. This was why Marty found it so easy to read through nearly all of the books in the library. Nearly all of the books he would have liked, the stories with good and evil in fantastic, science fiction or religious settings, were snatched up by the MOPEO before he fled from the Pastmoon moon rock castle. -Not to mention the doubles that were running around because of aliens from one time period being brought to another time period. The only doubles that did not exist, at least in immediate circumstances, were Tempus Fugit, Scribanim, Sarah, Enchilada, and Marty — none of whom really lived on Pastmoon during the moment in time they had arrived there. Nevertheless, doubles of Sceptus, the rest of the Royals, all of the common Greenmyn, and all of the Ministers existed. To avoid confusion, the Council had deemed that all doubles were to stay on the moon they either arrived on or lived on “in the past” respectively. But the Council doubted whether the Ministers and the doubles from the Monarchy would obey.)

“Well, it sounds like you’ve brought me here for my superior supervising skills. You need a supervisor for this operation,” Doug chimed in business-ese. Marty rolled his eyes a little. This was his dad’s favorite thing to say. From cutting the grass to other household chores, his father deemed himself the supervisor

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and Marty the worker.

Marty said, "Actually, I brought you both here because I missed you. And I missed mom bringing all of those great books home."

"Well, all of it is amazing. I should, um, tell you that we're proud of you." His Dad cleared his throat uncomfortably.

Maria said, "And thank you, Marty. This is so exciting! I'm sure we'll be able to help you somehow. This is just like a young adult book! I wish I had some notepads and a laptop. I could work on my first children's book!"

"That would be a good idea... only, you might be guilty of copyright infringement. Surely, you've heard of the *Tempus Fugit* time-traveling alien cartoon series?"

Maria said, "Yes, you're right, Scribanim, is it?" (They'd been introduced) "Guess I'd have to change the names to protect the guilty." She winked. Scribanim laughed. He explained that he, incognito, worked on that series, and he chatted with Maria a while while the rest conversed congenially.

Tempus Fugit looked at his watch, cringed a little at the sight of it for more reasons than one, and preached in a fuss-budget manner, "Well, now that we've gotten acquainted, I think we need to set off to the castle in a hover vehicle." They loaded on to one that looked like it had some sorts of downward fans on its sides that glowed slightly.

Maria struggled with the heavy bag of books but refused Marty's or Doug's help with it as she brought it on board. And they set off over many craters, the sand-castle-like turret towers of the moon rock castle just visible on the horizon, and came upon a crater that was not empty. Within it sat a building that looked like someone had used the Minister of Shipping's enlarging ray on a very small stack of dollar coins or had designed the building to look like a truncated cylinder. Atop the building was a flashing sign that read, "Lunar Cafe."

Doug said, "Looks like that ridiculous nonsense they put in the sci-fi pulps in the 50s." Marty's father had been swayed away from all such things at a very early age obviously. He tried to mold Marty in the same image but somehow it just had not worked.

His mother Maria was the main cause. She encouraged him to read whatever he wanted to, not caring what it was. Only occasionally did she prod about realism. Of course, all of this was a good thing — something that Doug was just starting to realize slowly. With Doug ending his skepticism somewhat, they landed near the Lunar Cafe.

Maria said to Marty, "Well, you better go here because we're not stopping again." This, of course, made everyone laugh, for there really were not that many places to stop.

"Ma!" Marty exclaimed and shook his head, blushing. But he could not get

to the bathroom quickly.

At the door, the owner and cook's bulky frame impeded them.

"Oh-h-h-h, bouncer," Scribanim quipped, "Now... now... I have seen this sort of thing in the Earth city. I assure you that I am hip and can vouch for the others here. Please let us in."

Maria hefted her heavy book bag a little through the doorway and dropped it as his feet with a harrumph. She dropped it and started laughing with the others. They kind of tried to push their way through again. Then, they stopped laughing. The obstacle, a very obese Greenmyn gentleman with an apron on that had surprisingly little or no stains, looked at them through squinty-mono-colored eyes. He blocked them from taking one of the plush booths that lined the circular wall. He muttered, "Only Ministers and Royals served here. And I dunno what those creatures are with you. But they can't come in here." He pointed to the humans in their company. The Council-members chuckled slightly.

Tempus Fugit said, "Those days are gone, my friend. Surely you know about the Council having control of Pastmoon and Presentmoon." The fat alien, who introduced himself as Cocinarum Greenmyn (Coci for short), said, "Sorry. I kept the policy. Only Ministers and Royals served here." The place was deserted. The smell in the air was neutral. Nothing cooked in the hydrator unit behind the stainless steel and Formica counter. The Formica surfaces of the various booth tables were covered with blue crescent moons.

Tempus said, "Maybe you can answer this then. Just what Ministers step into this place...it looks deserted to me--"

"And not a bicycle in sight," joked Scribanim about the Monarchy.

At this, Coci softened a little. He started sputtering, "I, I- I haven't had any customers in a long time... except for the Ministers of Primitive Earth Objects ... say, wait a minute... you aren't those Earthlings they sometimes talk about, are ya?" Marty's parents and Marty nodded.

Coci grunted a response and said, "Well, I might let you come in... just out of curiosity."

"Ministers?" several of the party asked at once.

Coci said, "Yea, the one from Pastmoon hangs out with the one from Presentmoon now. They call themselves MOPEO I and MOPEO II. -Said something about being able to steal... er, procure more Earth objects that way. I never knew what Earth was before till I heard about your speech on the other moon, Tempus. I always thought they was digging in the 'earth' here for them objects. I always thought it was stuff from our past. -Didn't know another place could exist with other people who made fascinatin' things."

"Primitive Earth objects, huh? So that's where that one sock you can never find went, Marty. It was stolen!" said his mother. Marty imagined kids everywhere

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losing jackets, video games, CD-ROMs, books — all because the now-twin MOPEOs wanted to add to their collection.

Marty said, “But they shouldn’t have any need to steal- uh, procure anymore because the Royals are not in power.”

“Exactly, Marty. And who are they stealing for? Why, none other than the MOPI.” Tempus shook his head at his own statement.

Coci said, “Look, I just serves ’em. I don’t keep up with all that.”

“Who else comes in here?” Coci said that no members of the Monarchy could afford his prices anymore and that no other Ministers have visited. He said something about hearing that the Presentmoon Royals and their Ministers had blasted off in a ship to some exclusive property on another planet. Evidently the Pastmoon Royals were left out of the loop, for they were still stuck in one of the Greenmyn villages, selling off relics from the Monarchy in the marketplace to make ends meet, riding their non-stationary bicycles there daily. No commoners would allow them to usurp power. This meant that the Pastmoon Royals were truly humbled where the Presentmoon Royals were not.

Coci said, “Oh, I am ruined... I, I, have lost 100 pounds.” His apron did hang like a toga sheet loosely around him.

He said, “I used to weigh 400 pounds. I was quite the specimen.”

“Quite,” said Scribanim, retraining a chuckle. Coci said, “But I don’t get the business...I have written my so-called twin many light-mails (light-mails being Tempus’ newly invented blasts of laser-like light powerful enough to leave one moon and transmit information, holding the digital information) to Pastmoon. He has allowed common Greenmyn to eat there and has lowered his prices. He now weighs 500!” Evidently, in this area of the Greenmyn moon, the class distinction of weight was still very important to the middle classes.

Doug said, “Now look here, Coci. As management, your solution is very simple. You’re losing your overhead because of this policy. What you need to do is open this place up to the common Greenmyn... just like your brother-”

Coci said, “It’s... it’s not so easy.”

“Why is that?” asked Tempus, blinking his seemingly large eyes that were magnified by his wrap-around glasses.

Coci said, “Look, I kept the policy at first because I wanted to but then I started talking to my brother and it sounded like changing it would be a good idea. But MOPEO I and MOPEO II threatened to bring primitive Earth Tommy-guns in here and destroy it by something they called ‘shooting’ if I allowed any common Greenmyn or the Council to come in here.”

“So what’s in it for you?” asked Marty. He put on his best hard-boiled detective accent, though his voice squeaked a little. Coci escorted them to his storeroom. Piled high to the ceiling were Earth’s “moon foods” such as freeze-dried ice-

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cream with NASA labels, Tang, astronaut rations, and even moon pies. The Greenmyn made a few slight errors about what constituted a “moon food.”

“Adorable,” exclaimed Maria. Scribanim said, “You silly ass. If you wanted to keep up your weight-gain during your loss of business, you should have hit your pantry.”

Coci said, “That’s just it. It’s all from the MOPEO’s, so I’m afraid to use too much of it... I thought they were Greenmyn Moon artifacts. They said that as long as I keep their policy, I can keep all of this. But I don’t know how long all of this is going to last... I’ve got to eat, after all.” They were all astonished at his great fear that he would grow hungry, but they did not make any remarks about polar bears being able to live off their blubber. The alien was obviously suffering because of this Mafia-like arrangement.

Tempus said, “Sir, serve us today, and we assure you MOPEO I and MOPEO II will be brought to justice.”

“And not poetic justice,” said Marty. “Yes, and not poetic justice,” said Tempus.

So Coci agreed to serve them all some Tang and freeze-dried astronaut rations, allowing Marty to stuff some to-go moon foods around his watermelon for the trip. The Council would not forget Coci’s kindness. Marty’s mother told him he was like a friendly giant from one of her library’s stories.

Coci said, “Aw, it wasn’t anything. I won’t worry anymore.” And with their promise that his business would no longer suffer, Coci saw the party off across the relatively barren landscape.