

Time Travelling

This scene came from a much earlier version of the book (there was even a chapter on magic in that version - I wonder if that was because I had just read Harry Potter!). I was trying to explain the Many Worlds Theory of Quantum Mechanics in a descriptive way. I liked this scene very much and was reluctant to cut it but hardly anyone who read it (children and adults alike) knew what on earth I was trying to say. Let me know if it means anything to you...

We all squeezed into the time machine, Sparky sitting on my lap and Sleepy on Tara's. I started the computer program and clicked on the *Go* button. The pyramid tubes began to glow and the time machine started to vibrate. I shivered with expectation.

"We're off!" Tara cried excitedly.

"At last we're going home!"

There was a sudden bright flash of light. A huge funnel formed below us and we fell downwards, spinning like spiders swept into a plughole. We spun faster and faster and I felt as though I was being stretched like an elastic band. I held on tightly to Sparky with one hand and gripped one of the tubes with the other.

Enclosed in the bright yellow pyramid we floated in cold dark space. As we spun and turned I noticed one of the tubes was glowing less brightly than the rest. It flickered

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momentarily and then returned to full strength. Tara must have seen the tube flicker too, because she shouted something to me. I saw her yellow lips move and her anxious expression, but no words reached me – there was no sound at all. I tried to shout a reply but again no sound came out from my mouth.

The tube flickered again and died completely. The time machine spun violently and I cried out as I lost my grip on the tube. Sparky burrowed his head into my T-shirt and put his paws over his ears.

Suddenly, all of the tubes went out and we were plunged into darkness. The only light came from the faint glow of the computer screen. I glanced at the screen and saw the message *Program error. Divide by zero encountered. Automatic steering is now off.* Underneath the message I read the date. It said *-150,000,000 years* and then quickly changed to *-150,000,001 years.*

“No!” I tried to yell. We were going the wrong way! We were going backwards in time!”

As I looked at the date, hundred of years passed and then thousands flicked by at an ever increasing rate. We watched the screen in horror as the date spun backwards, taking us further and further from home.

I looked up from the screen and noticed pinpoints of light appeared all around us. Below us was a blue-green ball, spinning rapidly with another smaller white ball whizzing round it. It looked like the Earth and the Moon.

We shot upwards and away from the big blue-green ball and saw the whole solar system before us. Nine shining planets circled the sun, the inner ones flying round so fast they looked like coloured rings. We moved away from the solar system until the planets disappeared and only the sun remained. Then, it too became lost in a sea of spiralling, swirling stars.

A message flashed onto the screen *Warning. You are*

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now approaching the beginning of the universe.

Thousands of pinpoints of light surrounded us. They swirled in complex and beautiful spiral patterns, all moving together towards a central point.

Stars, I thought.

All the stars in all the galaxies were coming together and I realised we were seeing the beginning of the universe. It was the big bang, being played backwards. The spirals unwound and the stars began to blink out. Now we could see to the edge of the universe, a bright burning sphere rapidly falling in on itself. The sphere shrank to the size of a football and then the size of a pea. Finally it was gone completely. The universe was no more.

I felt terrified. I started out at the blankness of space. There was absolutely nothing there. We had come back to time before the universe existed.

A message flashed up on the computer screen *If automatic control fails the time machine can be operated on manual. Use the arrow keys to move in the lower four dimensions and the shift key and arrow keys to move in the higher four dimensions.*

Tara looked at me questioningly. I reached out and pressed one of the arrow keys. The time machine spun round wildly.

Patterns of colour appeared on the screen and changed as I pressed the key. I pressed another one and the patterns vibrated and shimmered.

Suddenly I noticed something happening outside. It was getting brighter. The darkness of space had gone. A grey swirling mist surrounded us. It grew brighter and we were soon engulfed in a sea of brilliant white light. The light was intensely bright, but it did not hurt my eyes, it felt soft and comforting and filled my whole body with warmth.

A message flashed onto the screen *Warning. You are now approaching the beginning of the meta-universe!* The

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brightness increased and the light felt almost solid, as though I could reach out and touch it with my fingers. Lines began to appear in the light, tiny hairline cracks that spread outward from a central point. It was like a solid sheet of glass that had been hit and was breaking into countless tiny crystals, each a perfectly regular geometric shape. It was like a crystal honeycomb, going on forever in all directions.

Inside the crystals I could see tiny points of light and as I looked closer I realised what I was seeing. Stars! Inside each of the crystals there were galaxies of stars. Each crystal was a whole universe!

As I looked closer I could see more detail inside the crystals. Then as I stared at one of the crystal universes it seemed to become larger and I felt myself being pulled towards it. I could see everything inside it so clearly that it was almost as if I was actually inside the universe and surrounded by millions of stars. I flew towards a spiral galaxy and then felt myself drawn towards a star at its outer edges. I could see its nine planets glistening like brightly coloured jewels. I recognised the green blue planet with its large white moon.

It was the earth!

I zoomed in closer and could see the village where we lived. There on the beach was Tara, Sparky and myself, collecting fossils. I could see the scene clearly now. I was kneeling on the rocks with the hammer in my hand, about to break open a stone, and Tara was sitting on the rocks beside me with Sparky on her lap.

But nothing moved. The scene was frozen. Everything was still, even the waves in the sea, like glass.

Then suddenly my attention was pulled away from that crystal universe and drawn to another. It was as though someone was guiding me there, trying to show me something. The crystal universe I was now looking at was

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almost the same as the other. Everything was frozen too, but in this one my arm had moved, I had almost hit the stone now.

Again I was drawn to another crystal universe. In this one I had hit the stone and inside I could see a golden ammonite.

Once more I was drawn to another crystal universe. It was exactly the same as the last one except that this time there was no fossil inside.

“Now do you understand, Peter?” I could hear a faint voice inside my head.

Understand? I felt so confused. What was I looking at?

“Each of the crystal universes is a single frame in a movie, a snapshot in time. But there isn’t just one movie, Peter, there are an infinite number and each one is different. They show us everything that has happened, everything that will happen and everything that could happen.”

But why was everything frozen? I wondered.

“There no time in any of these universes, they are completely still. It is you who creates time, Peter. It comes from your mind. Your mind moves from one universe to the next and so makes things seem to move. You choose our own path through the universes. You make our own journey.”

The crystal universes began to fade and merge together until only a brilliant pure white light remained. I do not know how long Tara and I remained, bathed in that light, gently and softly warmed and comforted by it. The light seemed to be full of goodness, almost as if it were alive and aware of our presence.

“It’s all a dream, Peter. Everything that has happened to you, you life so far, everything you thought was real. You dreamed it all.”

I nodded. At last I understood.

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I looked up at Tara and she smiled back at me with wisdom and understanding in her eyes.

“Nothing is real except the light. We dreamed it all.”

I glance down at the computer screen and saw that another message had appeared *Final warning. You are now approaching the creation of the unified field.*

The light had now become so bright that I could see nothing else. The time machine disappeared, Tara faded away and my body was absorbed into the sea of energy. I was losing myself, becoming a tiny shrinking bubble in a sea of brilliant light.

At first I felt terrified. Nothing was real, I realised. The world that I had believed in was a dream. I was not real either, my thoughts and my feelings were all a dream too, a dream that was shortly going to be washed away in the sea of light.

“Who am I?” I wondered. “What is this thing called I?”

I knew I was going to die. I knew that the essence of myself, that which I call I, was going to be destroyed in this light. I tried to hold onto myself, to fight the waves of infinite light that swept over me.

“There is no need to be afraid,” came the gentle voice inside my mind. *“Do not try to fight it.”*

I gave up the struggle. How could a tiny bubble struggle against an infinite ocean of light? I let the bubble burst.

It is difficult to explain what happened next. No words can ever describe that experience. I did not die. I did not lose myself. I did not lose any part of myself. Rather, I became the sea of light. I became infinity. I became everything that was and is and will be and could be. There was nothing that was not me. I felt so amazing, so wonderful – words cannot express what it was like.

Then, in an instant, it was over and I was myself again, looking out through my own eyes, feeling my own body again, but forever changed by what had happened.

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I looked at Tara. She gazed back at me and I knew that she had experienced the same. I could see it in her eyes – they shone with the pure light of peace, goodness and knowing.

I felt Sparky moving on my lap and glanced down at him. His eyes were like Tara's too, windows into the infinite ocean of love.

We had all been changed. Forever changed.