

DIVINE G ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS

TIME JACK



A NOVEL BY JOHN WHITFIELD

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A Novel By John Whitfield

Also by John Whitfield
Under Pseudonym Divine G

Novels:

- Baby Doll* (Published by Q-Boro Books)
Money-Grip (Published by Street Knowledge Publishing)
Money-Grip 2 (Published by CreateSpace)
Enigma of Love (Published by Divine G Entertainment)
The Canarsie Connection (Published by Divine G Entertainment)
No Other Love (Published by Divine G Entertainment)
TGONG (Published by Divine G Entertainment)

Short Stories:

- Averted Hearts* (appearing in *The Game*, published by Triple Crown Publications)

Stage Plays:

- Peak-Zone* (appearing in *Exiled Voices, Portals of Discovery*, published by New England College Press)

TIME JACK ®

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Dedication

This novel is dedicated to the number one person in my life: Good ole mom. She is the one person who has proven time and time again that no matter what the situation she will always have my back. This novel is dedicated to you for being there when times have gotten extremely rough, rocky, raw and real. Once again, thanks for all the support, love and understanding.

PRELUDE

Calvin Thompson's sweat-covered face glistened like a melting Hershey's chocolate bar as he barked commands. "Decrease the pitch!" He was dressed in a white lab coat and stood inside a topless control station behind a plexi-glass window, watching a machine the size of an overgrown phone booth. Four other scientists, all similarly dressed, sat behind consoles, adjusting computerized devices connected to the machine. Calvin's anxiety resonated from every part of his body as he nervously rocked back and forth on his heels with his arms crossed. "Take it easy!" He shouted when he heard a surge. "We're not in a race!"

The anticipation in the laboratory had almost reached pandemonium. As Calvin looked on while a mixture of frustration, hopelessness and bewilderment raced through his body, the machine hummed loudly and violently. What was causing the flaw to persist in this manner!?

Every so often sparks flew from the base of the machine.

Eric Seabright, Calvin's assistant, shuffled over to Calvin and shouted over the noise. "It's not the pitch! We have to increase the energy flow in the distributor! It'll balance out the defect!"

Calvin turned and met Eric's excited stare. That was a very risky maneuver; if too much energy was introduced too quickly, and a surge took place, the Gallium Phosphide Crystal could explode and not only destroy the machine, but possibly the entire lab. This was the reason Calvin repeatedly discarded this approach whenever the thought crossed his mind. Calvin faced forward and resumed watching the machine as his thoughts ran wild. Could this really be the root of this defect? he wondered. After hastily weighing the situation and the consequences, he decided to take a chance. Eric's suggestion had to be clear confirmation that he was initially on the right track.

"Demetrius!" Calvin shouted as he turned to the curly haired Latino man, who had a smooth facial complexion and even features. He

sat behind a console, resembling a NASA space station. "Slowly increase the energy level in the distributor!"

Demetrius's brown eyes widened in shock as he looked up to meet Calvin's no joking stare. After a moment, his trembling fingers began activating the computer dials.

Calvin held his breath.

The humming increased and the whole laboratory tremored as if an earthquake had activated.

Calvin turned, saw Eric was enthralled with excitement, and for the first time it dawned on him; this could be one of Eric's tactics to sabotage the experiment. Eric tried to conceal his desire to gain control of the project, but Calvin's keen ability to read peoples' ulterior motives was as brilliant as a God given gift.

Suddenly, the Time Machine made an ear torturous squealing sound and the smell of burning plastic appeared. The sparks coming from the base of the machine were now flowing steadily.

Calvin calculated what the sound and smell represented, and terror bolted through his body. He realized he made a monolithic mistake that would cost him his career. The Time Machine was going to explode!

Just as Calvin frantically spun around, about to scream for Demetrius to decrease the energy, and before he opened his mouth, a sudden, tremendous flash engulfed the lab.

CHAPTER # 1

Calvin entered his office as his head spun with fury at what he had done. How was he going to explain this!?! He flopped down in the seat at his desk and started cursing himself for allowing his overzealousness to cause him to make a decision that brought about this uncomfortable moment of painful mental aerobics. Even though he subconsciously knew his actions were appropriate in light of the greater good that will occur down the road, his heart, on the other hand, seemed to be telling him that his sacrifices might not be worth it. That voice in his head reminded him that he was losing something far greater than success. He didn't want to hear this, so he struck out against the invading thought by opening the project file on his desk, hoping it would help take his mind off the guilt and pain he felt in his chest.

The second he laid eyes on the Board of Directors' statement in response to his progress report, explaining how the energy increase repaired the flaw, he smiled cheerfully. In an instant, he was beginning to feel like his old self again. Then, he repeatedly began telling himself Dameeka would understand why he could not attend her first Junior High School theater performance, and slowly he began feeling a little less guilty. If only he hadn't promised her he was going to be there, he could have avoided breaking her little heart once again. The image of Dameeka's hurt facial expression when she looked out into the audience and saw Ramanda there alone, unleashed a pain-stricken grunt.

As Calvin struggled to convince himself Dameeka would understand, he suddenly heard Eric's hard sole shoes approaching his office. He couldn't understand how those damn shoes could make a tocking sound like no other pair of shoes he had ever heard before. He wondered if Eric had them custom-made with a unique material that made them sound that way.

Tock! Tock! Tock . . .

Calvin sighed, reclined in his seat and braced himself for the storm that was rapidly approaching. There was no doubt there was going to be some fireworks. Calvin fixed his clean shaved face, making his ceaselessly serene and friendly expression appear firm and unwavering. His contagious ready smile mutated into a lock jawed frown that was alien to him and looked as fake as a counterfeit Rembrandt painting. After all these years of mind wrecking research, and putting up with all the racism at every single stage of his career, there was no way he was going to allow some new jack, rich kid who was as spoiled as week old milk sitting in the blazing hot desert sun, to walk in on his project and take everything he worked so hard for right from under his feet. If you kind-heartedly gave an inch, they would ruthlessly take a mile!

There was a knock. "Come in." Calvin shouted.

When Eric Seabright entered, Calvin realized he underestimated his response. His boyish facial features and those stone chiseled cheek bones encased in a head full of sandy brown hair didn't look upset in the least. Eric looked so calm, Calvin's thick eyebrows crunched closer to his soft brown eyes with perplexing force. Calvin even felt his dark brown skin turning lighter as the confusion mounted.

With a pleasant smile Eric said. "We need to talk, Calvin." He waited for Calvin to offer him a seat, but after a moment breezed by without receiving it he invited himself.

Calvin locked eyes with Eric. "I'm all ears." He said, reminding himself that smiling faces tell lies, and they don't tell the truth.

"I read the board's response to the progress report and I think it's rather unfair my efforts weren't mentioned." He was struggling to keep his promise not to blow a gasket. "What happened?"

"The board writes what it wants in those reports, Eric."

Eric swallowed the built up rage in his throat as he pulled a copy of the report from the pocket of his lab coat. "This report says you told them it was you, and you alone, who repaired the glitch in the

Continuum Antigravity Infusion System." He politely laid the document on the desk.

Calvin sat up and clasped his hands together on top of the desk. "I don't want to appear as if I'm unconcerned about your grievance, but I am the lead scientist and the time travel expert on this project. And you were brought in to assist me ... Yes, you did help. But I discovered the flaw and you--"

"With all due respect, we may still be in the lab trying to rectify the defect, if it wasn't for me."

Calvin sighed hard. "You actually believe without you this problem would not have been detected?" He shook his head with a smirk on his face, displaying just how pathetic he thought Eric's position was. "Has it ever dawned on you, if I could create the Continuum Antigravity Infusion System, it's apparent I could repair a minor glitch?"

With complete composure, Eric said, "I heard it was your father who created this system, and it--"

"You should do your homework, Eric." Calvin rose to his feet, allowing his impatience to take control. "I'm not going to alter the report. Your contribution was minimal. Any way you choose to look at it, standard protocol says it's well within my right to present my report in this fashion, since you are my subordinate."

Eric humbly locked eyes with Calvin's. But he really wanted to jump up and release some of his frustration. The desire to be the first official time traveler was so piercing, Eric felt a mixture of sheer terror and hatred at the thought Calvin was going to be the one. This was going to be the greatest scientific accomplishment of all times and Eric was willing to do anything to have his face represent such a phenomenal scientific achievement. He was hoping he could get the board's attention by showing them he was more qualified than Calvin to run the project, but things weren't unfolding as he would like. Although he was recognized as the second most qualified Time Travel Specialist, being

number one was the only position he could settle for. What the hell was the board thinking!?! How could they allow this!?! Eric told himself if this were a couple of hundred years ago, he wouldn't be sitting here locked in a staring match with Calvin. He was convinced this work fanatic, arrogant Negro would be shining his shoes and begging to clean his bathroom!

With a humbled smile, Eric rose from the chair and spoke in the most respectful fashion he could muster. "Thank you for giving me the opportunity to voice my grievance. Now that you mention the protocol, I must admit you're right. I was just hoping our teamwork philosophy would allow each team player to receive credit when he demonstrates he wants what's best for the team. Sorry for the intrusion, Calvin." When he saw Calvin's head nod, he picked up the report from the desk and exited the office.

Calvin flopped down in his chair as a disturbing premonition swept over his entire being. Alarms were going off in the back of his head; each one telling him something was wrong with Eric's nonchalant response to the report. Usually he was excited and hostile about everything. That over-confident smirk and that warped twinkle in his eyes were even more troubling. When the board brought Eric in as his assistant, it only took a couple of days for Calvin to see Eric was an extremely competitive person who had his eyes fixed on taking Calvin's position. It wasn't Eric's desire to become the top man on the project that made Calvin nervous. Since the board wanted the most qualified scientist to be in charge of the project, and because Calvin knew he was the best, Eric was no real threat intellectually. But what got under his skin was Eric's money. It didn't take a lot of brains to recognize money made the world go around, and usually when people with substantial amounts of it went out of their way to obtain things, they usually got what they wanted.



Eric had the expression of a man in deep thought as he headed toward Diana Fullmore, his girlfriend's office. He actually was sizzling with rage.

Diana was talking into her voice-activated computer when Eric entered. She was a brunette with matching colored eyes, and her lustrous wavy chestnut hair that fell to the middle of her back when she let it all hang out was her most notable feature. With high cheekbones and a waist that was disproportionately small in relation to her thick, muscular looking legs, Diana could turn plenty young heads despite being 36 years of age and could even pass for a model. She stopped in mid-sentence when she saw the tension throbbing from Eric's body. She rose to her feet. "I guess I don't have to ask how it went."

Eric sat in the chair next to the desk, causing Diana to sit back down. He sighed hard and said. "I can't take this shit anymore. I see the writing on the wall as clear as day. As long as Calvin is in charge of this project, he's never gonna allow my accomplishments to be recognized by the board."

"Well," Diana leaned back in her chair. "I warned you. Calvin is very over-protective of this project. He's not gonna let anyone out shine him. His selfishness is a blinding emotion that'll never allow him to give others the credit they deserve."

Eric felt like all his dreams were being shattered one by one as reality set in. The feeling of hopelessness and defeat were so overwhelming, he felt the urge to cry slowly metamorphosing into a strong sense of despair. He shifted his emotions back to the feelings he was content working with. Ever since he took this position, he'd been hoping and praying it would not come to this. But, at least he could say to his conscience and the integrity component of his mind, he tried to get Calvin to do the right thing. He sincerely didn't want to result to the use

of extreme measures. A hard sigh escaped from his body because he wasn't asking for much. All he wanted was to receive credit for the work he put in. He locked his stare on Diana as he spoke. "He's giving me no choice."

Diana held back a determined smile. "Oh, you do have a choice. Life is full of choices. All you have to do is determine what are your options and select one."

Eric's mind was made up. "I didn't make this choice. He did." He rose and when he received Diana's supportive head nod, he turned and headed for the door.

CHAPTER # 2

Calvin entered his two-story, two-car garage, pool in the back, modern style home, realizing his guilt had reached its zenith. But the moment the stomach teasing aromas of Ramanda's succulent delicacies coming from the kitchen touched his senses, he felt an emotional skirmish set off inside of him. The mixed smell of roasted soybean burgers, onions, garlic, brown rice, spinach, peach cobbler and several other aromas he couldn't identify made his mouth water with delight. His pleasure didn't last long because he felt worn-out with a ton of unfinished research looming over his head. Most of the day he was entrenched in an emotional tug-o-war match; exhilarated by the repair of the Continuum System, but deeply hurt by his failure to attend his daughter's play, and it all was finally taking its toll.

As Calvin closed the door behind him, and fastened the locks, he heard Dameeka rushing down the stairs. Hanging up his jacket on the coat rack, he felt her staring eyes boring into his back. When he turned, and saw Dameeka leaning against the wall with her arms crossed, he couldn't believe how much his 13-year-old child was starting to look just like her deceased mother, Cookie, especially when she was upset. "Sorry, Dameeka."

"What happened, Daddy?" Dameeka twisted up her face, and did not wait for his answer because she knew what the excuse was. "Do you know how embarrassing it is to be the only person whose father wasn't there?" She wanted to unleash a barrage of fake tears, but she couldn't seem to get them flowing.

Calvin stood there looking like a misplaced pimple. "There was an unforeseen emergency with the project, honey." He went to her, gave her a strong hug and a kiss on the forehead. "I'll make it up to you." He was about to say I promise, but realized he was running this particular phrase

into the ground whenever he found time to talk to her. "Please, baby, try to understand. This is gonna be--"

"I know, I know." She said with a mimicking voice. "This is gonna be the World's greatest invention. I understand, daddy."

With his arm around Dameeka's shoulder, they headed for the kitchen.

Dameeka wanted to lash out, but her dad completely disarmed her with his warm embrace and affection. "When you start traveling in time, daddy, I want to go with you to the time when Cleopatra was the Queen of Egypt."

"As long as you promise not to alter any of those events with your beautiful smile, we'll see what we can do."

They entered the kitchen and saw Ramanda working at the food counter wearing a white apron. Her high yellow complexion and those sensuous brown eyes and lips made her look totally out of place slaving in front of a microwave. She looked like someone whose business was best illustrated in the bedroom or on the silver screen.

Ramanda spoke without turning around. "You guys can get cleaned up, dinner'll be ready in a minute."

Calvin gestured to Dameeka to go get cleaned up and she obeyed. He came up behind Ramanda, wrapped his arms around her sexy waist and kissed her on the neck.

Ramanda spoke while stirring the pot of rice. "Your daughter was shattered when she didn't see you in the audience."

Calvin eased away from the embrace and leaned against the counter. He really didn't want to be reminded of the pain he caused Dameeka and was now becoming irritated. "I tried to get away, Ramanda, but once we repaired the defect in the Continuum System, there was nothing I could do."

Ramanda faced Calvin with excitement in her eyes. "You finally fixed it!? So that means there's gonna be a test run very soon?"

"Yes, that's exactly what it means. In fact, we're scheduled to send Blinky on a trip tomorrow."

Ramanda went to the counter, retrieved the strainer and began pouring the long grain rice into it. "Calvin, I understand how important this project is to you, but your daughter really needs to spend some time with her father. I'm doing the best I can to fill that void. I really don't think she's fully over the loss of her mom. We get along just fine, but if you were around more, it would make it a lot easier for our--"

"Dameeka assured me that she understands," Calvin hated when she rubbed in the fact he was inadvertently neglecting his daughter. "This is only temporary."

Ramanda started preparing the table and held back the urge to remind him four years of being an absentee father was not temporary. "Well, Calvin, I'll say it again; it's time to squeeze in some quality time with her. Just one day out of a month will help tremendously and make a world of a difference."

"Please, let's not start this again. I told you, Ramanda, we're at the most crucial stage of the project."

"Calvin, something has got to give. Your child needs your support." She sat down and gestured for Calvin to do the same. He refused. She really wanted to tell him she needed him as well, but the use of his daughter would obviously have a better effect and a realistic potential to bring about some results. "Some sort of sacrifice on your part has to be made. If you love her you would--"

"Don't throw that in my face, Ramanda. You know I love my daughter. This is absolutely the wrong time for this. I'm literally days from reaping the benefits of all these years of mind breaking work." He almost raised his voice too high, but caught himself. "Have you been listening to me!? I'm almost there. The first official time traveler, do you know what that means?"

"Of course, I know what it means. But whatever happened to keeping things balanced. All work and no play is a formula that'll--"

"I thought we agreed when this is over, we'll make it like it was before. Dameeka understands, why can't you?"

"Your daughter tells you she understands because she loves you, and wants to make you happy." She took a moment to collect her thoughts. "Have you ever walked in on her while she was crying? Have you ever asked her why she was crying?" Ramanda saw Calvin bowed his head. "Well, I have. And you know what she says 99.9 percent of the time when I ask why she's crying?"

Calvin sighed, leaned against the counter, and crossed his arms impatiently. He looked into Ramanda's eyes. Why was she doing this!? Why now?!

Ramanda sensed he wasn't going to answer. "Dameeka claims she cries because she's losing her dad." Ramanda rode the silence for all it was worth, maintaining eye contact every step of the way. A moment later she said. "I was thinking, maybe this weekend the three of us could go to the movies, or an amazement park like Great Adventures, even a restaurant, or just go window-shopping, anywhere as long as it's the three of us together."

Calvin bowed his head again because he felt terrible. He was so into this project, he couldn't squeeze in a measly single day with his family. When he felt himself slowly giving into Ramanda's suggestion, he heard his dad's dying request scream in the back of his mind, and he began shaking his head. He refused to let his focus be knocked off track. He came too far for this! There was simply too much on the line and too many years of hard work to waver now.

With a straight face, Calvin spoke softly. "I'll say this again. This is the most crucial stage of this project. All of my time, including work-time, spare-time and time off, must be spent at the lab and putting the final touches on this project." He paused, realizing the mere mention of

the word "time" and "project" compelled him to look at his watch. He sighed, wishing there were more hours in a day. "Sorry, Ramanda, please try to understand." He wanted to give her a hug and a kiss, but the frown that suddenly appeared on her face told him to let it go. "I'll eat later. I have to get right to work on a couple things before tomorrow. If you want, you can put me a plate on the side and I'll get it as soon as I can." He rushed out of the Kitchen.

Ramanda shook her head in disgust, wondering how did Calvin's ex-wife (Dameeka's mother, Cookie) put up with Calvin's placing his work before his family, his health and everything else in his circumference. She often wondered how she, herself, was able to endure such neglect. Now that she saw their relationship intricately involved severe bouts of loneliness and never-ending rounds of minimal communication, she had second thoughts about marriage, even though she understood what Calvin was trying to accomplish.

Ramanda rose to her feet and began preparing two plates of food. Once again, it would be her and Dameeka eating dinner together. Ramanda once believed she could deal with Calvin's excessive work habits, but that was before she got a taste of genuine neglect. He hadn't touched her sexually in over a month and a half, and she was starting to realize this was standard operating procedure; one steaming hot episode followed by months of absolutely nada (nothing). Her rage was mounting daily because she needed some real, steady and hard-core affection, and if she didn't get it soon, she was going to be forced to jump ship on this relationship.

CHAPTER # 3

"Easy, Blinky," Calvin said softly to the lab monkey, who was making a loud squawking sound as he laid on a gurney with wires attached to his head, arms, chest and stomach. Calvin and Tina Jones, a short, stocky woman, with sandy brown hair, watery blue eyes and a severe case of acne, were conducting a head-to-toe exam on Blinky. Eric, Demetrius, and Diana were performing a series of last minute inspections on all the Time Machine components. When Calvin was satisfied Blinky was in excellent health, he turned and spoke to Eric. "How's everything coming along?"

"I think Demetrius discovered a minor problem," Eric was fiddling with the huge fiber optic cables in back of the Time Machine. "Hey, Demetrius, what was that you found?"

Demetrius looked up from his computer. "There's a hair fracture in the inner Cyclonic Plate." He walked over to Calvin. "Let me show you." He picked up a device resembling a flashlight from a tool cart and lead Calvin inside the Time Machine. He turned on the device and pointed the infrared beam of light at the almost invisible squiggly crack. "If you get us another Plate, we can replace it within an hour."

Calvin maintained his composure with an effort as he examined the fracture. How did this happen!?! Before his anger could grab hold of him he realized this wasn't the first time such a fracture occurred. Last week they found a fracture on one of the outer plates.

Calvin sighed and headed for the phone in his office at the other end of the lab. As the scientist in charge of the project, Calvin was the only one who could order supplies and equipment. He picked up the receiver of the phone on his desk and dialed the number to the warehouse. When the line was picked up, he spoke. "Larry, this is Calvin. I need you to send me a left inner Cyclonic plate ... Yes, as soon as possible ... Okay. Thanks." He hung up, went to the Time Machine

to conduct a few last minute checks and to recheck everything his subordinates had checked.

About an hour later, the outer perimeter alarm went off. It had to be the Cyclonic Plate. Calvin went to the visual intercom and saw Larry had apparently hired a new deliveryman without giving him advance notice in accordance with standard protocol. "Let's see your ID?" Calvin said into the intercom as he closely scrutinized the blond haired man with a thin mustache, dressed in the company uniform. He raised his ID card and Calvin honed in on the document. "Bring it a little closer to the camera." When he saw Eddie Bartlett's information was in order, he activated the entry dial. The locks opened with a loud clank.

Calvin felt the urge to call Larry and make a big stink, but too much time had already been wasted. Plus, he knew Larry would not send anyone to the lab without first receiving the appropriate security clearance, and if his ID wasn't intact, Eddie wouldn't have made it anywhere near the fence. Calvin watched Eddie through the security monitors, heading toward the entrance about three hundred yards from the outer gate.

Eddie Bartlett saw the rumors were true. Timetron really did have a fully self-contained state of the arts laboratory that had its own security system and needed no security guards. Covering over fifteen acres of land, the complex was down in a heavily wooded valley and was surrounded by triple layered barbed wire fencing that was sensory activated and had microscopic cameras all over the outer perimeter. With a one by three feet cardboard box tucked under his arm, Eddie nonchalantly moved toward the lab, examining the trees scattered about and the plush green lawns that looked like sophisticated carpeting. He wondered if Eric was exaggerating when he said any intruder who came within two feet of the fence without authorization received a debilitating jolt of electricity that left the invader unconscious for at least an hour. Animals other than humans were exempt!?

Eddie pulled his gaze from the scenery and let his eyes dance upon the main building. It was a one story, white brick, ultra-modernized complex with no visible windows and had an observatory like section on the roof. Eddie squinted his eyes from the reflective glare of the sun that bounced off the gigantic satellite disk in back of the building, which stood dominantly over everything else like an all-seeing eye keeping watch over the complex. Edward secretly commended Timetron because this lab was in the middle of nowhere. With the nearest sign of human life over twenty miles away, Eddie couldn't think of a more confidential location because this area was the perfect place for conducting a project immune from pestering eyes prying into private affairs.

As Eddie arrived at the sliding door entrance, he nervously hoped whatever Eric was up to wasn't going to cost him his job. Eric sounded like he was definitely up to no good. Eddie was never the favor giving type, but five thousand dollars wasn't something a smart person with gambling debts would let slip through his hands, especially when the money provider was able to guarantee him nothing would go wrong.

Eddie entered the lab and Calvin realized he evidently knew who he was because Eddie headed straight for him. Eddie walked across the lab, and Calvin saw all the high-tech equipment mesmerized him.

As Eddie moved pass the Time Machine, he saw it resembled an oversized phone booth that could hold three adults, and had a cylindrical tube on top leading up to the ceiling. His attempt to conceal his amazement was unsuccessful.

When Eddie arrived, he smiled as he handed Calvin the box. "Good afternoon, Mr. Thompson." He then handed Calvin the electronic signature device.

Calvin smiled back. "Same to you, Mr. Bartlett." He signed in the section of the devise which said signature and handed the device back. After Eddie gave Calvin a head nod and a smile, he headed for the door

he had entered the lab. Calvin headed for the counter on the far side of the lab to make sure the Cyclonic plate was intact.

Eddie carefully inspected the signature, as he moved across the lab, retracing the path he took moments ago.

Eric was assembling some tools on a mobile cart and made eye contact with Eddie as he walked by. When Eric saw his inconspicuous head nod, he felt a surge of excitement tumbled downward and crash landed in the pit of his stomach. He tamed the tight-lipped smile that almost slipped across his face. Eric scanned the area to see if anyone saw the visual exchange between him and Eddie. In one graceful sweep, he was able to conclude with unequivocal confidence that no one was paying him or the deliveryman any attention.



As Calvin helped replace the Cyclonic plate, while wielding sparks flew from the solder that mended the plates together, he slid into a daydream like trance. His mind retraced the history of time travel technology, and he smilingly basked in the thought that he was finally about to become an intricate part of it.

At the dawn of the twenty second century, Calvin bore witness it was at this point it all started to take shape. When Jonathan Moyer broke the light barrier, the field of time travel turned from a theoretical possibility into a legitimate field of science. Mr. Moyer solved the mystery behind Dark Energy and used that discovery to create an apparatus that allowed matter to travel at speeds faster than light. Although traveling at warp speeds was and remained limited to super-compressed energy, this achievement constituted a major breakthrough for the field of time travel.

Three decades later came the breakthrough that shoved time travel a huge step forward. Carl Thompson, Calvin's father, created a system

that not only transformed matter into dense, super-compressed energy, but also allowed this energy to be moved great distances and then safely reconstructed back to its original state. The system responsible for such a feat was called the Gallium Phosphide Crystal. But without a way to tame the devastating force of gravity, these breakthroughs were worthless, since gravity would crush anything that did not conform to its rule of law.

As a result, Carl began his work on what came to be known as the Continuum Antigravity Infusion System. But the moment he was weeks from putting the final touches on this system, Carl was struck down by a stress related stroke. As Carl laid in his death bed, he summoned his son, Calvin, to his bed-side.

Suddenly, his father's last will and testament flashed across his mind with profound clarity and Calvin grunted as the event re-enacted itself in his third eye as if it was appearing in real time, instead of inside his head.

Calvin had entered the hospital room on trembling legs. The antiseptic smell was everywhere, and as usual, it made him nauseous because the scent was synonymous with pain and suffering. He saw his father lying in bed with wires attached all over his body while the heart monitor beeped lively. Calvin saw his dad open his eyes, turn his head with a struggle and crack a pain-drenched smile when he saw Calvin. His chubby cheeks, squinted brown eyes, ashy golden brown skin and his head full of gray hair looked worn and sickly.

Carl spoke hoarsely with a trembling voice. "Calvin, come quickly, we must talk." He coughed painfully and gasped for air.

Calvin nervously pulled up a chair to his bedside, sat and grabbed his father's hand. "You shouldn't do any talking, dad." His father's grip was strong, almost desperate and it scared him. "I was planning to come see you tonight, but Nurse Serena called me at the lab and said you wanted to see me. She said it was an emergency."

"Listen, Calvin, I'm not gonna make it. I need you--"

"Don't talk like that, dad!" Calvin felt a tremor of dread sweep over him. He couldn't fix his mind to even image his father in a coffin. "Remember you said your worst enemy is your own mind. Talking like that will kill your will to fight this. The doctors said it's a fifty--"

"Listen to me," Carl said in his *I'm not playing any games voice*. "I need you to continue my work. The Continuum Antigravity Infusion System is literally days from completion. This is my entire life's work. Everything that I stood for is in--"

"But I know nothing about time travel, dad. I'm a geneticist. Studying genes and the--"

"You're a scientist! That's all that matters!" Carl coughed explosively, and saw it almost unhinged Calvin. "You have a critical mind, my son. You can do anything, once you put your mind to it." He paused, drawing deep breaths. "I trust no one else to carry on my legacy. Before your mother died, she asked me to let you be who you wanted to be, not to force you to follow in my footsteps, and that's what I did. But I need you to do this. I--I--" Tears rolled from his eyes as he coughed explosively. The thought of all those years ending up wasted and the prospect of his life-long struggle not being accomplished seemed more painful and frightening than the fact he was winking at death.

Calvin was flabbergasted and confused. He knew he couldn't tell his father no, especially not at a time like this. "Don't worry dad, I'll do it." He knew this promise was just words because his father was going to be just fine; the doctors personally assured him of this fact.

"All contracts are in order," Carl gasped for air. After a moment, he tamed the attack with a struggle. "Go see Bill. He'll explain all the legal issues. Calvin, please, promise me you'll be the first time traveler."

Calvin spoke, while squeezing his dad's hand with a loving embrace. "I promise, I'll be the first time traveler." He saw his dad

smiled and closed his eyes while his grip disappeared. "Now, you can calm down and relax--"

The loud, ringing sound that engulfed the hospital room when his dad flat-lined would echo in his mind for eternity.

Within two years, Calvin saw to it that the Continuum Antigravity Infusion System was fully operable. During numerous experiments, all compressed energy sent to various Black Holes, Cosmic Strings and Wormholes withstood all degrees and forms of gravity. The way the System worked was notoriously simple; the compressed energy was encapsulated in a negatively charged force field made from space debris taken from the rings of Saturn that possessed strong antigravity properties. When the main constituent, tycafolium, was extracted from the debris and made into a concentrate, the antigravity qualities increased. The more the substance was concentrated, the more the antigravity properties grew. Acting as an antigravity scaffolding, the casing covering the super-compressed energy would hold open a Wormhole portal long enough for the encased energy to pass through or the casing would simply repel any surrounding and ever-present gravity.

Once the gravity obstacle was conquered it was downhill from that point because time travel was well researched from a theoretical standpoint. For hundreds of years, scientists studied time travel, and fortunately, some of the theories developed turned out to be accurate. It had become common knowledge that Wormholes attached to Black Holes were time portals that could transport matter further into the future. Likewise, Cosmic Strings had the ability to send matter into the past. With everything in place, Timetron and a few other labs began a race to become the first to turn time travel into reality. After Timetron rebuilt a new Time Machine that incorporated all the new technology, and gave Calvin everything he needed to fulfill this mission, inanimate objects were the first things to experience time travel.

A ballpoint pen was the very first object to be placed in the Time Machine, and sent it to the ERB Black Hole in the Andromeda Galaxy at a velocity a thousand times faster than the speed of light. After the energy passed through a selected Wormhole channel, the energy was hurled back to Earth to a time zone about two hundred years into the future. As the energy landed on the planet earth, it was reconstructed back to its original form. The same procedure applied to backward time travel into the past. Instead of using a Wormhole as the transport medium, Cosmic Strings (long, dense, thin objects believed to have coalesced out of the universe's very earliest days) were utilized. As a result, the pen, in the form of super-compressed energy, was fired at the two Cosmic Strings located in the center of our Galaxy, the Milky Way. Traveling at the speed of 93 million miles per second, the energy flew past the parallel Strings, which in turn hurled the energy back to a time zone in the Earth's past. When the pen was brought back to the lab, it underwent various Carbon 14 tests and the microscopic dirt particles attached to the pen, confirmed the pen made contact with the Earth around the year 1005 AD as indicated by the Time Machine. Further tests confirmed the pen's molecular structure was brought back without a single flaw.

After a dozen successful experiments (transporting inanimate, inorganic objects), Calvin and his team moved on to inanimate, organic objects such as fruits, plants, and organs from animals. There were a few setbacks because some of the objects were returning with flaws in their molecular structure, believed to have occurred during the reconstruction process. On the surface the objects appeared to be in perfect condition, but upon microscopic analysis, the flaws were detected. The objects that came back without any problems were put under meticulous scrutiny and Calvin was baffled for quite some time. Finally, when Calvin took action on Eric's suggestion to increase the energy in the distributor, the defect was instantly rectified. During that

experiment, a sedated dog was transported to China in the year 313 BC and returned moments later. After a barrage of tests was performed, it was determined the dog's physical integrity was in order. When the dog was awakened, and began happily licking Calvin's face, the Timetron team cheered victoriously.

But the achievement that Calvin could call his own was the time dial which allowed him to pen-down time zones by manipulating the locations and angles in which the energy passed the coupled Cosmic Strings or entered a Wormhole. For example, the coupled Cosmic Strings utilized by Timetron covered a distance of 5 million miles, which comprised twenty thousand years of backward time travel. If the energy was directed at the top section of the Cosmic Strings, the energy (or time traveler) would be transported back twenty thousand years, but if it was aimed at the bottom section, the subject would be transported back only a couple of days. The meticulous aligning of the Time Machine enabled Calvin to manipulate transportation to time zones with near perfect precision.

Another achievement Calvin took pride in was his indispensable contribution to the development of the reverse system. This component in the Time Machine initially had significant defects, but Calvin added onto this system by creating the Micron watch, a device that activated the reverse process when the subject pressed the control switch on the watch. The Micron watch encapsulated the subject and anything he or she touched inside a Gallium Phosphide field. Once the return coordinates were activated, everything within this field was converted to super-compressed energy and taken through the return process.

Calvin also created a primer chemical that was designed to offset the violent and deadly effects of the deconstruction and reconstruction processes. Many insects and mice that traveled through time without first being chemically primed had died instantly from the trauma caused by the violent demolecularization process. With the use of a Gallium

Phosphide Zirconium compound that was injected intravenously, living subjects' atoms were smoothly deconstructed and reconstructed. This compound also ensured that the time traveler's body was perpetually in synch with the Time Machine.

But, today, Calvin's excitement was at its ultimate level because they were at the final stage before they would go public. Blinky was going to be the first living organism with monitoring equipment to travel through time, and if everything went well, they would be able to prove conclusively that time travel was not only safe, but it could also be monitored with audio and visual devices.

"That'll just about do it." Demetrius said as he completed the final inspection of the replacement.

Calvin was instantly pulled out of his energizing reverie. "Let's get Blinky dressed."

As Calvin placed the Micron watch on Blinky's wrist, the monkey squabbled happily. "You like this, huh, Blinky?"

"ARRAARR! ARRAARR!" Blinky responded.

When the watch was fastened, Blinky began toying with it, apparently trying to figure out how Calvin placed it on his wrist. Since there was no visible latch like the other watches he'd wore before, Blinky was baffled by the fact.

This particular Micron watch was manufactured without a control switch in order to prevent Blinky from tinkering with the experiment.

"Let's get that backpack over here," Calvin said to Tina. The Gallium backpack was equipped with a variety of monitoring equipment that would record and take samples of the time zone Blinky would travel to. The omni-directional camera and microphone would record everything in their vicinity, while the aerometeorograph would record temperature, atmospheric pressure, humidity, and the weight and density of the air and the gases present.

Calvin and Eric put the backpack on Blinky while Diana approached with a hypodermic syringe containing the primer solution. She belatedly tried to conceal the syringe from Blinky by placing it behind her.

"AAAAAHHH!" Blinky shrieked wildly, grabbing hold of Calvin's arm in terror. "AAAAAHHH!"

Calvin gave Diana a daggered-eyed stare, and then spoke comfortingly to Blinky. "Relax, no one's going to hurt you, Blinky." He massaged Blinky's hairy neck as his voice became more soothing. "You won't even feel a thing. And if you behave yourself, we got some real nice treats for you when you get back."

Blinky was determined not to get stuck with the syringe and began thrashing as Diana eased closer. Blinky kept his eyes locked firmly on Diana.

As she drew closer, Blinky moved away and got behind Calvin, squawking loudly while waving his hairy hands at her.

Calvin gave Diana an expression that told her to stop approaching. He was glad he had a back-up plan in place. Calvin gave Demetrius a covert nod.

Demetrius inconspicuously picked up the syringe from the nearby tray.

As Blinky was watching Diana's every move, Calvin whispered in Blinky's ear to relax and distract him.

Blinky was so preoccupied watching Diana he didn't feel a thing when Demetrius injected him as fast as a bird flaps its wings.

Without having to be told, everyone took their places.

Calvin grabbed Blinky's hand, escorting him to the Time Machine, while the others entered the control station, activating a spectrum of switches. Demetrius took a seat behind the mainframe computer and turned on the preliminary power source. The humming sound came to life.

Calvin opened the door of the Time Machine. The pressurized valve made a "sssssss" sound and a small cloud of smoke swirled from the Time Machine. Calvin kneeled and spoke softly to Blinky. "You gonna make us proud of you, Blinky. In about another half hour, you're gonna be the most famous monkey in the world, my man." He tickled Blinky's stomach. "When you get back we got a surprise for you. You with me, big guy."

"AAAHHHH!" Blinky started jumping up and down happily. "AAAHHHH!"

Calvin gave Blinky a huge hug and then ushered him inside the machine. He bolted the door. As he headed for the control station, Calvin turned and gave Blinky a wave.

Calvin entered the station, instantly barking off commands. "Activate the Gallium Phosphide Crystal." When Calvin saw the universal monitor indicate his instruction was obeyed, he continued. "Activate transport components."

The mild hum now transformed into an ear torturous streak as sparks started jumping enthusiastically from the base of the Time Machine.

Calvin saw Blinky was jumping up and down excitedly. He knew Blinky was not acting excited because he was afraid; he could not hear the horrifying noise since the Time Machine was soundproof. Calvin turned and looked into the eyes of each of his crew, seconds from giving the final command to jettison Blinky to Rome in the year 25 AD at the height of the Roman Empire. Everyone stared back, anxiously waiting with edgy expressions. Calvin looked at his watch. It was 4:07 p.m. He drew a deep breath and said, "On the count of three. One ... Two ... Three!"

There was a huge flash!

Everyone squinted their eyes in response to the brilliant light rays, despite the protective visors they wore.

The bright flash remained at an intense level for several grueling seconds and slowly subsided.

When the light receded completely, Calvin saw the Time Machine was empty. "Yes!" He mumbled joyfully.

There was a universal mutter of tight-lipped cheers.

"Activate all monitors," Calvin said when he realized there was no picture on the monitor directly in front of him.

"Everything's activated." Demetrius said.

Calvin looked at the other near-by monitors and saw there was nothing coming from any one of them. His heart tumbled from his chest cavity and landed at the base of his stomach. He quickly told himself not to jump to conclusions. Don't panic. "Are you sure they're activated?" He said calmly, surprising himself at how composed the words flowed from his mouth.

"Come see for yourself," Eric said, standing behind Demetrius, looking over his shoulder at the main monitor.

Calvin eased over to the main console. Upon arrival, his eyes scanned over each and every dial with lightning speed, hoping one of the switches was not placed at its correct coordinate. As the silence gripped the room, Calvin gritted his teeth and struggled to maintain his professionalism.

"Do you think we should pull him back?" Diana said.

"No," Calvin did not want any hastily and possibly reckless reactions. "Let's do a complete troubleshooting analysis." He moved back to the location he was standing moments earlier while the others began checking all dials. "I want no stone unturned and if that doesn't--"

"We have something!" Demetrius said excellently.

Calvin bolted back to the console. When he saw a very fuzzy image trying to come to surface on the screen, and then faintly heard Blinky's squawking sounds, he almost unleashed a victorious cheer. The way Blinky was squawking instantly told him something was wrong.

Blinky sounded as if he was in pain or in trouble. He even sounded like he was fleeing.

"Something's wrong, Calvin!" Tina said with terror in her voice.

"He's in trouble!" Eric screeched.

"Pull him in!" Calvin shouted. "Hurry! Pull him in!"

Demetrius's hand slammed down on the emergency return lever and the humming came to life with a vengeance. The lab began to shake and the sudden explosive flash appeared much brighter this time.

Calvin raced toward the Time Machine, not waiting for the energy surge to whine down. He slammed through the control station's door with Diana, Eric and Tina dead on his heels. Calvin's pace turned into a panic drenched run when he saw the machine looked empty. When Calvin reached the Time Machine and saw Blinky lying on the floor, he frantically unlocked the door and flung it open. Calvin turned and shouted. "Get a stretcher!"

Calvin kneeled and saw blood oozing from a series of injuries. Most of them were inflicted on Blinky's arms and legs. A tear almost escaped from Calvin's eyes as Blinky moaned in pain. "Hang on, big fella, we're gonna take care of you." He said softly and then noticed something in Blinky's blood-covered hand. It was hair. Calvin needed no other evidence to know Blinky was attacked by a wild beast and had fought whatever it was that attacked him.

As Diana and Tina rushed Blinky to the emergency room on the other side of the lab, Calvin stood staring into the oblivion as his mind started lashing out at him. If only he had pulled Blinky back at the moment he realized they didn't have a visual, he might have prevented this. He sighed in frustration as he headed for his office. Calvin walked pass Eric and saw he was about to say something, but upon detecting his locked jawed expression Eric had wisely changed his mind.

Calvin entered his office and turned on his voice-activated computer with a verbal command. He sat down and sighed as he

accumulated his thoughts, developing a plan of action. Before he did anything he had to clear his mind because frustration and anger were his worst enemies when it came time for critical thinking. "Activate visual and audio recorder graphs." He said to the computer.

A picture of the time travel camera, a graph of its structural make-up and all its specifications appeared on the screen. As the graphs of the audio and visual devices appeared on the screen, there was an onslaught of questions jumping around in his head: What the hell is causing these problems with the visual and audio? Why hadn't they obtained a clear view, even though all dials said everything was in order? And what happened to the sound? There was simply no rational reason for any of these malfunctions! Where's all this coming from!?

Calvin leaned back in his chair and said, "Present a complete read-out of all actual and potential defects."

Calvin watched the information popping up on the screen. He could already hear the executive board's distraught response since he had assured them an accredited and documented time travel would be ready by next week. Calvin gritted his teeth when the computer said everything was working fine.

He sighed, struggling to stay calm because this was going to be an all-night situation. His intuition was reminding him these unexplained problems could be foul play, and with this in mind he instructed the computer. "Give me a complete integrity analysis of all visual and audio recorder components." As the stress mounted, so did the realization that this setback was much bigger and more substantial than he thought. It was also self-evident that this mishap was going to cost him some major points.