

## **Time is Money** by Kevin Semanick

I. The man was nondescript, but his accessories were dated. He carried a Satchel without a black mirror. His sports coat distracted from a missing SensorBow tie. And he was still wearing last year's Aug Reality Sites 3.6 over his eyes.

He had a hat, too. A bowler hat that must have belonged to his grandfather's grandfather. When he checked in at the receptionist terminal, the RFID chip recognized him as Robert Shimmer. Lucky for him, because no secretary would have accepted him as the CEO of Lorentz Industries. Tech companies might be run by nerds, but they were all run by powerful, cocky, assuming nerds. Their presence exuded shine similar to that of a rock star. Though he craved that, this was not Robert.

The terminal asked him if he would like coffee, as his chip profile indicated. He had been meaning to change that, but it was such a rigorous process to change chip information. It'd take all day even for the CEO of the country's fifth-largest company. He felt bad for all those on universal income that had to wait in line at three different locations over the course of a week just to upgrade their chips to include preference details.

With a sigh, he selected "Other." Then he proceeded down a list of choices, selecting "Carbonated" "Sugar" "Calories" "Dark" "Cola". It rolled down the slot next to his satchel. As he removed the beverage, the terminal and his AR Sites 3.6 flashed "< 5 minutes."

Now Robert heard the sighs of several other people in the room, as their wait times were pushed back for him. These were mostly Workers that weren't used to longer wait times, unlike the Universalists that were always at the bottom. Several of the Workers looked at him, knowing that he was important. Most Producers would take advantage of these situations, but not Robert. He lowered his eyes and waited his turn.

Robert's birthright was to be the Trustee for the estate of his Great-Great-Great-Great Grandfather, John. He had to come to the AlphabetPay offices every year, as the Trustees have been doing for the past 197 years since that fateful courtcase.

II. John's son, Evan was the first Trustee of the account. At the age of 23, he was too young to travel with the others. He didn't even want to go because of his girlfriend. And it would have broken his mother's heart to say goodbye to her husband and son on the same day.

The plaintiff began by asking Evan on the witness stand, "When was the last time you saw your dad?"

"Ummm. About three years ago."

"Was he alive that last time you saw him?"

"Of course."

"Did he leave alone?"

"No, there were four other men."

The plaintiff scattered four contracts in front of Evan, "Are these the names of the other men?"

"Yes"

"And are you the Trustee of their estates as well?"

"Yes, along with Mr. Washington." Leo Washington was the President of the company where his father had worked his whole life.

"And have you had any contact with your father since he left?"

"Yes, about three weeks ago."

"Did you talk to him? Did you see him? Did you text with him? Did..."

Evan's lawyer objected, "Badgering, your honor."

The lawyer continued, "I'll simply ask: what contact did you have with him?"

"He sent an LED signal."

"No further questions your honor." As Evan returned to his seat, the lawyer continued, "We'd like to call our next witness, our expert witness in the field of space travel, Dr. Ethan Roth."

The first few questions gave the professor a refresher on physics and time dilation. Then the lawyer proceeded with the case. "Doctor, since they left the atmosphere on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, how far has John and his crew traveled?"

"Through Exhibit 1A, we see in their plans that they are travelling at 99.75% the speed of light." Therefore, they are travelling about 186,000 miles per second. They've been gone for almost 40 months or almost 105 million seconds. So according to the calculation, which I presented the court in Exhibit 14B, they have travelled 195 trillion miles."

The lawyer interjects, "So doctor, if they are even alive then they would be 195 trillion miles away."

"Not exactly," the expert explained. "They are in an inter-galactical orbit, so if you look at Exhibit 14C, they are approximately 5 trillion miles away."

"So we all learned from you earlier that the speed of light can only travel at 186,000 miles per second. Therefore, the LED that Mr. Shimmer received was sent on what date?"

"Our calculations show that the LED had to be sent on August 3, 2023"

"So we know that someone sent a signal to John Shimmer, one month after takeoff?"

"That would be correct."

The lawyer finished with the expert still on the stand, "...and we don't even know which crew member sent that signal. There might only be one member still alive. Your honor, as you can see these annuities should not be paid, as there is no proof that the policyholders are still alive."

### III. Cycle 100

[Editor's note: There was no need for the Circadian Rhythm on the ship, therefore each cycle was 30 hours. Therefore in the 10 years their body would age, they would have 2,920 cycles.]

We finally hit the century mark today. And time is moving so slow, despite the fact that in reality it is moving so fast. I can't help but think that my boy, Evan will be turning 30 years old very soon. But a small part of me is hopeful that I might one day have a chance to search the records to see how he turned out. That is – if . So many 'ifs'.

The topic of 'what-if' is only second behind 'what I miss' during our discussions on this trip. Like any mission before us, there is the fear of our own demise. But with this mission, there are so many more things that can go wrong.

What if civilization is gone by the time we return?

What if civilization isn't civilized when we return?

What if we can't recognize their language or find a way to use technology to communicate?

What if our money isn't there, and we wasted ten years of our life?

These were all topics discussed during training. And we took as many measures to secure our safety and success. But sometimes the topics were less serious. Sometimes we would dream. Sometimes we would philosophize. And sometimes we would just wonder aloud.

So if we had a video feed, would everyone just look like they were moving in fast forward?

Do you think they're receiving our signal still?

What if they don't have pizza when we return?

What cool inventions do you think they'll have when we get back?

Somebody even asked me, if I would remarry.

Do you think it will be strange to meet your great-great-great grandchildren?

Think about all the wars, Super Bowls and movies we'll have to catch up on.

What do you miss more, beer or sex?

IV. The courtroom adjourned the next day, late in the afternoon. The judge had made his final decision.

He began, "Regarding the case of Lorentz Industries versus Roosevelt Investments, an order has been entered, as stated: Roosevelt Investments will maintain their annuity payments in an escrow account for the duration of the contract under two conditions. One, the LED light must continue to be present in the pattern rendered in exhibit 3K. Two, the trustee for each man must sign an affidavit each year that swears the annuitant is not knowingly dead."

This was the biggest victory for John, Evan, and Lorentz Industries. The judge continued with more restrictions and a small victory for Roosevelt Investments. “In instances that proof exists that the ship lands on another planet or inter-galactical body, any claims to contract protection and restitution becomes void.”

There was a whisper among reporters that provided annotation to the transcript being live-released on their streams. Precedent had been set that going to Mars would create a paradoxical existence. The person would no longer be considered alive and they most certainly wouldn't be dead. And they wouldn't seek to exist. They would simply just relinquish their existence on Earth. Although this would apply to Mars and beyond, it did exclude the Moon and Jupiter's moons. The same courts that struggled so mightily to define the rules on immigration among countries, not had to decide the same for planetary travel.

V. This was the week that had taken 200 years or maybe 10 years, literally depending on perspective. The world buzzed with excitement. Centuries ago, time travel existed only in imagination. But over the centuries, it sparked the greatest minds of math, science, philosophy, and technology to exceed the boundaries of the antiquated concept of time.

It spurred other startling missions, such as a commercial enterprise that put grandparents on 30 year time travel missions to see their grandchildren grow. But missions like the one undertaken by Lorentz Industries didn't continue when the Solar System Act of 2024 determined that investments, wills, contracts and annuities would be suspended when one of the parties left the solar system.

Several missions had returned in the meantime with little ill effects. Therefore there was great hype that there would soon be travelers from the past returning. It would be like opening a time capsule or bringing video images to life. But first, the travelers would need to adjust for several months in orbit.

Robert Shimmer sat with his bowler hat near family and the scientists at Lorentz Industries. Smiles and a small cheer were unleashed upon hearing the ship's first words, “We are home. Mission Control, this is John Shimmer. We can see the blue oceans and the green land. Please activate the Preparation phase.”

“Welcome home, sir. Preparation phase has been activated. Atrophy system initiated.”

“Check.”

“Connector docking ready?”

“Check.”

“Member count, five?”

John hesitated before answering, “Count, less one.”

There was a tiny gasp in the room. “Report name.”

“Sergei Leprov.”

“Noted. Thank you captain. Supply and health will be docking in T-8 hours. Over”

“Over.”

VII. Over the course of the next few weeks, Operation Prep Phase kept Robert busy. He returned with his satchel and his implanted chip to AlphabetPay. This would be different than the other 37 annual visits he had previously made.

The building was closed, expecting his arrival. The company’s three Co-Producers greeted him at the door, as did the Producer of Pangea Bank and Goldman Sachs. It was inevitable that they would want to curry favor with him. The government had tried to restrict their gains by changing the tax code. However, when America split, Pangea Bank and Goldman Sachs helped move the money into the areas of the world that would protect it.

He walked down the long corridor as Workers scurried about busily. They led Robert to their legal room, into the seat with the Audio recording chip receiver. It tried to verify John’s voice, but returned an error the first three times. Although it made everyone in the room nervous, it was to be expected for a voice that this technology remembered as being two centuries old.

“We are home. Mission Control, this is John Shimmer. We can see the blue oceans and the green land. Please activate the Preparation phase... Check... Check... Count, less one... Sergei Leprov... Over.”

It wasn’t really painful hearing the loss of Sergei for a fourth time. No one knew Sergei; it would be like getting sad when reading a history book about a dead general.

Finally the machine reported, “Voice verified. Escrow Account unlocked via court order #332N44LQ2”

The account had over \$165 trillion dollars, representing over 40% of wealth in the world. The owner of it, John and Robert, along with all of Lorentz Industries would rule the world. This wasn’t hyperbole. Robert was now preparing for the final phase King Landing.

As Robert checked the account figures on his AR Sites, a message popped up. It stated, “Roosevelt Investments DBA AlphabetPay contests the full payment and has filed a lawsuit against Lorentz Industries claiming they are only responsible for ten years of annuity payments.”

VII. The landing was scheduled for late afternoon. Everyone was connected to their Oculus or their AR Sites to watch the historic moments. As John Shimmer set foot on the ground, a roar erupted from the crowd. His leg trembled, possibly from fervor or possibly from the reintroduction to gravity.

Government officials, space officials and key executives from Lorentz Industries greeted him with handshakes and hugs. They were all people he never met, even his own descendant Robert. He didn’t even know the difference between family or not. A member of the Oculus team ran up to him with an Oculus Captain headset.

Immediately once donning the Oculus Captain, the world synced up with John. They felt his confusion about the people around him. The unsettling feeling of regret moved over him and therefore everyone around the world. Then shots of fear about the device that sat on his head gripped his thoughts next and wouldn’t let go.

Some people worried when he thought he might be assassinated. Others wept, when his sadness didn't subside. They saw what John saw, as he scanned around looking for anything familiar. Most people laughed when he spoke. His accent was that of the past, using words that hadn't been used or recognized for the past century.

By this time, minutes since he landed, most people turned off their Sites or at least switched channels. But the day continued unfolding with pomp and no purpose. The crowd slowly dissipated and few even noticed the other three crew members taking their first steps on land.

IX. The court case dragged on for years, until eventually John died. He never remarried. And he never felt part of a family again. A clip of his landing was shown across the Oculus and AR platforms, but no one really cared, especially not Robert. Without the entire purse of money and without the kingdom that had been imagined, Robert retreated to his skyline apartment. John was simply a stranger to him, one he never spoke to again.

X. A few of the crew members became influential figures in academia and society. But they never sought to rule the world which had been devised on Earth centuries ago.

In an interview, one of the surviving crew members explained why their coup never developed,

Power comes in many forms. Those that have a need to exert power over others cannot control their own personhood. Either by vanity, recklessness or idiocy, they are unaware of the purpose we contain within ourselves.

As we traveled, we didn't realize that landing in the future would significantly impact us. It is a marvel that is difficult to understand. Unbeknownst to even those that wore the augmented reality sets, we were coronated with knowledge of world development greater than anyone else in world history.

The power that we have been able to excavate from this knowledge far exceeds the power to rule over people.

Another crew member summed it up succinctly:

There was an epiphany that took between ten to two hundred years, realizing that money creates the illusion of power, but knowledge beckoned the truest type of power, that of respect.