

# My Fifth and Most Exotic Voyage

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*Chapter One. A Project to share hard-won Lessons from the Author's former Adventures. The unsatisfactory Nature of his Life in Redriff, and his Forbearance of Society. A strange Sighting.*

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Following a reluctant return to England from my fourth voyage, I conceived the project of reforming my countrymen with an instructive account of all that I had seen and learned. None can gainsay that the book thus written has made my travels famous. As for bringing about any improvement, however trivial, among my fellows, I must confess to abject failure. Of this disappointment I attribute a small part to a scurrilous publisher who took it upon himself to expurgate my report and a somewhat larger part upon my technical defects as an author. I assign the dominant responsibility to hubris and folly, for this undertaking was surely doomed from the start. Who but a fool might suppose any among his brutish kind capable of serious improvement—or even capable of printing books as the author intended and directed?

In the years that followed my latest return to Redriff, I had rejoined, howbeit with some difficulty, the company of the occasional person. I once again would dine with my wife, separated one from the other by a long table. I would even converse, from time to time, if usually with but one at a time, with other members of my family. Of strangers and crowds, I perforce remained aloof. In large measure, then, I spent my days in the company of horses.

In short, I did not know the troublesome publisher. Needs be, I had entrusted to my cousin Symphon, an advocate of this endeavour, to engage a publisher on my behalf. I had but recently begun a letter of complaint to my cousin about the unsatisfactory changes made to my book in its first edition when a new adventure overtook me.

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That afternoon, as many an afternoon, a favourite horse and I wandered across a rolling meadow wherein no one, whether highwayman or garrulous neighbor or mischievous child, might come upon me unawares. I talked, and she listened. After awhile, I didn't much talk. Sixty-six years of age, hard-worn by my past adventures, I was all too easily winded.

Of a certainty, I had been mad with grief and loss upon my latest return to England. Was I insane on the day my new adventure began? Am I mad yet this day? In the unlikely event anyone should happen upon this, my latest account, the reader shall have to decide.

Mad or not, I spent each day in Redriff in apprehension of the perversities into which people so often lapsed. How carelessly we become cutthroats and thieves, politicians and vote sellers, fornicators and prevaricators, drunkards and forgers, suborners and perjurers, lawyers and whores. Human, we might flatter ourselves to be named, but there was nothing *humane* about us! And so, I never ventured from home without a hanger strapped to my side. That weapon had served me well throughout my voyages; I trusted it would serve again were my equine companion and I to be set upon, during one of our walks, by beasts or brigands. Verily, I scarcely distinguished 'twixt the two perils.

That afternoon, as many an afternoon, my muscles and joints complained of the exertion, and yet I rejoiced in that aching. It was a sign that ere many more years should pass, I would be relieved of the burthensome knowledge of my innate moral failings.

As my friend and I approached the curving shore of the Thames, me gasping for breath, she neighing in sympathy, I espied out of a corner of my eye a disturbance of some kind. The air, although the sky was clear, of a sudden held the pungent scent of an approaching storm. The horse, too, sensing something peculiar, shied away.

Even as I turned my gaze toward that indistinct disturbance, it began to take form. It changed into a bright flicker. The flicker became . . . I knew not what. A shimmering rectangle afloat just above the ground. A featureless, translucent rectangle. A featureless, translucent box. The box, in turn, took on an almost solid whiteness, within which lesser shapes appeared: tables, perhaps, and cryptic engines, and shadowy human figures. Of a sudden, in but a few beats of my pounding heart, the whiteness faded to nothing. It was as if only the sheerest pane of glass separated me from a spacious room that had appeared out of nowhere—and as if from within that room, people in odd garb stared at me!

I had only an instant to consider this turn of events, for the apparition was too much for my friend. She galloped away, panic-stricken, and I ran after. Some rock, crevice, or gopher hole unseen in the grass snagged the toe of my shoe. My hat, and then I, went flying. My head struck a rock, and all went dark.

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**Chapter Two.** *The Place of the Author's Arrival. The Debasement of the Language. An uncertain Location. A curious Conversation.*

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Flat upon my back on a strangely firm and broad bed, I awakened in a large and unrecognized room.

I studied this place intently. Walls and ceiling alike were of shades of white. The room, although windowless, was not dark, because the ceiling, without evidence of any flame, somehow gave off a steady white light. The wall past the foot of the bed held a large, shiny, black rectangle where a window might have been. The wall to my left had a large, paneled wooden door; the wall to my right offered two narrower such doors. All three doors were closed. The room, but sparsely furnished, held, in addition to the bed, a small wooden table, two cloth-covered chairs, a wooden chest of drawers, and divers other items whose natures and purposes eluded me. A scent of lemon was unmistakable. I swung my feet to the floor, which was entirely covered in white square tiles. Apart from my clothes, muddy from my fall, the room was spotless. My reflection in the shiny black rectangle showed a bruise on my forehead. Short cloth strips, somehow adhering to my skin, seemed to serve as stitches over a gash almost two inches in length.

As I sought to make sense of this strange place, the door to my left opened, to admit a man of

most curious aspect. He was neither clean-shaven nor bearded but had a heavy stubble everywhere that whiskers could grow. His hair was curiously short. From my seated position, I judged him half a head taller than I and quite thin. His manner of dress was entirely unfamiliar. To begin, he wore no coat. His upper garment—without collar, its short sleeves not reaching even to his elbows—might have been some sort of mere tunic but for the fabric. That cloth was of a weave so dense and yet so delicate as to shame a lord's finest shirt. I had only a glimpse of his stockings, for his trousers, going well below the knees, went almost to his spotless white shoes. Those seemed made partly of cloth and partly of a shiny material for which I had no name, with no bit of leather to them.

At the appearance of the stranger, I had, by instinct, leapt to my feet and reached for the hilt of my hanger. The scabbard was empty!

He smiled, and never had I seen such even and white teeth. "Oh. You're awake."

His English carried an accent I could not place. "Where am I?" I asked. "Why am I here? And where is my hanger?"

"You are among friends. You have no need for a sword."

"Among friends *where*, good sir?"

"Let's start over." He sat in one of the chairs and gestured at the other. "Call me Josh."

Short for Joshua, I supposed. And no surname? I responded in like discourteous manner. "My name is Lem."

"Good to meet you, Lem. Please, sit. Are you all right? You took quite a blow to the head."

I sat on an edge of the bed, farther from this stranger than the vacant chair. Indeed, my head did throb. I wondered anew how the tiny strips held themselves to my forehead.

"Can I bring you something for the pain?"

I declined, although, in truth, I would have welcomed a spot of rum. More than that, I needed my thoughts clear.

I wondered if the blow to my head explained his strange speech. His discourse was English, but his manner of speaking—slurring some letters together, dropping other letters altogether, emphasizing the wrong parts of some words—appeared as indifferent as his manner of dress. I have a gift for languages that had served me on past adventures; I hoped it would accommodate as well the butchering of my native tongue.

"Where am I?" I asked. "How did I come to be here?"

"We will get to that." He hesitated. "We have much to discuss."

It seemed evident that Josh and I differed on what needed to be discussed. After several urgings on my part and much circumlocution on his, I obtained, or so he would have me believe, a location. "We are in Chicago."

"Chicago," I repeated. "I know not of this place."

"You wouldn't." He shifted uneasily in his chair. "Chicago is among the largest cities in America."

"In the Colonies? Impossible. If I had, insensible the whole time, been brought by ship across the Atlantic, I must surely have starved to death during the journey. I am not even hungry. The mud from my tumble has not fully dried. And while my travels never took me to that region of the world, I well know its major towns. This *Chicago* is not among them."

"It's complicated." Josh laughed uneasily. "Lem, are you familiar with latitude and longitude? I can give you our location that way."

"I was for many years a ship's surgeon, and after that a captain. I know well about latitude and longitude."

"A ship's surgeon and then a captain," Josh repeated. "Lem. As in Lemuel?" At my nod, Josh twitched. A disturbed look settled upon his face. "No. Impossible. It couldn't be. *You* couldn't be."

However peculiar this place, his reaction was familiar. The publication of my travels, no matter their failure to reform my fellow creatures, had achieved a certain notoriety.

"As skeptics have remarked often of my voyages." I stood to offer a courtly bow. "Lemuel Gulliver, sir, at your service."

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**Chapter Three.** *The Author learns Something of his Circumstances, and finds himself a Prisoner. He encounters much Doubt. The Impossible is asserted.*

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His face gone white, Josh leapt to his Feet. "I must discuss this with the physicists."

"With whom?"

"Um, natural philosophers, I think you would call them."

"Wait," I said. "There is much I would know about this place and why I have been brought here."

"Be patient," he mumbled, turning for the door through which he had entered.

Patience is a virtue, I had once been instructed, but so is persistence.

And in recalling that lesson from my learned master, I was reminded of a more recent companion. "Where is Rebecca?" I asked Josh.

"Who?"

"The horse accompanying me on my walk."

"She's fine," Josh said dismissively. "She was racing away when we, well, took charge of you. Doubtless, she went straight home. If not, I'm sure someone took care of her."

He had more faith in humanity than I. Perhaps Rebecca *had* found her way back to her stable, but more than likely some thief had taken her. The idea made me sad. Better than most, I understood what sort we were.

I had been years in exile, but Houyhnhnmland remained ever in my thoughts. There, calm and rational behavior held sway. There, every decision proceeded from the dictates of dispassionate reason. There, every conversation was imbued with, if not dedicated to the very topic of, some benevolent good. For a time, my master there permitted me to live in his household, to absorb some small part of his wisdom.

As gentle and noble as were the Houyhnhnms, in appearance little different than horses, the creatures in that land of *my* aspect were wild and thoughtless beasts. Surely, I had at first imagined, we humans differed from these Yahoos we so resembled! Indeed we did differ, the dispassionate reason of noble Houyhnhnms had shown me, but not in the way I had hoped. My prideful explication of the affairs and accomplishments of my own kind only proved we had expanded and perverted our innate brutishness with all manner of new vices. What cause had those gentle creatures to suppose that I would not instruct the Yahoos to revolt? That I would not bring down upon their gracious heads the scourge of war? Instructed by their insight, shamed by the brutish depravity of my own kind, I could but agree and comply when their assembly concluded that I must needs be banished ere I corrupt their Yahoos. Sending me away in a handmade canoe. Condemning me to live out my days among my own kind. . . .

"Lem? Are you all right?"

Houyhnhnms, in their virtue, did not, could not, speak an untruth. Their language lacked the very notion. If a statement seemed wrong, they were left, in confusion, to ask if the other "said a thing which is not."

Back among my kind, I had learned anew to lie. And so, my answer to Josh was, "Yes."

"Someone will be here soon," he said, rushing from the room to consult with the natural philosophers. Why, I could not guess.

I heard a soft *click* just as the door closed behind him. It did not budge when I tugged on its handle. On the opposite wall, the first door that I tried did open, at the same time bringing forth light from the inside ceiling. I found naught but an empty closet and no means of egress. Behind the final door, in a small room whose ceiling again lit when the door opened, I encountered: a porcelain basin set into a cabinet but no water ewer; a second basin set upon the floor like a chamber pot but half-filled with clear water; and a large, empty washtub. This room, too, offered me no means of egress.

As surely as upon my first awakening in Lilliput, I was a prisoner.

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Left to myself, I had picked up and examined, to little avail, many of the curious objects to be

found in my prison. Quite by accident I discovered that by the position of my hand I could cause water to flow into the basin in the cabinet. I filled a glass and drank deeply. It appeared I would not die of thirst. Thus encouraged, I had, by further experiment, caused water to empty from, and then refill the chamber pot. I was still exploring this strange place when, with another *click*, the main door opened.

A greybeard entered, of a round face and wearing thick spectacles, stoop-shouldered and of about my height. He had on a dark coat and a red cravat, alike of unfamiliar cut, over a clean white shirt, trousers to the ankles, and proper leathern shoes. More clothes were draped across an arm. "Good morning, sir," he said. His manner of speech was somewhat less odd than that of Josh.

"Good morning," I agreed, although in this windowless place I could not know morning from midnight. "Are you a physicist?"

"Hardly," He smiled. "I'm sorry the room is so sparsely furnished, but we were not expecting a guest just yet. Fresh clothes, however, were easy enough to provide on short notice. If you care to go into the closet and change, I will have your clothes cleaned."

I had already lost my hanger and my hat; I did not want as well to lose my clothes. "Perhaps later."

"As you wish." He set the clothes he had brought across the foot of the bed. "I apologize for not being here earlier. We did not expect you to be up so soon. Certainly Josh did not expect to find you awake. My name is Doctor Ignatius Kelly. I am an historian."

Why an historian? I wondered. "Lemuel Gulliver."

At my name, inexplicably, he shook his head. "You gave young Josh quite a start by saying that. Please, sir, let us be serious."

My face became hot. "Lemuel Gulliver, sir, *is* my name."

"It could be a great coincidence, I suppose." He seemed dubious. "A famous book written at about your time has the title of *Gulliver's Travels*."

About my time? "I wrote *Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World*. Without my leave, the editor changed the title."

Doctor Kelly removed his spectacles to polish the lenses with the end of his cravat. "Actually, Jonathon Swift wrote it. It's a satire."

"More changes made by the accursed editor. He claimed there were too many travel books on the market."

With a sigh, still polishing his lenses, Doctor Kelly sat. "I understand how confusing it must be to find yourself here. I will explain as best I can. Please know you will be returned to whence you came."

A soft chime came from the man's coat. He returned the spectacles to his face, then removed a flat object from a pocket. The small thing seemed akin to the black rectangle upon the wall.

"One moment," he said, poking with a finger at the little object. Colours shone from it. Pictures and text (or so I perceived, for the details were quite tiny) flickered and rushed past. At last he looked up. "Where was I? Oh yes. Let us dispense with the notion you wrote that book."

I found no reason to debate which of us was the more likely to know my name. "Let us return to the question Josh did not, or could not, answer. Where am I?"

"The University of Chicago, in the city of Chicago. Let me show you on a map." He cleared his throat. "OK Google, real-time satellite view of North America. Highlight Chicago."

Real time? I had no knowledge of any other kind. Satellite? Like the moon? Like the worlds Galileo had seen circling around Jupiter, or the Laputans had discovered near Mars? But I had little opportunity to wonder as the big black rectangle on the wall lit up.

Instead of a navigator's chart of the familiar type, I saw the continent as if from a perch so tall that the very curvature of the Earth became plain. The red expanse that I was evidently to believe a city sprawled along the southwestern shore of Lake Michigan. The Frenchman Jean Nicolet de Belleborne had reported only rude Indian settlements along that lake. As I gauged the scale, this supposed Chicago was . . . impossible.

While I studied the fanciful map, the small rectangle still in the doctor's hands chimed anew.

He resumed poking at it. Text flowed. Images flashed by. Soon, like some savant on the floating Island of Laputa, he had forgotten my presence. As he had no bladder-wielding servant to tap his head and restore his attention, I was forced to interrupt. “My good sir?”

Doctor Kelly looked up at the sound of my voice. For a moment, he seemed surprised to see me there. “Sorry. Do you see on the display where we are?”

“In an English-speaking city larger than London in the wilds of North America? It cannot be.”

“In your time, you are correct, there was no such city.”

“That is the second instance in which you have spoken of ‘my time.’ How can my time be different than yours?”

“Because it is. Because my time is your future.”

Struck all but speechless, I got out the words, “You speak a thing which is not.”

“No,” said he, “I speak only the absolute truth. This is . . . my colleagues have brought you to . . . the year 2022.”

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**Chapter Four.** *The Impossible is demonstrated. The Author learns Something about Travel through Time. Another Impossibility presents Itself.*

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My voyages had taken me to many a strange place. But to a strange time? To a time that had yet to occur? That was impossible to fathom.

“We will get nowhere,” Doctor Kelly said, “until you admit this truth. Come.” As he approached the door, once again it *clicked*.

“You did not as much as touch the door. How did it unlock?”

He waved an arm. “The door reads a tiny chip placed under the skin of my hand. Once you’re settled, I’ll get you a key card that will accomplish the same. But I ask that, for your own safety, you not wander about by yourself. Much you would find here will be unfamiliar and can be dangerous.”

Upon descending from Laputa to the island nation of Balnibari, I had visited the Academy of Projectors in their metropolis. I well remembered how a savant of that academy, in the city of Lagado, aspired to extract sun-beams from cucumbers. He would in that manner capture warmth to be released from bottles whenever the weather was poor. In countless such endeavours, the men of the academy had yet to accomplish a thing. So: a door that could read? This University of Chicago knew folly to shame even the men of the academy.

Except that this door *had* unlatched at Kelly’s approach. I could almost begin to wonder if the unborn future was indeed real, was, in some wise, a place to which a person *could* journey.

The door opened to his gentle pull. We proceeded down a long hall, artificially illuminated in the manner of my room, toward a distant wall of glass. I felt oddly weighted down, no matter my relief at leaving confinement.

Through the wall that we approached could be seen the tops of trees, and it appeared we were in a tall building. Along the hall, we passed divers doors, some of wood, others of glass. Behind one of the latter, labeled *Temporal Laboratory*, I recognized the strange engines that I had seen—it already seemed a lifetime ago—through the floating box while I last walked in Redriff. Indeed, as we walked past this laboratory I had a glimpse within of some harbour, with a three-masted merchant vessel bobbing at anchor.

At the end of the hall, we turned to the left, and beyond yet more glass, I beheld new wonders. More buildings than I could count lie before me. Directing my gaze downward into a grassy courtyard, through which divers men and women walked briskly, most garbed more like Josh than Doctor Kelly, I found myself to be fifty or more feet above the ground. The sun, shining between nearby buildings, was not too far above the horizon, and trees and buildings cast long shadows. Whether these shadows showed me midmorning or teatime, I could not judge.

“Lift your gaze, Lem.”

Miles distant, beside some ocean or vast lake, great towers reached into the sky!

“Skyscrapers,” Doctor Kelly said. That bold name seemed no exaggeration. “Many of those buildings stand several times the height of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. Could anyone in your



day build such things?"

"Surely I am somewhere strange. Such has been my fate on divers occasions. But am I, if I may coin a phrase, *somewhen* new? That, I cannot believe."

"See my cell?" He removed from a pocket of his coat the small black rectangle that had so fascinated him. With a few pokes, he made an image appear on it. "Do you agree this is a picture of those skyscrapers, just as you see them in the distance?"

"Yes," I said, marveling that a depiction could be drawn in an instant.

"Then come with me."

I followed him back to my room, wherein a segment of the globe still showed on the wall rectangle.

"OK Google," Kelly said to the air, then paused as if lost in thought.

"Who is Master Google to whom you speak? Where is he?"

"A servant of sorts, but not a person. In your terms, it would be an engine." He chuckled. "Actually, in our terms, too. Google is what we call a search engine. Instead of grains or metals or wood, Google works with information."

With information. That, surely, was yet more ethereal than sun-beams. "I do not understand."

"An invention made after your time," he said. "OK Google, zoom in on Chicago, centered on this building." So abruptly did the map change that it was as if I hurtled headlong from an impossible height to my doom. It was all I could do not to shout. "Slower. Slower. OK Google, stop."

He showed me again the little picture he had made on his cell, then pointed at the wall. "That view is from high above, at a different angle than what you saw out the window and what I captured on my cell, but do you agree both images show us the same buildings?"

Carefully studying images large and small, I had to concur.

"And did any such city exist in your time?"

Almost a century had passed since the explorations of Jean Nicolet. If the construction of so great a city during those few years would seem a marvel, it was surely less wondrous than to travel into a new era.

Feeling foolish at speaking to the air, I instructed, "Return to a global view."

Nothing happened.

"You must begin each command with the words 'OK Google.'"

I tried again. "OK Google, return to a global view, then slowly approach Redriff, England."

A voice, slightly mechanical-seeming, declaimed from the ceiling: "Redriff unknown."

Self-important, chatty ceilings needs be yet another wonder of the future. I objected, "I was *taken* from Redriff."

Doctor Kelly poked at his cell. "As I thought. That neighborhood is known more recently as Rotherhithe."

Indeed, the area about my home had once gone by that name. I said, "OK Google, return slowly to a global view, then slowly approach Rotherhithe, England."

Just as magically as I had, moments ago, appeared to fall, now I seemed to soar. Then our vantage reversed. Our bird's-eye view converged upon Great Britain, then southern England, then approached closer yet to the ground until the familiar bends and curves of the Thames were plain to the eye.

"OK Google, stop," I ordered.

The shape of the river left no doubt but that my view had come to a halt above Redriff—and yet this was no Redriff that I knew. There were far too many buildings, most of too many storeys, and no trace of my home. In the river, the ships, huge and of unfamiliar kinds, moved without having sails. All this lie deep within a city far larger than the London I knew.

"Is that Redriff?" Doctor Kelly asked, and I could not gainsay him.

I said, "OK Google, move our view slowly up the Thames."

Even in the unaccustomed bird's-eye view, there could be no mistaking the Tower of London nor Westminster Abbey. But among these familiar landmarks, beginning with a giant upright hoop along the river, slowly turning in place, was much I had never beheld. The Palace of West-

minster itself, where Parliament sat, was much expanded and had sprouted two towers. And all about, divers skyscrapers loomed far above the Dome of St. Paul's.

"Is this London?" Kelly asked.

I could only agree.

"Is this the London of 1727?"

"I cannot say that it is."

"You see Parliament as it was rebuilt after a great fire. You saw skyscrapers in Chicago, where only wilderness stood in your time, and now you see such skyscrapers have also come to London. I ask you, my friend, when are you?"

What explanation, apart from what the doctor offered, remained to me? The magicians of Glubbdubdrib could conjure the dead. A mage there had, at my request, once conjured the shades of Brutus, and of Alexander the Great, and of many more besides. But surely even the mightiest magician could not conjure a person who never had been.

I took a deep breath. "I know not how, but I needs be in my future."

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In the comfort of my room, a prison no longer, for I had a *key card* in my pocket, after a fine dinner arranged for me by Doctor Kelly (for the clamour of the many Yahoos in the *cafeteria* remained more than I could bear), my state of mind was much improved since my confused awakening. I had, after instruction from the doctor, washed mud from myself in the *bathroom*, shaved my face with a curious buzzing razor, and changed into clean clothes of the modern style. Only a ridiculous rule against the use of my pipe and tobacco—stowed away for now, with my tinderbox, and comb, and other meager possessions, into the pockets of my new attire—put the reins to my complete satisfaction in this new adventure.

To keep me company (a boon I had *not* requested), Doctor Kelly had had his own meal delivered to my room. As he finished his pastry and set down his fork, I said, "Storms and shipwreck and the cruelty of pirates can deliver a person"—as I well knew of personal experience—"to an unfamiliar place. By what means can a man be delivered into a distant time?"

He tipped his head in thought. "A fair but hard question. Fair, because having been brought here, it is but natural you would want to understand. Hard, for two reasons. My subject is history, not natural philosophy, and it is the natural philosophers who truly understand these matters. Second, because much has been learned in the many years since your time. For me to try to explain would be pointless."

"If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit."

"Matthew? No, I think Luke. Whichever, you are basically correct."

"Then I would speak with one of your natural philosophers," I said. "A physicist, I think you call them."

"Do you know of Sir Isaac Newton?"

Among the most famous men in all the world, and doubly so in England? He had been buried in Westminster Abbey but a few months before my being taken to this time. "Of course."

"Do you understand his calculus? His great theory?"

What need had a seaman to understand the calculus or the law of universal attraction? None. What I knew of Newton was that as Master of the Mint his "reforms" of the coinage had brought much chaos upon the land. "Nothing. But you know more of the matter than I."

"As great in his day as was Newton, so in the modern era are Albert Einstein and Erwin Schrödinger. Their discoveries, the physicists tell me, and the mathematics to describe them, would be as abstruse to even Newton as Newton would be to the ancients. It is upon such learning that travel in time relies. Even the men and women who build such engines argue among themselves *how* it works."

I thought anew of cucumbers and sunbeams, but my very presence in the future gainsaid such skepticism. "I do not understand OK Google, but I can command it."

"Again fair. This much I can explain. There is an engine down the hall in the Temporal Laboratory. This engine opens a gateway to other places and times. Scholars like me look through the gateway, the better to understand history."



I remembered the apparition that had startled poor Rebecca. “And those of us in history can look back.”

“Yes.” Kelly slid away his empty plate and began twisting his napkin.

“I think there is little to be learned about history from watching a man and horse taking a walk.”

“More than you might suppose,” he said. “How people work and live forms a part of my studies.”

“This gateway is more than a window, else I would be at home, smoking my pipe.”

“As you say.”

“So someone from here—was that you?—went through your gateway and brought me here. I can well understand an historian’s curiosity about my travels. What the publisher did to my work was a travesty.”

“Why do you persist in this absurdity?” Doctor Kelly’s face of a sudden had grown quite red. “Having seen all you have of our technology, how can you possibly expect anyone to believe this? Not the least speck of land on this world is uncharted.”

“I do not understand your ire. I *am* Lemuel Gulliver. My travels *are* famous.”

“Have it your way,” he said. “OK Google, restore the satellite view of North America.” The now familiar image reappeared. “OK Google, re-center the view on San Francisco Bay.” He turned to me, expectantly.

Whilst I stared, in silence, slack-jawed. Up the coast from a great bay (a region of shore explored well before my day, reported upon by Sir Francis Drake), where the land of Brobdingnag, vast homeland of gentle giants, must jut far into the Pacific Ocean, I espied . . . only ocean.

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**Chapter Five.** *Beyond even Time and Place, yet more is thrown into Confusion. The Author struggles to prove he exists.*

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“I do not understand!” Surely my determination of latitude and longitude on my second voyage could not have been so mistaken. “OK Google, show me Brobdingnag.”

“I do not know a place of that name,” a voice answered me from the ceiling.

“Let’s try this another way,” Doctor Kelly said. “OK Google, what is Brobdingnag?”

The ceiling spoke again. “Brobdingnag is a fictional land in Jonathan Swift’s satirical novel *Gulliver’s Travels*.” On the display, the deceitful map gave way to a more complete narrative, albeit with only haphazard attention to spelling and the use of capitals. (The article seemed part of an encyclopaedia, a modern version of which, rumour had it, Ephraim Chambers was in the throes of producing. I wished him better luck with his London publisher than I had had.) In the days that followed, I adopted that minimal usage of capital letters. If naught else, the practice saved ink.

Bewildered, I tried again. “OK Google, show me the islands of Lilliput and Blefuscu.”

“I do not know of places by those names,” said the voice from the ceiling.

“OK Google, can you show me Laputa?”

It claimed to know nothing of the floating island, either.

The doctor said, “OK Google, what do Lilliput, Brobdingnag, Laputa, and Houyhnhnmland have in common?”

“Each is a fictional place visited by Lemuel Gulliver in *Gulliver’s Travels*.”

Even as my mind reeled, I could not desist from inquiring, “OK Google, who is Lemuel Gulliver?”

The ceiling replied, even as a new confounding article appeared on the wall. “The fictional protagonist and narrator of *Gulliver’s Travels*.”

“Would you care to read what an encyclopaedia has to say about Lemuel Gulliver?” Kelly asked, “or are you prepared to offer your true name?”

Truly, I was struck dumb. I shook my head, wondering how the people of the future dealt with their lunatics. I had horrifying memories of Bedlam, but for all I knew those memories were as fictitious as . . . myself.

“We will speak again tomorrow,” Doctor Kelly said. Bidding me a good evening, he let himself from my room.

\* \* \*

My mind awhirl, I slept but little and poorly that night. That the ceiling continued to glow brightly did not help. After awhile, I left my room, in hopes that a walkabout, and fresh glimpses of the marvels of the future, might distract me. As I opened the door, the hall changed from dark to light.

The *Temporal Laboratory*, apart from a scattering of green glows, was dark. Next I paused, for a long while, at the limit of my excursion with Doctor Kelly. There, at the long wall of glass, I contemplated the bright lights of the city and the more enigmatic flashing lights traversing slowly across the sky. I studied the moon, high overhead. Was it from that orb, I wondered, that OK Google kept its eagle-eye watch? But none of it could deflect my mind from the puzzle that was . . . me.

Soon after I came to a doorless doorway, beside which was a plaque reading *Break Room*. The ceiling brightened as I entered, revealing a strange box-like engine labeled *Refreshments*. This engine had painted sides (of metal, I judged, with a gentle rap) and a front of glass, with divers small packages within all ensnared in metallic coils. Writings on these packages were mostly cryptic, but a few words thereupon suggested foods. Indeed I would not have minded a morsel, but I found the coins in my pocket were too thick for the indicated slot. Turning to go, I espied, on a small table, a small notebook with flimsy covers, its pages bound by a metallic spiral. The pages were wondrously thin—there might well be a hundred sheets in the slender volume—and very white. The pages were marked with faint blue lines: guides, I suspected, for the quill. Flipping through the pages, I discovered them to be quite empty. I put this most fortunate find into my pocket and proceeded.

In the distance, I heard voices, the words indistinct. I walked toward them. Ceiling panels lit before me as I proceeded, and went dark behind me. Sensing a pattern, I retreated, then went again forward. The lights ever accompanied me. If a door could read, I thought, why should ceiling lamps not keep watch for passersby? Why did only the ceiling in my room stay ever on? Perhaps the man and woman I heard could instruct me how to turn off and on the lights in my room.

Proceeding farther than on my earlier expedition, some few feet of brightness overhead accompanying me as I went, I turned the corner into a new hall. I espied, midway down a murky passage, light spilling from an open doorway. Though here the exchange was more audible, I almost doubted the words were English. Withal, it seemed clear the conversation was heated. I made myself a mental note to remember the divers strange words, intending to ask OK Google to explicate. In that endeavour, I largely failed. Only much later, in the composition of this account, have I, with much effort and great difficulty, recalled these strange words to mind.

I stood still as a mouse, several doors removed from the occupied room, considering whether to intrude.

“Agreed,” a woman’s voice said. “We have yet to detect any discontinuities or anomalies. I know people above my pay grade, Nobelists among them, say that’s a valid demonstration of robustness in the timeline. Any theoretical effect of our peeking and poking and having shanghaied Everyman just dampens out. Somehow.”

“But?” a man responded.

“But how can we know we’d know if something had changed? Maybe we never see that the timeline has reconfigured because we’re a part of it. We’ve been reconfigured, too.”

“You’d know.” The man laughed. “You never forget a damned thing.” I heard a clinking as of glasses and thought I caught the smell of ale in the air. Indeed, the whole back-and-forth, middle-of-the-night bickering had somehow the feel to it of idle chatter among young folk. I remembered that well from my days at University in Leyden.

Or were those more of the fictitious memories of a fictitious Lemuel Gulliver? Had I, whomever that was, gone to university?

When my attention returned from my unhappy predicament, the argument had moved on, if

I heard the words aright, to matters yet more arcane. “. . . Two-dimensional time,” the man was saying, “has to be the most absurd load of handwavium since collapsing of the wave function.”

“Uh-huh,” the woman said, “and whatever *that* means, we know the *math* of it is correct.” She laughed. “Unless you disbelieve in your iPhone, Xbox, and FitBit.”

“Really? You truly believe the universe *splits* every time we open the gateway? How many fracking universes do you suppose there are?”

“Not nearly as many universes as there would need to be if the many worlds interpretation solves your collapse of the wave function conundrum. That, somehow, is an academically *respectable* load of—”

Of a sudden, the hall went dark. I fear I made a startled noise.

“Is someone there?” the woman called out.

“Indeed.” At my first step toward the beckoning doorway, light reappeared in the ceiling. It needs must, somehow, read motion as the modern doors read a key card. I approached the lit entrance to offer my apologies. The man and woman I had heard were within. He appeared African and had a long face and shaved head. She, of some type that I could not judge, was petite and had more than ample hair, albeit of an odd, mahogany colour, for them both. Their casual attire reminded me of Josh. Each slouched in a tipped-back chair, with shod feet resting on their respective desk. Empty bottles were arrayed across their desks.

“Speaking of Everyman,” the Man murmured. “It’s Gulliver.”

“Do not mock me, sir.”

“Sorry,” he said.

I nodded. “Pardon my intrusion. I would have some help.”

That aid was provided forthwith. I was instructed that my room, like that office, had a spot by the entrance sensitive to touch. With mere sweepings of a Finger, I could control the lights and alter the temperature. Had I the wit to have asked, OK Google would have so instructed me. I retreated to my room, dimmed the lights, and bade OK Google a good night.

In the blessed darkness, I tossed and turned until, at long last, I was taken into the arms of Morpheus.

\* \* \*

**Chapter Six.** *The Author’s Beliefs are at once explicated and refuted. Return to his Time is considered.*

\* \* \*

I had but recently awakened, much refreshed, when a brisk knock came at my door. With my acknowledgment, Doctor Kelly entered, followed by a short woman I did not know, who reminded me of women I had seen in Japan on my travels home from Glubbudubdrib. Doubtless, those places did not exist either.

Kelly said, “It appears that I owe you another apology.”

“And why is that?” I asked.

“Doctor Watanabe can explain it better than I. She is a physician.”

The woman nodded, as if to herself. “Sir, I am Jennifer Watanabe. You arrived here having injured your head. The technicians on duty cleaned the wound and closed it with a few butterfly bandages.” She touched her own brow where mine yet wore the odd cloth strips. “You said you were fine apart from wanting a bit of rest, and they”—she gave her colleague a hard stare—“left you alone without contacting me.”

“I have no memory of these things,” I said. “After I fell in pursuit of my horse, I awakened in this room.”

“Likely you have a concussion. Do you know what that is?”

Had I been a surgeon as I yet believed? Howsoever, I believed I knew the term. “An injury to the brain, as by shaking or by a blow to the head.”

“Exactly,” she said. “Of course, some loss of memory is a common effect of concussion.”

And hence, it would seem, I had forgotten my very arrival in this time, likely in passage through the Temporal Laboratory. “Why?” I asked, “does Doctor Kelly owe me an apology?”

He shrugged. “For doubting you.”

I did not understand. "How, if Brobdingnag does not exist, could you believe me? Or does OK Google tell lies?"

The woman said, "In your time, as I understand it, *Gulliver's Travels*, is newly published and very popular. Without warning or choice, you, like Lemuel Gulliver, have found yourself in a very strange place. You are told of science—"

"Natural philosophy," Kelly interpreted.

"Sorry," she said. "You are told of natural philosophy that must seem magical. The mind will invent memories, if need be, to fill in the blanks. Confabulation, we call it. I do not doubt you sincerely believe you *are* Gulliver, but whether from confabulation or confusion, your belief is ultimately the result of the concussion. It's your mind doing its best to make sense of what must otherwise seem a nonsensical situation." She paused. "I hope I am being clear. I have not studied how English was spoken in the eighteenth century."

"Compared to some," I said, "your speech is most lucid." I had in mind my new acquaintances from my explorations the night previous, but from his frown, it seemed Doctor Kelly took my remark as critical of him. As an olive branch, I offered him the much-folded sheet of paper that had accompanied me to the future. "Albeit I have no honest memories to offer, I have this one small document. It will not speak false."

He put the note into his pocket, unopened, no more pleased than before my gesture.

"Anyway," Doctor Watanabe said, "I am glad you feel better. With rest and calm, the symptoms of concussion usually go away."

"And then I shall remember who I am?"

"Almost certainly," she assured me. "In the meanwhile, you need to take things easy. Do no exercise or exertion. No excitement. Try not to think too much about all this."

Not think about having been transported into the future? About the loss of my memories, of even my name? It seemed an impossible prescription. "And until that remedy should take hold, what shall I be called?"

"You can choose a name." She had a pleasant smile. "Or stay with Lem. You aren't Gulliver, but you may well be a Lem or Lemuel. That would be all the more reason why you might have conflated yourself, I mean, identified, with Gulliver."

"A word, Doctor?" With a quick tipping gesture of the head, Kelly showed that he meant outside my room.

"Certainly." She smiled at me again. "We'll be right back."

They went into the hall, shutting the door behind them. However much concussion had added my memories, my hearing remained excellent. I could not help but to overhear some of their loud dispute.

"... without memory ... unreliable ... no benefit to the program," Doctor Kelly said. "Our resources ... limited ... budgets ... discredit entire ... we ... send back home."

"... fault," Watanabe said. "... abandon a ... with amnesia and delusions? ... will raise ... stink if ..."

"Hold it down," he urged.

Thereafter, I discerned only such widely scattered words as to be without sense to me.

The door opened, and they returned to my room. "Lem," she said, "if I may call you that, we need to do a few tests to be sure your injury isn't too serious. The tests may seem strange, but they won't hurt or do you any harm."

I accompanied Doctor Watanabe to a nearby building for a cat scan (withal no cat was anywhere to be seen) and a noisy test she called an MRI. Both, she explained, would somehow take pictures of the inside of my skull.

After, as I finished breakfast, once again delivered on a tray to my room, she came to discuss her results. "No internal bleeding, just a concussion. That's good. All you need is bed rest." And then, unmindful of the irony, she added, "And time."

\* \* \*

**Chapter Seven.** *The Author's Wound heals, but not his Memory. Conversations with a new Friend. Puzzles and Perils of Travel in Time.*

I found it hard to obey the order to take bed rest. Lemuel Gulliver was a man of action. Whosoever I might be, I knew not any other way to act.

Withal I had been delivered to this era in part to speak of my experiences and knowledge, Doctor Kelly had no interest in fictitious accounts. “I mean you no disrespect,” he said, “but I can read *Gulliver* for myself. If—I mean, when—your memories return, *then* we shall have cause to talk.” And until that day should come, he left me with divers books to amuse me.

The top book on the pile was *Robinson Crusoe*. Indeed, I had heard of that. I began the novel with high hopes, only to find disappointment. That mariner’s adventures paled beside those I, however falsely, still remembered as my own. In truth, I envied Crusoe’s lot. The memory remained quite real to me that I had attempted, after my exile from Houyhnhnmland, to lead a solitary life on a remote island. Alas, a cruel Portuguese captain had “rescued” me, withal I had had no desire to leave. I found I had not the heart to open any more of the books.

I turned my attention for awhile to the study of divers oddities in my room. Among the most puzzling, found at the back of a drawer, was a slim, clear cylinder of perhaps six inches in length. Along the center was a much thinner cylinder, *it* as black as soot. When, upon a whim, I removed the cap covering an end, I discovered a tapered metallic tip terminating in a tiny metallic ball. By gently sliding that ball point along a page in my spiral notebook, I made a perfectly fine mark. Compared to a familiar quill, this modern pen was a marvel and an excellent match for my new notebook.

And—every day, and many a sleepless night—I devoted much of my time to turning over in my mind every strange thing I had seen or heard here. Those efforts yielded little in the way of sense.

When Doctor Watanabe came next to call upon me, she declared my wound much improved, with no sign of infection. I asked her leave to explore the university. She gave it not, claiming that such excitement and novelty could only impede my recovery. When Josh brought my next meal, I made the same request of him, but he had been instructed otherwise by the physician. That evening, I returned into empty halls and made my way down several flights of stairs to the ground storey. There, too, I was thwarted, for a night watchman stationed at the entrance sent me back.

My confinements during past adventures had oft been far less pleasant, I consoled myself—only to remember, yet again, that the events so vivid in my *mind* needs be mere figments from the blow to my *head*. I reversed course, setting out for the office I had visited soon after my arrival in this era. If ever a beer had been in order, this seemed the occasion.

The future, alas, had other plans. Of a sudden wearied by my exertions, I took my key card to hand and turned toward my room. Sustaining my balance with a shoulder brushing up against a wall, perhaps still suffering the effects from the bump on my head, I came upon the Temporal Laboratory—whereat I heard a *click*. The door gave way to my gentle pull, and the lights within came on. I looked for awhile at the cryptic engines, pulled the door shut, and continued with halting steps to my room for much needed rest.

I spent the following day in my room, in yet another failed attempt to take interest in *Robinson Crusoe* and a somewhat more successful effort to see Chicago. The latter exploration was not as I would have preferred, by walking about the streets and lanes of the city, but with the aid of OK Google. The place itself was amazing in both its extent and the incredible heights of its buildings. Horseless carriages of divers sizes careened about. Multitudes teemed everywhere. To the north and west of the university, I discovered a large, flat expanse named O’Hare Airport, to and from which great winged vehicles called airplanes somehow flew.

I looked also to divers places at greater and greater distances from Chicago. Familiar cities from around the world—withal none from “my” famous travels—were much larger and taller than in my memory. The changes were most striking by dark of night as seen from OK Google’s high vantage, wherein the continents and islands blazed with dots and splotches of bright light. One needed a diligent search to find a few scattered places *not* marked by man.

Had my studies proceeded no further, I might have been well pleased, but it was my misfortune also to ask OK Google if this era offered a gazette with tidings of the day. Then, for what seemed an age, I perused articles from recent issues of the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*. The particulars often escaped my comprehension, but the theme was clear: murderous outlaw bands here, there, and everywhere around the globe. The hallmark of this era was fanatics slaughtering innocents with guns, and with bombs, and even with air somehow turned poisonous.

Whether or no my Houyhnhnm master had ever existed, I could not gainsay his wisdom. Humanity was not better for our intelligence; we were the worse for it. We had not the wit to resist perverting technological progress into new debasements mere brute Yahoos could scarcely imagine.

When, at last, the chatter of people abated in the hall, after OK Google assured me the hour was late, I set out in search of a beer.

\* \* \*

In the office where I had first met them, I again encountered the young man and woman. He was named Alan, she Patricia. I introduced myself only as Lem. Alan borrowed a chair from a nearby office, and I sat, contemplating the words framed upon the wall. The sign declared: *Not only is the Universe stranger than we think, it is stranger than we can think*. I knew not this Werner Heisenberg, but my own experiences must surely have proven him right.

"Let's see what we have for tonight." Alan opened the door of a small box found beneath a table, giving rise to an outpouring of cold air. He removed three dark bottles labeled *Guinness*, removed their metallic caps, and distributed the beverages. I found this *Guinness* to be a fine porter, putting aside the barbarity of serving beer cold.

Perhaps drink loosened my tongue, for nearing the bottom of my bottle, I found myself asking an impolitic question. "How is travel in time possible?"

Patricia sighed. "Lem, I cannot even *begin* to explain. You would need to learn centuries of science to understand."

"I do not mean the mechanics of such travel. I mean what is implied by it. If you go to the past, do you not change it? And changing the past, do you not then change your own time? Even, perhaps, to the point of preventing that first change?"

Alan said, "And the man from the past nails it on the first try." He clinked bottles with mine. "That *is* the question, isn't it?"

Patricia said, "If I travel back in time and kill my grandfather before my father was born, then I can never be born. But if I was never born, who was it who traveled back in time to prevent my birth? So I am born. . . ."

That she was born, then not, then born, then not, then . . . My head began to pound, and not, I thought, from my concussion. I took refuge in my beer.

She mistook my confusion. "No one need literally be killed, Lem. The grandfather paradox is what we physicists call a thought experiment, a way to illustrate the problem you asked about changing the past."

"People from your time went back to my time to get me. Therefore I am here—or, I should say, now—and not then. Does that not show the past *has* changed?"

"In point of fact, I went back," Alan said. "Well, two of us from the team did. And it wasn't exactly a well thought-out plan." He finished his bottle and removed three more from the cold box. Of a sudden, his eyes brightened. "Would you like to see?"

Leaving my new bottle to warm up for awhile, I said, "I do not understand." In the future, I said that often.

He leaned forward to gesture with his hand over a small square on his desk. It appeared he, like Doctor Kelly, had had a chip placed under his skin. "OK Chronos, access lab surveillance for the morning of April 12."

Chronos. Was he not, for the ancients, the personification of time? Perhaps this was but one more thing I knew that was not so. "OK Chronos? Not 'OK Google'?"

"They're similar," Patricia said, "but not the same. Google is a service for the public. Chronos



has its own tricks and is only available to the few of us in the Temporal Project.” She laughed. “We don’t want just anyone meddling with the timeline.

“OK Chronos, begin playback at 9:30.”

The Temporal Laboratory, as if spied upon through a peephole in its ceiling, appeared on a wall display. Among the divers people therein, I recognized only four: Doctor Kelly, the historian, seated at a sort of desk with many buttons; Josh, he who had first greeted me here; and my two new friends. After a babble-babble of conversation and much milling about, the laboratory fell to silence, and everyone crowded into one end of the room. Kelly waved his hand over a square on his desk, then he poked repeatedly with one finger at an array of buttons—its numbers all in a row but the letters of the alphabet in a jumble.

OK Chronos, with a mechanical voice like OK Google, announced through the wall display, “Gateway initialized.”

“That means, made ready to work,” Patricia said.

I watched and listened as Doctor Kelly spoke to OK Chronos, specifying latitude and longitude, date and time. He ended with, “OK Chronos, proceed.” Of a sudden, sparkling, a rectangle appeared in the recently emptied portion of the laboratory. The rectangle became, much as I remembered, a window that turned quickly into a box.

“Gateway active,” OK Chronos announced.

Beyond the wall display, in the laboratory, through the box . . . there in the familiar meadow were Rebecca (assuming that what I believed to be her name was not likewise some figment of concussion) and I. Rebecca galloped away. I chased after, fell, and struck my head. There followed the immediate events of my arrival of which I had no memory but which the physician had related. Then, at Doctor Kelly’s command, the magical box shrank and vanished.

At my ardent request, we watched it all a second time, and then a third. I would have seen it yet again, but for the evident impatience of my new friends.

Patricia said, “The instant our gateway startled you into conking your head, we had gone beyond observing the past to changing the past. And so, our careful, step-by-step research was shot all to Hell.”

Events indeed brought to my mind the *Pandemonium* described by John Milton in *Paradise Lost* as, after a shocked moment of hush, the crowd in the laboratory had erupted into tumult. These watchers dared not to leave me to bleed to death where I fell. In a single unlucky stroke, their opening into the past could have undone my descendants unto the final generation.

The lesser risk to the timeline needs be to whisk me away, to succor me, and then return me. Doctor Kelly was quick to promise the gateway would restore me to a brief moment after my mishap, it mattering not whether I stayed awhile to heal. They might as well learn from me about my time.

And so, Josh and Alan ventured through the gateway to get me. I saw myself carried back to the laboratory. I was thereupon relieved, all unawares, of my hanger, that weapon promptly shut inside a nearby cabinet. A cursory search was made of my pockets—for other weapons, I supposed, as naught more was taken from me. I saw myself stir, shake off the stupor of the blow, to gaze about in wonder—averring all the while, to all and sundry, whilst staggering about as though giddy, that I had no need to see a physician. I saw myself firmly led to a chair, and seated, and my wound attended to as had been explained to me previously.

I had, indeed, lost these memories.

Withal the wonder of events, much still seemed odd. “This all looks ill-considered.”

Alan nodded. “Because it was. Sure, we had done short-range controlled experiments. We had moved small objects an hour or two. We’d moved mice in cages, to be certain time travel didn’t harm living creatures. After that, a few of us, volunteers, had even been shifted by short times. But we were still early in using the gateway to watch other eras, and not prepared to bring anyone back. The History Department had only just held its lottery to pick a professor and a time period for the first long-range viewing. Old Man Kelly won, proposing to study the effects of the some early World War. The War of the Spanish Something-or-Other? Succession? I forget. The point is, we weren’t prepared to bring anyone to our time.”

Gulliver had been abroad, but for the occasional few weeks, for the duration of that conflict—and mad long thereafter. I (whomever that might be) knew no more of the matter than he. It seemed doubtful I could assist Doctor Kelly in his studies.

“Why bring a person here at all?” I asked. “Why not speak with people in their own time?”

“However long, days, even weeks, we may speak here, we can return a person to scant seconds after he or she left. For an historian to remain so long in the past seems both dangerous and apt to change the very events to be studied.”

“We had a plan,” Patricia said, “until you and your big, dumb feet changed everything. Thereafter, we had to make it up as we went along.”

“But why look to a remote meadow for someone to interrogate?” I had to ask. “If you would study the past, why not deal with the King or a general or another great personage? Surely such as them are more involved with great events.”

“Because,” Alan said, “such people are seldom unattended. And even if we could meet alone with one, the meeting by itself almost certainly *would* change the past.”

And so they would seek someone for whom neither his presence nor his absence would be of any note. “Whereas when one such as I returns to my own time, prating of horseless carriages, flying machines, and search engines, it will be taken as merely a wild tale.”

Just as many had not believed Gulliver. If there were a Gulliver. Time travel or concussion, either was confounding. To experience both? That was impossible.

“And that’s why we expect you’ll say nothing at home about what you’ve seen.” Alan offered me another bottle, although I was scarce halfway done with my last. “Time travel messes with your head, doesn’t it? You might as well enjoy what parts you can.”

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**Chapter Eight.** *A frustrated Historian. The Importance of a mere Sheet of Paper. The Author’s Identity reconsidered.*

\* \* \*

I had but recently finished a stroll when Doctors Kelly and Watanabe came to my room. My sojourn in the future had by then gone on for nearly a month, and apart from the brief venture out for my cat scan, I had yet to leave the building.

As ever on her visits, the physician bade me to do odd things. I counted backward from seventy-three. I recited the months of the year in reverse order beginning with October. I stood for awhile with my eyes closed and my arms up and stretched in front of me. I walked along a line between two rows of floor tiles. I sat, gazing up and down, left and right, wherever she directed, while she, standing close to me, studied my eyes.

“He’s fine,” she concluded, changing it to, “Lem, *you* are fine. For a week now, you’ve been totally fine. There’s no remaining evidence of concussion.”

“Except for amnesia.” I had learned the word from her. “Withal I can now remember my arrival in Chicago—for which, I did not doubt, the seeing of the event had certainly been a help—“I have no memories before that apart from Gulliver’s.”

“Except for the amnesia.” She looked in turn at Doctor Kelly and at me. “To be honest, I’m surprised none of those older memories have come back. Your concussion in every other respect seems a minor case. You *should* have remembered by now.”

Kelly frowned. “Do we know if those memories will ever come back?”

“Know?” She considered. “Sorry. Maybe a neurologist—Lem, that would be a physician whose specialty is conditions of the brain—would offer a different answer. After a great many tests, of course. From my reading, though, I have my doubts. Being here may compound the very problem we wish to address. The old, familiar sights may be just the thing to reconnect with those misplaced memories.”

“And if Lem stays awhile longer? What likelihood is there of any improvement?”

She shrugged.

“Thanks, Doctor,” Kelly said.

He pulled his chair closer. “I guess that’s it, Lem. Time for you to go home.”

But where *was* home? I “knew” only of Gulliver’s. “I would rather remain awhile, and see

more. However long I stay, is it not true you can return me to moments after I left?"

"It is true, but you heard the Doctor. A return is for your own good." He stood to go. "If it helps, Lem, I am truly sorry for the harm we have caused you."

The sooner I returned, the sooner, perhaps, I should recover my name and my memories. "When will it happen?"

He looked at the physician.

She peered again at my brow, from which, days earlier, she had removed the narrow bandages. "Another few days, and the cut will scarcely be noticeable. Meanwhile, I'll run a few tests to be sure Lem doesn't carry any modern bugs back with him."

"Bugs?" I asked. "Tests?"

She said, "It's complicated. I just mean we want you to be well when you return, and not give your family or neighbors some modern disease. To be certain, I will need to take a small sample of your blood."

Was aught in this era not complicated? "Very well."

Doctor Kelly said, "And we'll have a barber come by. It wouldn't do for your hair to have grown an inch while you took your walk."

In a few days, then, I should return to my past—and thereat an uncertain future.

\* \* \*

Two days after Doctor Watanabe took a sample of my blood, a knock came at my door. I expected a barber, but the caller was my friend Alan. He came with most unexpected news.

"Congratulations," he said. "You have brought on a revolution."

"I do not understand." And that statement was more true, even, than usual.

He had not before visited my room. "Look where they stuck you. They might at *least* have given you someplace with a window." He rubbed his chin in thought. "I suppose they worried an outside view would be disorienting. Well, we can fix that. OK Google, show us a sunset view of Big Sur." In a twinkling, what had been a featureless black rectangle became a rocky coast, and wild ocean, and roseate sky. "That's more like it."

"I did not know OK Google could do such things."

"Just ask. If you make a request it doesn't understand or can't handle, it will tell you."

As OK Google had said of Brobdingnag when I had asked. But neither a window nor its lack had brought Alan to see me. I asked, "What was this of a revolution?"

Alan plopped into a chair. "Some while back, I take it, you gave Old Man Kelly a letter. Evidently he was too busy to give it a look, what with the university administration being all over him about bringing you here. And fighting for another chance with the gateway once your situation gets sorted out. And, if gossip is to be believed, giving boring lectures."

I took a guess. "So he has now looked at the letter, and found it of interest?"

"Interest is far too mild a term. What is implied by your letter is—no other word will serve—revolutionary. To the historians *and* the, um, natural philosophers."

In my youth (or was it only Gulliver's?), I had lived through what had become known as the Glorious Revolution. That popular sobriquet notwithstanding, I recalled the King's expulsion and the accompanying tumult as well less than glorious. Was any revolution ever to the good? "Once more, I do not understand."

"You'd better sit." I did, and Alan leaned toward me. "The letter you furnished is from Captain Gulliver to his cousin, complaining about changes to his book."

"Indeed . . ." Yet again, confusion overtook me. "But wait. Your experts insist I only came to believe I was Gulliver after the concussion."

"Exactly so. When Kelly *did* look at the letter, he assumed it a hoax or a delusion. Whichever applied, he assumed you had written it after arriving here. Only you didn't."

Indeed I hadn't. "True, but how can anyone know that?"

"Carbon dating." Alan shrugged. "That's another modern technology it would take too long to explain. What's important is that Doctor Kelly was thorough enough to have had your letter authenticated *despite* his doubts. Both paper and ink are confirmed to have been made between 1720 and 1730. Also, the review of an expert confirms the text of your letter was written with

a quill pen.”

“Paper and ink made in 1727, certainly, whence I came. And in that year, with what implement but a quill could I have written it?”

“You arrived sans inkpots and quill pens. You *can't* have written the note in this time.”

“Then I *am* Gulliver,” I said. “Only how can that be? How can I be someone whose adventures never took place? I can hardly have voyaged to the divers places he reported, when even OK Google, with his view from on high, knows naught of those lands.”

“Interesting, no? The easy answer is that you were delusional before the gateway ever opened, though why your family let such a person wander about unsupervised is curious.”

“I don't much like being called mad, nor do I see yet any revolution.”

“No, I suppose not.” Alan took a deep breath. “That brings us to our next expert, a professor of literature. *She* is well-acquainted with the writings of your time, including *Gulliver's Travels*. That book was first published in . . .”

“1726,” I supplied. “The year before I came hence.”

“Another edition, she told us, came out in 1735. *It* included, for the first time, a letter from Captain Gulliver to his cousin Sympson.” Alan stood to pace. “That letter is, word for word, 90 percent the same as what you gave Old Man Kelly.”

Too confused to consider the implications, I asked, “And the few differences?”

“Minor, I've heard. Even the few new passages are in style like the rest.”

I could imagine but one answer to this riddle. “It needs be I am this ‘Jonathon Swift’ whom your historians say wrote *Gulliver's Travels*.”

“Compared to the alternatives, a split personality *would* be easy to believe. The thing is”—Alan completed a slow circuit of the room and started anew—“paintings of the day show us his appearance, and you and he look not at all alike. Historians also have records of his journeys, and he was in Ireland when we visited you in England.”

“Were I not, somehow, this Swift, why would I write a letter of complaint about the book as Gulliver? And why would Master Swift include such a letter in his new edition?”

“It doesn't seem logical, I agree. Everyone agrees. Yet more puzzling is that far more matches up than two versions of the letter. The method is subtle, comparing choices of words, turns of phrase, and the like, but the experts conclude your letter overall is a match to the whole of *Gulliver's Travels*.”

Struggling to find some sense among these revelations, I conceived of another explanation. “Then this Jonathon Swift stole my manuscript, to have it published as his own.” And perhaps anger at such villainy, rather than adventure and misadventure, was the source of my past madness.

“Historians here rejected that possibility. Swift was a famous author, friend to several others, and dean of Saint Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. To the certain knowledge of many, Swift worked for years on the manuscript that became *Gulliver's Travels*.”

A well-known figure of my time of whom I was entirely unaware. “This needs be madness, but I can imagine but one other possibility. There is not one history, but many, and your gateway plucked me from a history other than your own.”

“Lem, you are a constant amazement. That is *exactly* what I think happened.”

\* \* \*

**Chapter Nine.** *More than the World turned upside down. The Grandfather Paradox explained.*

\* \* \*

Of a sudden, Alan ceased his pacing. “As fascinated as I am by all this, there's something more important you need to know. They're no longer planning to send you back.”

“I don't mind staying awhile longer. Now that your colleagues know me to be sane, I hope to see much of this city and this time.”

“They may *never* send you back.” He paused. “They . . . we . . . may not know how.”

“I do not—”

“Understand,” he completed. “I'll do my best to keep things uncomplicated.” He paused to carefully choose his words. “The universe has more tricks than ever I imagined. Those who ac-

cept the many worlds interpretation—and I’ve now joined that small minority—envisioned reality after reality splitting off. Imagine limbs, then branches, then twigs of a tree, a new split whenever more than one thing could take place.”

A new world with each choice any person made? “If so, there are many worlds indeed.”

“It now appears the development and increase among the worlds is not so . . . simple.”

This was simple? I was loath to ask, but I did. “How so?”

“Your world has whole regions unknown to us. Geographic features form slowly, and it suggests your world and mine can only have split very long ago. But you speak recognizable English, and *that* suggests a considerably more recent split.”

“Perhaps I am mad *and* from another world. I could as well have invented Brobdingnag and all the rest in another world as here.”

Alan shook his head. “You could, but I don’t think you did. Once we had to take seriously the possibility of other histories—other timelines, as we call them—we used the gateway to take another look. Before, we had opened the gateway only near London. When we opened the gateway where *Brobdingnag* should be, we found that.”

I had to smile. “It would be hard to miss.”

“Also giants. And all sorts of things that made no sense, and that didn’t care whether we thought them possible, that flat-out don’t exist in *this* world. Forget how long it takes to raise continents. The very laws of Nature must be different, going back to the Big Bang. . . .”

The Creation, I presumed that to mean, his phrase seeming more than a little irreverent. He went on and on for awhile about squares and cubes and ratios, and gravity, and Brobdingnagians who would be unable to stand in this world. And that with differences as ancient as the Creation and as recent as the development of English, histories needs must sometime converge as well as diverge. That rather than sprouting branches in the manner of trees, timelines needs must ever be spawning an ever more tangled web.

I was too overwhelmed to take it in.

“But what,” I asked, breaking into the torrent of words—and worlds—“has any of this to do with whether I stay or return?”

“Right.” He considered. “We designed the gateway to open a path back, not to . . . not to . . .” trailing off, I surmised, in search of words I might understand.

I offered, “Not to go sideways?”

“That will do. We don’t know what makes the gateway go sideways, or how far, or how it makes a connection with another timeline. And not knowing how it made the connection once, we couldn’t know if we could reach the same timeline twice. It turns out we can’t, at least not yet. When we opened the gateway several times with our controls set exactly the same, and took samples of air and dirt from the far end, well, every set tested out differently.” He managed a grin. “You wouldn’t understand.”

“And indeed I do not.”

“The good news,” Alan said, “if you care to think of it this way, is that at least we may have answered one deep question. It may be there are no grandfather paradoxes because no one can go back into their own past. They can only visit, or create, another timeline.”

Withal my head was veritably spinning, I tried to un-jumble my thoughts. “So your gateway cannot reliably find my home?”

“Exactly.”

“And if I were prepared to take the chance?”

“It’s just too uncertain. Too dangerous. The authorities won’t allow it.”

After the strangeness of my several travels, what worse peril did these authorities suppose I might encounter? Cannibals? Fire-breathing dragons? Werewolves? I said, “*You* know how operate the gateway, do you not? Will *you* allow it?”

I took his unease as answer to my first question and his silence as answer to my second. “If I am to stay, Alan, what do the authorities intend for me?”

“And so we come full circle.” Looking weary, Alan settled once more into a chair. “I don’t know. Hell, no one knows. The thing is, you’re not only from another time, you’re from another



*universe.*”

“Not only is the universe stranger than we think, it is stranger than we can think.”

He blinked. “Exactly so. What I expect, and why I’m here to warn you, is that you’ll be studied to, well, hopefully not quite to, death. Scientists and historians and, well, *everyone* already have endless questions about your world. Medical researchers are already eager to do whole batteries of tests on you, having seen the one sample of your blood.”

“And if I choose not to be interrogated and vivisected?”

“It won’t be quite that bad.” He sighed. “But it won’t be much fun, either. That’s why I’m here—as a friend. You can’t go home, so you need someone from here to look out for you. To guarantee you the right to decide what is and isn’t done to you. To assure you the right to just say no.” He pondered a bit more. “And someone to protect your rights in the *next* book you write. You’ll want that to pay your way in this world.”

“And that someone is you?”

“If so, God help us both. Lem, I’d like to bring in a lawyer to talk with you. If you agree, to have him represent you.”

I had, before expulsion from Houyhnhnmland, once discussed the legal system with my master. Lawyers, I had explained, were “Bred up from their youth in the art of proving by words multiplied for the purpose that *white is black* and *black is white*, according as how they are paid. To this society, all the rest of the people are slaves.” My disquisition that day on the subject had served only to demonstrate, yet again, the vices to which my kind is both inventor and heir.

Nothing since my exile had softened my opinion of that profession. Was I now to entrust my safety and future to lawyers? Once lawyers were involved with a problem, who but they ever saw any benefit? Whenever did a lawyer rest until his client had become destitute—an affliction certain to befall me sooner than this vast university. Alan’s plan would, at best, postpone the divers tests and trials he foresaw. Rather than to entrust my life and future to lawyers, I should prefer—and it was an opinion informed of experience—the mercies of a horde of petty, vindictive Lilliputians.

To Alan, eying me anxiously, I dissembled, “I needs must give this matter some thought.”

\* \* \*

**Chapter Ten.** *The Author takes Matters into his own Hands. His Adventure reaches its Conclusion.*

\* \* \*

As soon as Alan took his leave, I turned my attention to the study of geography. To this end, OK Google was of great assistance. Soon several pages in my spiral notebook were filled, in tiny script, with what I had learned.

As many an evening, a servant, what the university called a graduate assistant, delivered the tray with my dinner. I thanked him, then ate well and completely, knowing that, if all went well, this could be my last hot meal for awhile. As I waited for the halls to empty, I gathered bits of food set aside from past meals. I had been saving provisions in case of an emergency, and surely my present straits could be so described. I likewise collected all that had come with me from Redriff, and divers items accumulated here. After filling my pockets, I put on, over my modern garb, my own clothes. Once those pockets, too, were filled, I removed a blanket from the bed and draped it across my shoulder.

When, at long last, I deemed the hour sufficiently late, I used my key card to open the door. Listening carefully, I heard naught in the hall but the faint hum of the refreshments box. With an empty scabbard slapping against my leg, I hurried to the Temporal Laboratory, whose door opened, as on an earlier excursion, upon the close approach of my key card. I closed myself inside, with an edge of blanket trapped between the door and the lintel. The hall went dark even as the door swung shut, and, I hoped, the blanket dangling within would hide—should anyone come seeking refreshment—the light that now shone in the laboratory. With a sweeping motion of a finger, I dimmed the ceiling.

I retrieved my hanger from whence it had been stowed upon my arrival, the familiar weight of weapon and scabbard most comforting at my side. Seating myself at the desk from which Doctor



## ANALOG

Kelly had opened a gateway to Redriff, I espied the small square over which he had, that day, passed his hand and its chip. I waved my key card over the same spot, then pressed buttons among the array just as I had seen him do. If he had, as I surmised, used the buttons to enter a secret watchword, and if I remembered aright the letters and numbers therein, my plan might succeed.

OK Chronos spoke the words upon which that plan relied. "Gateway initialized."

I retrieved my notebook and, as I had observed Doctor Kelly do, directed OK Chronos with regard to date, time, latitude, and longitude. Instead of the coordinates for Redriff, I used the first location from my list. With a whiff of pungent storm scent, the gateway opened—

Alas, the view therein brought me only disappointment.

"Gateway active," the ceiling announced.

I tried the second location from my list. Then, the third. And at my eighth try, I smiled.

"OK Chronos," I asked, "Can you remember and then follow a group of instructions?"

"Yes."

"OK Chronos, can an instruction placed at the end of such a group make you forget things?"

"Yes."

I ordered, "OK Chronos, here are my instructions. Five minutes after I have passed through the gateway, close it. Then, erase all records of where I went." Remembering how Alan had shown me my arrival to this very room, I added, "Finally, erase any images of me this night. Can you do all that?"

"Yes."

"OK Chronos, when I have left through the gateway, proceed as I have just ordered."

I stepped out from behind the desk and went through the gateway. Looking about me with satisfaction, I decided: here I remain.

With a broad smile on my face, I waited and watched until the gateway winked closed.

\* \* \*

With my pen all but emptied of ink and my spiral notebook all but filled with tiny writing, I bring to a close this account of my latest adventure. In anticipation of this event, I have long preserved a treat, it being the last of the food that I brought hence. These Oreos will, I believe, go nicely with a bit of fresh milk of coconut. And then, withal that the sun is yet high in the sky, I have no plans for the day apart from a nap, and throwing the occasional fallen branch onto my cooking fire to keep it going, and enjoying the sunset.

And tomorrow?

Tomorrow I shall turn my attention to the adventures of Robinson Crusoe—whom I doubt not, on some timeline, is as real as myself. Then, to the murmur of the surf and the rustle of leaves, I shall consider his advice on best establishing myself on a tropical desert island.

\* \* \*

(Signed)Lemuel Gulliver  
some world.  
some time.

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*Edward M. Lerner is a physicist, computer scientist, and curmudgeon by training. Writing full-time since 2004, he applies all three skill sets to SF (his latest novel being the award-winning InterstellarNet: Enigma) and popular science. Ed's a authorial web site is [www.edwardmlerner.com](http://www.edwardmlerner.com).*