

# Portle

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## Robert Scherrer

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Report from Ariel Lysse

Earth, Everett coordinates  $E(1,2,3,4) = (96,2,14,76)$

Local date: July 30, 1981

BEGIN REPORT

I was able to observe Amy Mathews again today at her grandfather's funeral—an excellent place to watch her without arousing suspicion. She nestled between her mother and father throughout the funeral Mass (which was entirely in Latin—recall that  $E(3) > 10$  normally implies the nonexistence of Vatican II).

At the reception following the funeral, I conversed with Amy briefly near the dessert table. She informed me that the chocolate cake was “yummy” and offered me half of hers. I stood close enough to perform a remote brain scan before Amy spilled cake crumbs down the front of my dress, mumbled a quick apology, and dashed back to her parents' table. I believe that Amy is part of the Remnant, but we cannot be certain until we reestablish contact with her.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

December 27, 1981

We were sposed to visit grandma Irene today. I told fake mommy and fake daddy that I wanted to stay home and they could go without me. But they said no I had to go. I didnt want to go in the portle so fake daddy grabbed my arm and dragged me so I started screaming and fake mommy said let her go. And he did. Then fake mommy went by herself and fake daddy stayed behind with me. I asked if we could drive to visit grandma and he said no she lives in Florida. Could we fly? He said no theres hardly any planes anymore and its too ekspensive and did I think that money growed on trees? I said lets plant a dollar in the front yard and maybe it will grow into a money tree and when the money got ripe we could pick it! Fake daddy laffed but I could tell he was still mad at me.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

December 30, 1981

It snowed today. I am so mad! We didnt get out of school cause we are already out of school for Christmas. I made a snowman with my daddy last year. We used rocks for the eyes but we didnt have a carrot for the nose so we used a stick. My daddy said the snowman looked just like me so I pretended to get mad and threw a snowball at him. Then we went inside and had hot choclat. I miss my real mommy and daddy.

\* \* \*

Patient Name: Amy Matthews

DOB: Jul. 25, 1974

Height: 48 in

Weight: 51 lbs

Referring pediatrician: Dr. Ben Rutler

The patient is slightly below average in height for her age, but the pediatrician reports no underlying health problems. Amy is quite voluble and seems well-adjusted, but she refers to her mother and father as her “fake mommy” and “fake daddy.” I think this is simply a normal childhood fantasy, typical for her age.

Of greater concern to the family is the fact that Amy refuses to use the Portal. Her school is within walking distance, but the family is planning to sell its only car and rely exclusively on the Portal in the future. At our meeting today, Amy declined to tell me why she does not want to use the Portal. I will probe further at her next appointment.

Jacob Schmidt, M.D. Jan. 19, 1982

\* \* \*

Amy's diary

January 26, 1982

We watched president Nikson give a speech on TV. Fake daddy said he has been president too long he should quit. Fake mommy said shush do you want the police to take us away. But I thought that president Nikson was ~~assassin assassin assassin~~ shot when I was in first grade. We watched his funeral on TV in math class. I don't get it.

**Portal: The Safest Way to Travel**

Jan. 28, 1982—Produced & written by George Popovich

Actor: Joe Dimaggio

**Video**

FADE UP NASA Apollo 20 stock footage

**Audio**

MUSIC UP (Holst “The Planets, Jupiter”) MUSIC UNDER NARRATOR VO: Eight years ago, in the Moon’s Tycho crater, the Apollo 20 astronauts made an astonishing discovery: a teleportation device left behind by a long-vanished alien civilization. Where did they come from? Where did they go? We’ll never know the answers to these questions. But in just four short years, American scientists were able to reverse-engineer this remarkable device and bring us the Portal transportation system. MUSIC DOWN

Cut to stage. MS JOE DIMAGGIO

DIMAGGIO: Hello, my name is Joe Dimaggio. You probably know me best from my career with the New York Giants. But today I want to tell you about a giant name in transportation: Portal.

CU DIMAGGIO

Portal has made transportation cheaper, more reliable, and most of all, safer. Why drive when the grocery store is as close as your front door?

Cut to stock footage of Paris

And Portal brings the world’s most exotic destinations just a few footsteps away.

Cut to MS DIMAGGIO

So call Portal at 1-800-555-3520, except in Nebraska. Portal, the safest way to travel. MUSIC SWELLS

## ANALOG

Amys diry

February 1, 1982

I want a ginny pig! Fake mommy said we cant get one cause they smell bad and who would take care of it? I told her I would and she said no you wouldnt and I said yes I would and she said no you wouldnt and I said yes I would. She got me a stuff ginny pig instead. I named him Chubster. I take him to bed with me every night.

\* \* \*

Patient Name: Amy Matthews

The patient elaborated considerably on her fantasy. She seems to believe that the first time she used a Portal, which was last summer (I will get the exact date from her parents), her "real" mother and father disappeared and were replaced by imposters. Subsequently, each time she traveled via Portal, her previous parents were supplanted by a completely new mother and father. As she particularly likes her "current" mother, she does not want to use the Portal again. I have rarely encountered such an elaborate fantasy outside of a handful of schizophrenic patients, none of them children.

A minor note: Amy insists that her last name is spelled with one "t": Mathews. However, her mother confirmed that the correct spelling is Matthews. This is undoubtedly a simple spelling error on Amy's part. I have examined samples of her writing, and it does exhibit problems with correct spelling.

Jacob Schmidt, M.D. Feb. 2, 1982

\* \* \*

Amys diry

February 3, 1982

I saw doctor Shmit again. We talked and talked and talked and talked. Doctor Shmit sure likes to talk! Maybe he needs a frend to talk to. I told him why I didnt want to go into the portle and he believed me! I hope he tells fake mommy and daddy not to sell the car.

\* \* \*

From *Apollo 20, a Space Odyssey* (1979)

Director: Stanley Kubrick

Writer: Stanley Kubrick

Stars: Tom Skerritt, Harry Dean Stanton, John Hurt

\* \* \*

CUT TO:

TYCHO CRATER

\* \* \*

STUART ROOSA

What's that reflection over there, in the crater wall? It doesn't look like anything I've ever seen before.

JACK LOUSMA

I can't tell. It looks like some kind of metal. Let's take a closer look. Both hop toward the silvery reflection in the distance.

\* \* \*

CUT TO:

COMMAND MODULE

PAUL WEITZ

What's going on down there? What do you guys see?

\* \* \*

CUT TO:

TYCHO CRATER

STUART ROOSA

It's some sort of artifact. Not built by human hands.

JACK LOUSMA

It's absolutely remarkable. Something wonderful.

\* \* \*

Music swells: "Thus Spake Zarathustra"

Amys diry

Febuary 8, 1982

I had a bad day at school today. In science class Mrs. Alan asked me who invented the light bulb. I said everyone knows its Edison but she said no Amy its Tesla. Then at recess all the girls made fun of me for being dum and not knowing about Tesla. I tryed not to cry but then I did cry and I had to run behind a tree so they wouldnt see me. And then worst of all at lunch time I opened up my lunch box and there was no twinkly. So all I had to eat was a peanut butter and jelly sanwich and an apple.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

Febuary 9, 1982

Fake mommy said she was sorry she forgot my twinkly yesterday. She is nice to me. The fake mommy before her used to hit me when I forgot to do my homework. Once she hit me in the face and I got a black eye. My real mommy never hit me. I just wish I could see her again.

\* \* \*

Official NASA Mission Transcript, Apollo 20

In accordance with NASA Policy Directive 1900.8C, inappropriate language has been redacted.

Speakers in the transcript are identified as follows:

CDR Commander: STUART ROOSA

CMP Command Module pilot: PAUL J. WEITZ

LMP Lunar Module pilot: JACK LOUSMA

CC Capsule communicator (CAP COMM)

\* \* \*

CONFIDENTIAL

CDR: Houston, we have exited the Lunar Module.

CC: Copy that.

CDR: Proceeding toward crater wall. What the [expletive deleted] is that?

CC: Repeat.

CDR: Some sort of [expletive deleted] machine. That thing shouldn't be here.

CMP: What the [expletive deleted] is going on down there?

CC: Please repeat.

LMP: Let's get the [expletive deleted] out of here. Abort the mission.

CC: Do not abort. Repeat, do not abort.

CDR: What the [expletive deleted] is that thing? Concur with Lousma. Abort the mission.

CC: Do not return to the Lunar Module.

LMP: Houston, it's not your ass on the line. [expletive deleted] you. We are out of here.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

Febuary 10, 1982

My fight animals had a fight tonight. Egbert the duck told Chubster that none of the animals liked him and he would have to leave. But I told Egbert that Chubster gets to stay. I love Chubster. Chubster told me he would never leave me. Even if I went into the portle.

\* \* \*

Patient Name: Amy Matthews

I have concluded my fifth meeting with the patient, and I must admit that her condition seems quite refractory. Amy has continued to spin an ever more fantastic series of stories. While these delusions in themselves do not appear to be interfering with her home life or school work, her father, in particular, has become increasingly impatient with her refusal to use the Portal. I am going to recommend antipsychotic medication (haloperidol, 2 mg/day). This may result in

## ANALOG

mild sedation, but other side effects should be minimal.

Jacob Schmidt, M.D. Mar. 2, 1982

\* \* \*

Amys diry

March 4, 1982

Fake daddy said that doctor Shmit would give me some medicine to make me forget about my other fake mommies and daddies. But I dont want to forget my *real* mommy and daddy! After I went to bed I heard fake mommy and daddy yelling downstairs. I hope its not a shot. I hate shots.

\* \* \*

Patient Name: Amy Matthews

The patient's parents declined my recommendation to administer antipsychotic medication. There appears to be some disagreement between the mother and father on this point. I offered them one other possibility. I have been combing through the medical literature and ran across an article by Joel Hardy at the University of Chicago. He has been doing research on anxiety disorders involving the Portal and is particularly interested in pediatric cases. Amy's symptoms cannot really be classified as part of an anxiety disorder, but I see no better options. And with the Portal, any doctor can make house calls.

Jacob Schmidt, M.D. Mar. 5, 1982

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*Physics Today*, March 1982

OBITUARIES

MASAHIRO TANAKA

Masahiro Tanaka, a renowned theoretical physicist who helped to develop the unified theory of electromagnetic and weak interactions, died on 14 November, 1981, in Chicago, Illinois, of a cerebral hemorrhage.

Born on 11 July, 1935, in Nagasaki, Japan, Masahiro was educated at Kyoto University, where he received his Ph.D. in 1961 under the direction of Hideki Yukawa. In 1961 he came to Harvard University as a postdoctoral researcher, and in 1963 he joined the faculty of the University of Chicago, where he remained for the rest of his life.

Masahiro is best known for his development, along with Sheldon Glashow and Steven Weinberg, of electroweak unification, now known as the Glashow-Weinberg-Tanaka model. He shared the Nobel Prize for this achievement with Glashow and Weinberg in 1979.

More recently, Masahiro worked on the foundational aspects of quantum mechanics. He developed ideas for several experiments to distinguish between the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics and the many-worlds hypothesis. These experiments present complex technical challenges, and none has been performed to date.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

March 25, 1982

A new doctor came to our house today. His name is doctor Hardy and I don't like him. He is grumpy. He made me tell him about my fake mommies and fake daddies. Why didnt he just ask doctor Shmit? Do I have to do all the work around here??

\* \* \*

Amys diry

March 30, 1982

Doctor Hardy came to visit again. He gave me a stuff animal! Its a stuff sea turtle and I named him mister Mudball. Doctor Hardy asked me lots of questions like I was in school. He asked who is the president and I said I saw president Nikson on TV but I thought he was dead. He asked who invented the airplane and I said Langly. But I didnt know the answers to lots of questions. We never studied world war two in school. Or the sivil war. Im only in second grade! I asked him what kind of doctor is he and he said a doctor of filosofy and I said my filosofy doesnt hurt.

\* \* \*

From the collected papers of Dr. Joel Hardy  
(Undated)

Once there were three of us—Masahiro Tanaka, Marco Fano, and me—the physicist, the engineer, and the psychologist. One of these things is not like the other, eh? Now it's down to just me.

It was loss that bound us together. I suppose all of us lose our children eventually—they grow up and they're not children anymore. But Marco's son Giorgio didn't make it that far—diagnosed with leukemia when he was ten years old. The doctors all told Marco that leukemia wasn't a death sentence any more. Until it was.

Masahiro was a kid during the war. He visited his grandparents in Kyoto one August, while his brother and sister stayed behind with his parents in Nagasaki. You can fill in the rest.

And as for me? Well, that's pretty obvious.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

April 1, 1982

When doctor Hardy came today I told him that I lied about everything. There arent any fake mommies or daddies. He looked at me funny and then I said April fool! I dont think he gets my jokes. And I dont think hes very happy. Today he made me tell him more about my fake mommies and daddies. I told him about the fake daddy who made cars and lost his job because of the portle. And the fake mommy who had only one arm but she still played the piano. I didnt tell him about the fake mommy who used to hit me.

\* \* \*

From the collected papers of Dr. Joel Hardy  
(Undated)

Marco made the key discovery even before he met us. He was part of the team that first examined the lunar Portal. They probed it every possible way—X-rays, five different kinds of spectroscopy, stuff I'd never even heard of before. Which was how Marco ended up examining a sample of the casing with a scanning electron microscope. And he saw, etched into the titanium in letters fifteen nanometers wide, "mfd Cupertino CA." Which led him down a road that pointed, in the end, to Masahiro and to me.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

April 6, 1982

Doctor Hardy told fake mommy and daddy that it was very important not to make me use the portle yet. He said he could tell I was getting better already. Better at what? Today he asked what I wanted most of all. I said I like choclat especially ice cream and hershey bars. He said what else and I said I really like stuff animals. And he said but what else? I said comic books especially the League of Superheroes. He didnt say anything for a while. Then I said I really want to see my mommy and daddy again. And he said I can help you. I said help me what? And he said I can help you find your mommy and daddy. Then I started to cry. I dont know why. I hate crying. Its so babyish.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

April 8, 1982

Doctor Hardy wants me to go into the portle again. I told him no I like it here I dont want to leave. And he said dont worry I can bring you back. I dont believe him. But if I could see my mommy and daddy again maybe I would go.

\* \* \*

From the collected papers of Dr. Joel Hardy  
(Undated)

We had run out of coffee, so Clara asked me to run across 57th Street to pick some up at the little grocer on the corner of 57th and Harper. But I guess she could see that I was engrossed in my book, because she said, "Never mind, honey, I'll get it myself." She probably never even saw

## ANALOG

the car that ran the red light, and by the time I got down to the street, someone else was giving her first aid. She died on the way to the hospital.

I rerun that day over and over in my head. What if I had gone myself, just as she asked? What if she had left one minute earlier, or one minute later? What if the driver had gotten held up in traffic? What if? What if? What if? An endless chain of cause and effect cascades across time, branching into all of the different possible outcomes.

Amy's diary

April 11, 1982

Easter! We died eggs yesterday, and today fake mommy and fake daddy hid them for me to find. I don't like hard boiled eggs but I like the plastic eggs with jelly beans inside. I don't believe in the easter bunny any more. But that's because fake mommy told me last week that the easter hair would hide the eggs and I said how can hair hide eggs and she said that's what you call the animal who hides the eggs. I said no it's the easter bunny and she laughed and said no silly you don't call it the easter bunny you call it the easter hair. Then she said any way there's no such thing.

\* \* \*

From the collected papers of Dr. Joel Hardy

(Undated)

Reverse-engineering an "alien" device without understanding exactly what it does? That's like shooting a gun without knowing where the bullet comes out.

\* \* \*

Amy's diary

April 13, 1982

Doctor Hardy still wants me to go into the portle. He said he has a magic hat that will bring me back. Everyone knows there's no such thing as magic. But I told him I would think about it if he brought me a League of Superheroes comic book.

\* \* \*

From the collected papers of Dr. Joel Hardy

(Undated)

Masahiro was our quantum mechanics expert—I never really understood all that stuff myself. He told me that every time you make a measurement, the Universe splits into multiple worlds, with each possible outcome realized in one of the worlds. It's as if you came to a fork in the road and decided to take *both* paths. But "you", the conscious you, only experiences one of those worlds. So what happens to all the rest of the "you"s? And wouldn't it make more sense for us to experience the Universe as it really is? Masahiro said that the Universe doesn't have to make sense. Spoken like a true physicist.

\* \* \*

Amy's diary

April 15, 1982

Doctor Hardy brought a TV set and a funny hat. The hat had wires all over the top and doctor Hardy told fake mommy and daddy that if I wore the hat he could see better how my brain worked. I said do we get to watch TV and he said no Amy that's a computer. What does it do? I asked. He said it could do math. Can it do my math homework? He said no. Can it play games? He said no computers can't play games. I think doctor Hardy wasted his money. Doctor Hardy told me that the hat had a machine in it that would bring me back here if I went into the portle. I said did you bring me my comic book, and he did! And it was the League of Superheroes! I think doctor Hardy might be telling the truth since he keeps being so nice to me. I told him I would think about it and maybe we can try next week.

\* \* \*

*Wonder Comics! #350*

The League of Superheroes

**Moon Man** (Galdok Garr) comes from the planet Tharkon, which has no moon. When he came to Earth, he achieved super-strength, but only when the Moon is full.

**The Termite** (Kyle Jordan) from Earth, was working at a lumber mill when it was struck by

lightning, giving him the power to eat through wood and paper products (but not plastic or metal).

**Inch Woman** (Paula Lawson) from Earth studied the mystic arts at a Tibetan monastery, where she acquired the ability to levitate exactly one inch above the ground.

**Quantum Kid** (J'non Non') comes from the planet Kal'dor, which crosses the transdimensional multiverse. He has the ability to move freely across the worlds of the multiverse.

\* \* \*

From the collected papers of Dr. Joel Hardy

(Undated)

Once you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be the truth. I have always thought that was useless advice—what if everything is impossible? That was the situation confronting Marco—exactly how could an alien teleportation device, discovered in a crater on the Moon, have been manufactured in California? He told no one else at the Portal project about his discovery, more to avoid ridicule than from any lofty motive. But he sought out experts elsewhere. Living in Chicago, it was natural to poke around the U. of C. Physics Department. And one man there was already experimenting with the Portal circuits: Masahiro Tanaka.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

April 20, 1982

Doctor Hardy asked me if I would put the funny hat on my head and go through the portle—he said I promise you will come back here and we can start looking for your real mommy and daddy. And he brought another League of Superheroes comic book. So I said OK Ill go in the portle. And then just like all the other times I was at a different place with a different fake mommy and daddy. But when I went back into the portle I came back, just like doctor Hardy promised! Woohoo! I cant wait to get back to my real mommy and daddy. Im going to give both of them a big hug and a kiss and Ill never do anything bad again.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

April 22, 1982

Fake mommy and daddy told doctor Hardy they were so happy I would use the portle now and its been nice knowing you. But doctor Hardy said I needed a little more counsling. What does he mean? He brought another stuff animal with him—a big hippo! I named her Edna. She is so soft and skwishy! I went through the portle three more times with that funny hat on. Doctor Hardy did a lot of typing on his computer.

\* \* \*

From the collected papers of Joel Hardy

(Undated)

I doubt that either Masahiro or Marco could have figured out the mystery on his own. But Masahiro had already been playing around with the Portal circuits to test his theories when Marco showed up with the smoking gun. It was only then that they came to understand the true nature of the Portal: not a teleportation system at all—that was just an unintended side effect. The Portal was built to travel between the quantum mechanical worlds.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

April 23, 1982

The League of Superheroes has a new contest. Your sposed to write a story telling which superhero in the league is most like you. Thats easy! For me its Quantum Kid. First prize is \$20. Thats a lot of money! First Ill figure out what to buy with the \$20. Then Ill write the story.

\* \* \*

From the collected papers of Joel Hardy

(Undated)

Masahiro and Marco realized the implications almost immediately—they could find a world in

## ANALOG

which Marco's son still lived, and Nagasaki survived. But then they hit a brick wall—as far as they knew, no one had ever experienced any change when traveling through the Portal—everyone just ended up in the same world as before. The key had to involve human consciousness in some way. That's when Masahiro contacted me. I wasn't the biggest name at the U. of C. Psychology Department. But I had the biggest motivation to help.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

April 27, 1982

I asked doctor Hardy when I could go back to my real mommy and daddy, and he said I had to do another job first. He said do you know how to use the fone. And I said of course I know Im not a baby. So he gave me a fone number. Every time I go through the portle, I am sposed to call the number and ask for Clara. How come I have to do all this work? I already have to make my bed every day and clean up my toys.

\* \* \*

From the collected papers of Joel Hardy

(Undated)

We zeroed in on the microtubules inside the neurons of the brain. What little research had been done on quantum effects in the brain pointed to electromagnetic oscillations inside the microtubules. Meanwhile I developed a new clinical interest in patients who were anxious about using the Portal.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

April 30, 1982

The fone number doctor Hardy gave me is his own number. Is this some kind of joke?? When I call and ask for Clara, the other doctor Hardy either hangs up or yells at me. I dont like it when grownups yell at me.

\* \* \*

From the collected papers of Joel Hardy

(Undated)

I kept running into the same kinds of stories in my new patients—vague memories of siblings who no longer existed, or poorly remembered historical facts that didn't seem to fit any more. And brain scans of those patients all showed anomalies in their microtubules—anomalies we could mimic in normal brains with a strong enough external magnetic field. The Tanaka device was born.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

May 2, 1982

I finished my story for League of Superheroes. Ill mail it tomorrow!!

\* \* \*

From the collected papers of Joel Hardy

(Undated)

The three of us argued over who would get to go first. We finally agreed it would be Marco, since he was the one who began our quest. I'm not a real emotional guy, but I gave him a hug and wished him luck. Masahiro, being old-school Japanese, just gave him a quick bow. Marco put the Tanaka device on his head and walked through the Portal. And he never came back.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

May 5, 1982

I wonder when the League of Superheroes will pick a winner. With \$20 I can buy the big stuff rino at the toy store and maybe even have some money left over to buy a hula hoop. Yippee!

\* \* \*

From the collected papers of Joel Hardy

(Undated)

Did Marco find his son? Is that why he never returned? There was no way to tell—we didn't have a way to map out the quantum realities, or to steer us toward any one world. Masahiro began working on both problems, while I searched for a better test subject—someone who could traverse the many quantum worlds with ease. Then we could make sure to get to the right place—a reality in which Nagasaki emerged unscathed, and where Clara still lived.

\* \* \*

Amys diry  
May 7, 1982

When I get my stuff rino Ill put him in my bed next to Chubster. I think they will be frends.

\* \* \*

From the collected papers of Joel Hardy  
(Undated)

It took a while, but Masahiro was able to enhance his device to make it directional—we could record where the Portal took us and return to the same place. But Masahiro exhausted himself in the process—maybe that's what triggered his cerebral hemorrhage. Or maybe it was just bad luck. Either way, it was down to me alone.

\* \* \*

Amys diry  
May 27, 1982

It worked! Finally! I called the fone number, and a lady ansered the fone. I asked if it was Clara and she said yes its me. So I got back and told doctor Hardy, and he took the hat and pressed some buttons on it. Then he said Amy Im sorry and I said sorry for what? But he didnt say anything else he just put on the hat and jumped into the portle. He forgot to take his computer.

\* \* \*

Amys diry  
June 2, 1982

I thought doctor Hardy would come back and tell me how to find my mommy and daddy but I dont think hes ever coming back. The police came and took away his computer and then they asked me a lot of questions. I mostly told them I dont know.

\* \* \*

Amys diry  
June 4, 1982

I think doctor Hardy lied to me. My real mommy told me lying is a sin. You should always tell the truth. I think Doctor Hardy didnt know how to get back to my real mommy and daddy at all. I dont think Ill ever find them now. And I dont even have the magic hat anymore, so I cant go into the portle. Fake daddy says I dont have to cause Ive been traumatized whatever that means.

\* \* \*

From *Quasar Science Fiction* (June 1982)

**Quasar Science Fiction announces its 1982 writing contest.** The theme for this year's contest is *an alterna te history*. Imagine all of the different ways history might have gone: what if the South had won the Civil War, or Vasco de Gama had never discovered America? Stories will be judged on their verisimilitude—make us believe you were really there! All submissions should be typed on one side of the paper, double-spaced, between 1,000 and 10,000 words. First prize—\$500, second prize—\$200, third prize—\$100. In addition, all winners will be invited to participate in a free writing workshop with the editor of *Quasar*, Ariel Lysse. Submit your stories to: Editor, *Quasar Science Fiction*, 51 E 23rd St., New York, NY 10010. All entries must be postmarked by Dec. 31, 1982.

\* \* \*

Amys diry  
June 23, 1982

The League of Superheroes called our house and fake mommy ansered the fone and said it was for me! I said did I win and they said no you got honorbal mention and I said how much money do I get and they said you get a sertificat. But I want my \$20! You cant buy a stuff rino

## ANALOG

with a sertificat.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

July 12, 1982

The man from the League of Superheroes came to our house to give me the sertificat but I was so mad about the \$20 I didnt want to talk to him. But fake mommy said Amy dont be rude you won honorbal mention. So I let him give me the sertificat and they took a bunch of pictures. When everyone was talking and it was hard to hear the man leaned over and whispered in my ear Amy we were lucky we found you. You have the gift. Your one of us. I think he ment I was a good writer and maybe I can write for the League of Superheroes! He said wait for a fone call from a lady named Arial. I said like the TV arial? He didnt laff. No one gets my jokes.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

July 23, 1982

The lady Arial called. Fake mommy answered the fone and said it was for me. Arial said hi Amy Ill be quick. We know you can travel between the worlds. Come with us and well take care of you. I said no I want my real mommy and daddy. I could tell fake mommy got mad when I said real mommy so I hung up.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

July 25, 1982

Its my birthday! Im 8 years old!!! Fake mommy made me a choclat cake with choclat icing and I blew out all the candles so I get my wish. But I cant say my wish or it wont come true. I hope it comes true. Then I opened my presents. I got a game called monopoly and an etchy-sketchy and a pluto platter. Fake daddy threwed the pluto platter to me in the front yard but I kept dropping it.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

July 27, 1982

The lady Arial called again when fake mommy was at the grocery store and fake daddy was cutting the grass. She said theres a lot you dont know and we can teach you. Then I hung up. Im tired of everyone lying to me.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

August 5, 1982

Fake daddy says its time for me to start using the portle again. I told him Im still traumitized. Was that a lie? Im not sposed to lie. But Im scared.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

August 11, 1982

Today the doorbell rang and a beautiful lady came in. Fake mommy said Amy this is Miss Arial Lis. She is a soshal worker and she will help you get over being traumitized. She was dressed all in white and had long yellow hair. I said are you an angel? And she just laffed. She sounded like my mommy when she laffed. Then she talked to me on the couch while fake mommy and daddy sat in the kitchen. I said you work for the comic book and she said I have many jobs but realy I only have one job and its finding people like you. We can talk more later. And then she left.

\* \* \*

Amys diry

August 18, 1982

The lady Arial came back again today and she talked to me in the kitchen. Fake mommy and daddy were watching TV so we couldnt sit on the couch. I wanted to watch TV too but fake mommy said no Amy the soshal worker will help you feel better. The lady Arial told me that they know all about me how I can travel between worlds and its a gift cause there arent a lot of us. I

said your lying everyone lies to me and she said no Amy. And then she told me all about my real mommy and daddy. How my mommy used to sing a funny song to me every night when she tucked me into bed and how my daddy throwed me in the swimming pool and then jumped in right next to me so I got splashed. And I said please take me back there. Please please please. She said its complicated we can talk more next time.

\* \* \*

Amys diry  
August 23, 1982

School started today. Im in third grade. My favrit subjects are lunch and recess. Math is OK. At least its the same everywhere I go.

\* \* \*

Amys diry  
August 26, 1982

The lady Ariel came back today and we sat on the front stoop and talked. I sneezed a lot cause fake daddy just moved the lawn and Im lergic to grass. I said when can you take me back to my mommy and daddy. She said your only seven years old you dont know what your giving up. And I said your wrong Im eight years old now! Im not a baby. So she said she would link me and then I could make up my mind. I dont know what that means but I said OK. Then she said I would have to go through the portle with her. I said OK.

\* \* \*

Amy Mathews's Diary  
Sept. 18, 1982

I have seen wonders almost beyond human comprehension. The gossamer cities of the T'lapec, knitted across the canopy of the Amazon rain forest like a giant spider web. A world in which pneumatic computers whistle and chirp as steam-powered airplanes ply the trade routes of the Mongol Empire. Floating Polynesian settlements draped across the surface of the Pacific, glowing at night with bioluminescence like blue-green strands of pearls.

We call ourselves the Remnant—or at least that's what Ariel told me. This is the way people were meant to live, before evolution nearly purged us from the human race.

\* \* \*

Amy Mathews's Diary  
Sept. 23, 1982

Ariel took me across the English Channel Bridge—it floats thirty feet above the surface of the water on gigantic magnetic pillars. We had breakfast in Dover and lunch in Paris, and we still got back to London in time for dinner.

I have to admit that I winced the first time I saw Ariel listed as my “mother” on our travel documents. But an eight-year-old girl can't travel by herself, no matter how intelligent she is.

\* \* \*

Amy Mathew's diary  
Sept. 26, 1982

Ariel gave me a book yesterday: *Quantum Mechanics, an Accessible Introduction*. I finished it this afternoon. I thought the writing was clumsy in places, but I got the gist of it. The book treats the foundations of quantum mechanics as little more than idle speculation. Which I guess is true . . . for most people. Dr. Hardy was badly mistaken—the Portal wasn't built to travel from one quantum reality to another. I understand that now.

\* \* \*

Amy Mathew's diary  
Sept. 30, 1982

I challenged Ariel to a simultaneous chess match—a hundred games all at the same time. I won thirteen of them. Not bad for someone who learned the rules last week!

When I first met Ariel, she reminded me of my own mother. I can see now that I was just projecting my desires onto her. But I like her all the same.

\* \* \*

## ANALOG

Amy Mathew's diary

Oct. 3, 1982

Consider our ancestors roaming the plains of Africa many thousands of years ago. They experienced the Universe as it really is—living simultaneously in all of the quantum realities. But then a mutation crept in—Ariel calls it the Fall. A handful of humans suddenly could experience only a single quantum pathway. And who has the greater drive for self-preservation: a man with a thousand lives to lose, or a man with just one? Natural selection is single-minded and relentless.

\* \* \*

Amy Mathew's diary

Oct. 5, 1982

I have the legacy genes—so do Ariel and the rest of the Remnant. And they built the Portal to allow us to reclaim our inheritance—to link together a thousand Amys across a thousand quantum worlds. There's still only one “me,” but I inhabit all of those worlds at the same time. I have the brainpower of a thousand minds—I know more and can think faster than any normal human who has ever lived. Ariel told me I have barely scratched the surface of the quantum multiverse.

Ironically, the only place closed to me now is my own prime world. To return home, I would have to collapse my wave function back down to a single Amy, a process that would strand me there forever. Do I really want to go back to living as a child trapped on a single world? I think not.

\* \* \*

Amy Mathews's Diary

Oct. 9, 1982

I can't go back to my prime world without being trapped, but I can get very close. I managed to link to a world almost identical to my home. But when I opened my eyes, I couldn't move. This Amy was injured in an auto accident and is severely brain-damaged. She (or I should say “I”) is bedridden and tube-fed. I saw my mother's familiar round face and jet-black hair, and I started to cry. She said, “Amy, is something the matter?” and she adjusted the pillow under my head. Then she started singing one of her songs. I could hardly bear to listen. My father came into the room and brushed the hair back from my eyes, like he always used to do when I went to bed at night. Maybe I shouldn't have come here.

\* \* \*

Amy Mathew's Diary

Oct. 12, 1982

I took a trip to the Moon this week and saw the massive Indian radio telescope on the far side—it stretches as far as the eye can see in every direction, listening for faint echoes from the dawn of time. It was fairly interesting.

A thousand worlds to explore, and I keep turning my attention again and again to the one on which I am paralyzed and mute. That mother and father are so much like my real parents, yet they have endured more than I can imagine. They almost never leave my side when I am awake. And, strangely enough, I don't want to leave theirs.

\* \* \*

Amy Mathew's diary

Oct. 15, 1982

I had a vivid memory this morning of the car trip we took over the summer after I finished kindergarten. My parents had saved up their money so we could drive cross country to Los Angeles and visit Disneyland. I remember my mother singing “California, Here I Come,” as we backed out of the driveway. But four hours later the car threw a rod just outside of Columbus, and we spent the whole week at the Ohio State Fair instead. I know now that my parents must have been bitterly disappointed, but they never showed it—we spent our time admiring the chickens and the pigs, watching the equestrian competitions, and marveling at a cow statue made out of butter. And it was the happiest week of my life.

\* \* \*

Amy Mathew's Diary

Oct. 16, 1982

Ariel and I linked to a world in which the descendants of the Mali Empire have already terraformed Mars. So I was slouching on a lawn chair in New Timbuktu near the edge of Syrtis Major when I told Ariel that I wanted to go back home.

She said, "Please don't make a rash decision. It's a one-way trip, and you haven't seen a fraction of what the Universe has to offer." She put her hand on my shoulder. "And I would miss you, Amy."

I told her I would think about it. I've been thinking about nothing else.

\* \* \*

Report from Ariel Lysse

Earth, Everett coordinates  $E(1,2,3,4) = (96,2,14,76)$

Local date: Oct. 20, 1982

BEGIN REPORT

This is my final report on Amy Mathews. She was recorded in her bedroom via remote camera drone and laser microphone.

Amy was moaning in her sleep when her mother entered the room. "Amy, wake up," said her mother. "What's wrong, were you having a bad dream?"

Amy opened her eyes and stretched her arms out to her mother. "Mommy, I missed you."

Amy's mother hugged her, and Amy began to sob. Her mother said, "Sweetheart, I was up here just half an hour ago. I don't think you're getting enough sleep." Amy wouldn't let go, so her mother gently pried her hands away.

Amy rubbed away tears with the back of her wrist and glanced around the room. "Where's Daddy?"

"Downstairs. He'll come up later to check on you. Now get to sleep." Amy's mother poked a stuffed guinea pig next to Amy's pillow. "Where did this come from? I don't remember buying it."

Amy clutched the guinea pig to her chest. "His name is Chubster. And he promised he'll never leave me, no matter where I go."

*Robert Scherrer is a physics professor at Vanderbilt University, where he does research in cosmology. His short fiction has appeared in Analog and Nature Futures, and he is also the author of a (sadly, out of print) quantum mechanics textbook. He does not actually believe in the many-worlds hypothesis, and neither do any of his counterparts in the other quantum mechanical worlds.*