

VIII

Hey dare, kiddo. Looks I walked into the living room here and see that it looks like yer playin' videogames again?

“Yup. Mom bought me the latest and greatest console game cartridge!”

That looks like it has got all the guts, violence and acts of hate a kid could ever dream about.

“Yeah, but that’s not why I like it. Sure this game is rated M for mature, but the escapism really relaxes me.”

Ya won’t get any arguments here. The days of folks thinkin’ the sex and violence of video games and movies influenced and corrupted minors is over. We know better now! ‘Sides, back in the days of yore, when the Arnold-Tones were comin’ up, all they had was Pong and Ms. Pac Man. And boy, if those games weren’t repetitive and dull enough to make a man want to kill, then I don’t know Paul from Mary.

“Grandpa, you think you could tell me more of the Arnold-Tones story?”

What?! Right now? As you play the video games with the back of your head facing me? Well sure as shit I don’t see why not! I really admire your generations ability for multitasking and parallel thinking!

Whelp, where we left off was, the Arnold-Tones had just agreed upon bein’ lab rats of guinea pigs or some other form of rodentia for that nice old science man, Doctor Flaygoil. Without hesitation the whole crew followed the doctor over to his laboratory. Now, nowadays most science is done inside computers naturally, but back then scientists had honest to goodness laboratories.

Inside these localize places was burners with beakers, conductors and all manner of contraptions, rods and doo-dads. Nearly each town and burg had a scientist of some sort, and nearly each scientist established a lab all their own! Flaygoil was no exception and his lab looked much like you would expect.

Here they were, a Doo-Wop group standing amongst the paraphernalia of scientific exploration. You can imagine them teenagers were cranin' their necks and taking interest in the various things they see. And Flaygoil was happy to see the keen scientific interest for which they explored his various pursuits. Now Cantor had a soft spot for animals, so he wasn't too happy to see a monkey in a cage, but Nightingale just consoled him, "Better him than us, old friend." Cantor agreed and the group in general resigned to feel chipper about the occasion, though their stomachs were twisting with anxiety over the trip they soon expected to embark upon.

"Gee. I'm sure nervous about the trip we're about to embark upon," said Croon.

Hey you think, kid you can at least turn the goddamned volume down on that Tee Vee?!

"Sure. Sorry, grandpa. Please don't stop the story."

Right.

Croon queried, "Doc. Where in the future are we going anyhow?"

"I've programmed you for the year 2,020," Flaygoil answered, "My scout probe indicates that there is racial parity that year so the Arnold-Tones should encounter no bigotry or discrimination."

“Swell!” declared Song then asked, “Doc. Is this a round trip ticket or a one way affair?”

“I’m afraid I can’t make promises in that department. For whatever reason my scout probe found no evidence of other time travel devices and my lab isn’t present there in its current location. Unless you can track down this device or a similar one, you will not be able to return.”

“But how did your probe return, Doc?” asked Nightingale.

“Well that was a probe. Probes always return, it’s their nature.” The Doctor gave the Arnold-Tones a *dub-a-doi* glance as he answered.

The Arnold-Tones share a glance too as Cantor whispered to Nightingale, “It’s science, bro.”

The Doctor continued, “But please. By all means try to find me! Even if you don’t want to return I want to find a way to send data back to myself from the year 2,020.”

“What do we do if we meet our future selves, Doc?” asked Croon.

“Yeah. Do we need to avoid that? Will it tear the fabric of space time?” wondered Song.

“Should we avoid it? Do we need to kill our future selves?” questioned Nightingale.

And wouldn’tcha know it Flaygoil just stared at them boys as if he never thought ‘bout none of that hisself. Then he answered:

“All good questions. I don’t know. Tell you boys what though...just burn that bridge after you cross it, okay?”

The Arnold-Tones at first didn’t seem too happy with that answer but then shrugged in unison as they were fairly prone to trust most adults, ‘specially the ones with advanced degrees.

“Well, well. Here is the device then boys,” said Flaygoil as he pulled out a little chromium boxed doo-hickey and set it on the floor. It looked pretty durn lame.

“Is... is that it?” asked Nightingale whom was rightfully aghast.

“No no no of course not,” Flaygoil answered. “Here.”

Flaygoil slapped a magnetic antenna onto it and it made a satisfactory little ping sound. Then the doctor gives like a gesture of showmanship to a jerry-rigged led ticker connected to a keyboard.

“And that right there is the control panel.” Dr. Flaygoil tapped it and: pfft, a tuft of steam raised up outta it.

The fellas looked concerned but Flaygoil just smiled and assured ‘em that it’s s’posed to do that.

“It’s supposed to do that.” he said.

“So I’ll just fire it up. Give it just a few jiffy’s and you guys will be all set to go.” Dr. Flaygoil began to beat upon that keyboard, which then caused quite a fracas with that durn little metallic box. It got to humming and beepin’ and gyratin’ and shakin’ and just creatin’ a big ole hullabaloo! The Arnold-Tones looked down upon it with a temperament damn nearing apprehension.

“Doctor, I’m not so sure of this. Maybe ‘TURD is still in the testing phase?” worried Croon.

“Oh malarkey,” the good doctor said with a laugh. “This ‘TURD is cooked and ready to serve!”

The Arnold-Tones just looked about connecting eyes with one another, aghast at the sight as it were unfolding. That machine got to makin’ a crazy fracas, clamorin’ like an Edsel Ford with a bunk tire goin’ eighty miles an hour over a pack of stray dogs. Then POP and FIZZ! A plume of

smoke arose outta it coupled with an awful smell. Song had to pinch his nose and exclaimed, “Dang! That smells like a hobo drank a gallon of Thunderbird wine and shit on the sidewalk on a hot day!”

But Dr. Flaygoil just guffawed, “Oh boys, that’s just the sweet scent of temporal fluidity.” The Arnold-Tones all pinched their nose and dusted the air as the smoke cleared. The roar of the machine soon subsided into a soft hum and the box rattled at a pleasant frequency.

“There now...it is nearly ready for your journey.”

“Um, gee. I have just one call I need to place before we go.” Cantor said sheepishly.

“Dear golly, you kids with your steady girlfriends these days!”

“It’s not quite that Doctor...but may I use your phone, Sir?”

“Yes, yes...but please hurry. Your destined date is entered in and the device goes into sleep mode after a few moments and I don’t want to wait for it to boot up again.”

“Yes, Sir.” Cantor scuttled to a corner of the laboratory to pick up the Doctor’s rotary phone for use. He dialed the numbers and looked over his shoulder, pleased to see the rest of the Arnold-Tones were paying him no mind. After a few rings the phone is answered – on the other end...? It was Madre Cantor. His Mother. She was running in a treadmill and eating popcorn, and her TV was blasting a pornographic film.

“Hey, sweet boy. I hope you have been very naughty for me to punish you...”

“Hola, mama. No, I haven’t been too naughty today but thanks for asking.” Madre Cantor bristled, she had anticipated a call from one of her gentleman callers.

“Mostly just been singing and stuff with my pals, but Mom....something has come up.”

“Jess,” she interrupted her son, “I expected something like this. You are going to time travel to the future with your Doo-Wop group, the Arnold-Tones.”

Now this led Cantor to surprise, the variety of bewilderment oft experienced by those too oblivious to surmise life as it exists around them. “How could you know, Mama?!”

“Mother’s intuition, Son.” At that moment she turned off the treadmill and sauntered over to a half-naked well shaven he-man sitting on a nearby wicker chair. She began to lather sweet smelling oils on him as she continued.

“Your padre and I know what this means to you, Arnoldo. We a very proud of you.”

“Okay. Well. I love you, Ma.” Cantor replied with disappointment evident in his voice.

“Chore, love you too.”

“Ma, can you tell Dad—“

He then was cut off by the *blurt* or the tone indicating he had been hung up on. After that, that boy was sure as shit lookin’ plain morose. He’d tried not ta show it as he slumped back to his pals. As he approached the other Arnold-Tones looked upon him with a few gallons worth of interest...a little too keenly interested if you askin’ me!

“Hey, was that your mom on the phone?”

“How is she? Did she seem upset?”

“She didn’t mention my name did she?”

But Arnolddo just ignored the queries as the ignorant and oblivious tend to do. He just rambled forward in depressive determinism, “I’m ready guys. Let’s go to the future. It couldn’t be no worse than this.”

Now Cantor had no ways to know it, engaged on the phone as he was, but them other fellers were choppin’ conversation ‘tween them when he was gone. They was doin’ that thing folks do when they’re protectin’ their ego but tryin’ to lead the group towards a foolhardy or cowardly decision all the same. Little did Cantor know, on the occasion he re-approached the Arnold-Tones, they were damn near on the fence, and were’n he to show any nature o’ apprehensive, whelp they were likely to have tossed in towel and given to scoops of sod towards any plan of time travel. But Cantor’s determination cinched it and they knew it.

‘He’s right guy,’ Croon agreed. “The future couldn’t be any shittier than this.”

“Yeah and I’m practically suicidal! I could give a shit if this time machine kills us all!” Nightingale says, elevating the mood further.

Song then piped up, “Alright! Let’s do this, guys!”

The change in tenor really delighted old Dr. Flaygoil, “That’s the pioneering, go-getter spirit fellas! Just like the moxie it took Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong to pull off that moon landing hoax!

Head down, Cantor tried abruptly to touch and activate that vibrating box but merely shook the thing and collapsed to the floor.

“Jesus! Hold on, kid! I have to engage the device first! Now it may not even work!”

From his spot on the floor, Cantor apologized. “Sorry.”

Then the Doctor flipped the switch and with a *whirr* and *whomp* the lid of that ol' box plopped right open and a great light shown out! SHLOOMP! It shot a beam straight up and into the ceiling. Cantor was within its sphere of influence so that sucker grabbed him up and spun him about! WHOA - WHOA -WHOA -he cried as he flew in circles as if bein' held and spun by his ankles. Then a great force bucks him down and tosses him right up at the ceiling!

SLAM! He hits the roof, but also disappeared. The rest them Arnold-Tones is pure shocked and awed!"

"It worked!" hollered Flaygoil, with perhaps too much measure of surprise. He coughed to himself upon the crooners notice and muttered, "I mean. See I told you! It works."

"I dunno, that looked painful...is that how it is supposed to look?" asked Nightingale.

"Yes, probably." answered Flaygoil. "Now who's next?"

The Arnold-Tones looked at each other with only questions in their eyes.

"He was the dumbest of us," declared Song, "So if we're going by that rubric I'd say you're up."

With that Song fingered Nightingale.

Arnold Nightingale looked upon Song with wry disdain for the insult.

"Ha! I'm smart enough to understand reversed psychology, pal. But I'll show you! Doc, I'm next, fire it up."

Flaygoil complies, inciting the machine to *whir whir whir*. Nightingale does a backwards walk, hands stretched out as he mean mugged his buddy Song. He was trying to insinuate the position of a tough guy, but he babbled and cried like a baby once that machine ray snatched him up and tossed him in circles in the same fashion it had done Cantor. That boy whimpered like a puppy in a

thunderstorm in a kennel on the 29th day. But soon ‘nuff he was tossed upon that ceiling and disappeared into the future too.

“Looks like he made it.” declared Song.

“Sure did...and if they didn’t, we’ll just have to read about it in the obituaries section.” agreed Croon.

“The future’s obituary section,” quipped Song, with a wise-cracking smirk.

As if to punctuate his smart take Song just did an elegant skip right through that still whirring laser ray of light to his destiny. His journey seemed a lot more elegant and less painful, he just slipped right through like a greased up gerbil bein’ shoved through a two inch galvanized pipe fitting. Maybe the machine was learnin’, or maybe Song had better form? The fuck do I know?!

So that left just Croon standing there with Doctor Flaygoil. The Doctor gave Croon a look as if to say whelp’ yer next, but Croon just kinda stood their apprehensive like.

He wondred, “It’s be pretty awful to turn back now and forget about the whole thing, huh?”

“Young man, that would be one of the worst things you could do. You’d strand all your friends in the future! They’d be a Doo-Wop group trio! Why...that’s ridiculous! Quartets are the nom de rigueur, and I’ve heard of quintets sure. But if your group is a trio you had better, just better be a folk group!”

“Yeah. It would be just about the worse thing ever to leave my best friends in the world stranded as a folk trio in the future.” Croon just stared into the temporal vortex thinkin’. “Although I heard the Bellhops just lost a member to syphilis and have an opening slot. I could be in a group conforming to color lines and have a lot less hassle.”

“C’mon, grandpa! I know he must go to the future, stop messing with me!”

Child I am building up dramatic tension! Don’t derail my flow here you little piss ant. Shit. Whelp at least I can tell yer listenin’. I been shoutin’ at the back of yer goddamned head as you play that videogame!

Anyhow. So Dr. Flaygoil started lookin’ all nervous like Croon was gonna back out on him.

“My dear boy! I was determined to do good with my new invention! If you back out my altruistic act will be for nothing! This is science, there can be no unintended consequences of an experiment you foolish child!”

With that Croon just gave the doctor a friendly buddy punch on the arm, beamed a smile and said, “Aw, just messing with you Doctor! Of course I wanna go to the future with my pals! See ya later!” Croon approached the time slit and tried to jump in feet first, like a scared child jumping off a diving board. The temporal gateway held him in its grasp for a moment then threw him up to the ceiling.

KNOCK! It appeared Croon bumped his head for a moment and then he disappeared, presumably to the future.

“Oh. Delightful.” Alone with himself, the Doctor fiddled with his hands for a moment in order to figure out what next to do with himself. He punched a button and just like that that durned TURD just closed up in on itself and there sat that tiny metallic box all by its lonesome on the ground. The doctor ambled up to his creation and picked it up, it sure was lighter than it looked and tha’s how a feeble old feller was even able to carry it some.

“I didn’t imagine him as old, grandpa.”

Hmm. Yer right, yer right. He wasn’t too old. Old compared to you and a youngin’ compared to me. I guess I just meant to convey ta you that this contraption, though it did a big job of throwin’ people through the universe to another time plane, it sure didn’t take up a lot of real estate or have a heft to it.

The doctor had that thingy picked up his arm and cave a WHA-TOOT! He hocked a loogie right upon it and gave it a shinin’ with the sleeve of his lab coat. Ha! Well I reckon had I made such a invention myself I’d be darn proud of it too and want to keep it spick and span. Now he set that thing down upon his lab table, and the doctor just couldn’t help but think and hope that sometime ‘fore too long he might get a message back from those boys he sent to the future. After all, playing with fields of time as he had presumably done, no reason the message couldn’a been received immediately or even a few days prior. Then he realized to hisself...were he never to hear back from the Arnold-Tones, how could he even know whether the TURD worked?

“He could send a probe to look for them.”

Yes of course he could! Shit, girl! Don’t you think that was the next thought of reasoning the doctor had in the first place?! You don’t even let me get to that bit of the story organically fore you gotta chime in you snide little fuck, child!

“Geez, sorry! Just go on then.”

The doctor pondered that thought for a spell, then realized. “Oh yeah! I’ll give it a few days to see if I receive a message, then if not I’ll send a probe to look for them!”

So the doctor turned on his transistor radio and got to listening to Perry Como and other classic adult contemporary tunes on something called the AM frequency – that is a thing before podcasts and mp3s was invented . So he’s shaking his butt a little and tidying up to the music when he hears the floppy feet of his assistant smacking against the linoleum of the laboratory floor.

Then wouldn’tcha know it, in waddled a lady we could regard as Dr Flaygoil’s lab assistant Cris. The doctor looked pleased to see her and exclaimed, “Oh Cris, there you are! You just missed it. I happened upon test subjects for my latest invention, the TURD. And they just recently departed for the future!” Now “Cris” took opportunity to reply, but I should say her voice would be queer-meaning weird – to a normal pair of ears, it was loud and round in sibilance and a scratchy kinda voice. I’ll take time to mention if storytelling came with sound this voice could perhaps even be familiar to you! Anyhow, Cris replies, “That’s just wonderfully, Doctor! I think that’s a cause for celebration. And you could tell me more about those four boys you sent into the future.”

So I has mentioned how this Cris ladies voice was kinda odd...and I implied she could even be familiar to you. Now I reckon I’ll take a straight path to the point. We already met this Cris lady, and she was none other than Crimble Clown!

Whoa! No need to turn round from your game there, I can see that does surprise you some but I wouldn’t want ya to fall down that pit and lose a life.

No, Flaygoil had no clue that Cris was Crimble and she wers a clown. Y’see Crimble was fairly new to the position and took pains to disguise her clownishness to the scientist. She caked on

powder makeup over her normal clown makeup look. It looked a bit weird as one could expect, with certain hues of red still poking through a thick and bright white coat of face shellac. The doctor may have spent a passing moment thinking it was an odd form of unflattering, but hey, he knew he was a man of science that understood little about the ladies ways of wearing makeup. She couldn't do much to disguise her huge tight curls or primary colored red hair neither, she just planned to tell anyone who may ask that she had Irish heritage. Disguising her clothes was easy, she just covered herself with a lab coat that hid her normal wide hipped polka dotted ensemble. Now don't ask me about the nose! That bit was easy, she just took it off as it's only a red foam application. Just about the only thing the doctor found out of place was the Crimble's giant ass feet covered up by them big ass shoes.

Hold on. Lemme take pause here.

“What is it, Grandpa?”

It's jus' that...for this next bit I think I better change something. I'm thinkin' I'm gonna head to the room and put on my formal denim pants.

“Jeans? Why? You look comfortable enough in your sweats.”

“And that's just it. This next part enters into appears of some certain sensitivity. Let's just say that these sweats don't do much to contain a fellers excitement. I need something with a bit more restraint.

Now don't look at me like that, kid! All shocked and stupid faced. Here I go, I'll just retire to my room for a moment and be back in a sec.