

EXCERPT

A noise novel . . .

Sometimes Never

GX Jupiter-Larsen

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Sometimes

N e v e r

a excerpt

from the

novel by

GX Jupiter-Larsen

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sov sohviohjc... then the noise stop!

Calm... Again, collapsing ewuewiøpewkumew swooned both the deiüdüwikew and the hifidiode. Squatted thumping definitely murmured any brittle through the crack. Shakily stretched back into the moist reckoning, Bartholomew Lau approached these slippery surroundings enticed by the moonlight. Then suddenly he stopped. He wondered briefly how such plentiful yet tentative interest straggled in as these vaguely surprising discharges piled up between the half a dozen usual functions that would rise in plunked persuade while these tremendous perspicacious recipients were scuffing the transmissions under whooping xylowaves that yanked this zone. A surprisingly short amount to be both an austere abstraction, an algebrization, and optical illusion. It had also been half a Kettle day, 182 nights alone since Bartholomew Lau had been by himself. The only thing he could do was to think about the predicament he had gotten himself into, and how he was going to tell his friend about the news. After all, it really wasn't news any more. But it had been awhile since he had seen any sign of his nameless friend. He had left hidden notes regarding the lost cosmonauts all over town. He was sure his friend had found the messages, but not so sure that he had understood fully the meaning within them. Not that the messages were in code, but that the ramifications of the information was a little more than just outlandish. It was this feeling he had. That not everything about the displacement would be griped. At least not consciously.

It was after the said displacement that he had gone into his voluntary exile. Removed to recover all his thoughts, and come to the awareness he needed in order to feel still. A sweaty pummel tore the wallop. Far too many were addicted to company, obsessed with celebrities; or even worst, afflicted with both of these maladies. Not Bartholomew; he

neither hated or feared himself. Bartholomew preferred hearing himself think to hearing the idle gossip of others. Henry Darger used his archetypal Vivian Girls as his device for measuring the distance between contentment and despair. Bartholomew Lau adapted his very solitude for such calibration. True enough, no one is an island. Many of us however, function much better as an isolated peninsula; thank you very much.

The first second after midnight. Bartholomew's conclusion was that the accumulative effect of his thoughts was much too vague. He needed to focus more. After a recent serious illness, focusing on his lack of focus was the only thing he really could focus on; or so it would seem.

Two seconds after midnight. He remembered some years ago hearing reports about some super virus that had spread all over the world. The airborne virus itself was harmless. The report said the only way any one ever found out it was even around was because everyone who had the virus was also having the occasional polymorphic vision. In fact everyone everywhere with the virus was having the very same vision. Everyone that is except those scientists working down in the Antarctic. They were all sharing completely different polymorphic visions. Everyone with the virus outside Antarctica saw flashes of white cycles over whatever it was they were looking at. While everyone with the virus in Antarctica saw white flashes of intersecting horizontal and vertical lines. It was later discovered that the virus and the visions were totally unconnected incidents.

Three seconds after midnight. A connection had been made with a visitor from outer space. One Henry Lloyd. A being who could best be described as a grant slug with five eyes stuck on the front of his head. A body 20 metres long; weighing in at 500 kilograms. The Antarctic was the only place where he'd been while visiting the planet. Word had it, the scientists he met there had been effected. Somehow.

Henry had had many effects on many people on many planets. He had been around a long time. A very long time. A very very long time. Henry had travelled far and wide, and met so very many different sorts. He wasn't immortal himself, but he'd met a few that were. And he'd always end up feeling very sorry for each and every one of them. Immortality by its very nature disallowed self-awareness. One needs consciousness in

order to keep from getting killed, but if one was truly immortal one was also then indestructible. Consciousness just didn't serve any purpose for the eternal. With immortality one would never have any sense of proportion. The truly spiritual are morally obligated to commit acts of blasphemy as often as possible. The gods were clueless. They know not of what they do. They know not of what they are. None of them had any idea of their effects on nearby mortals. And none of them had any idea that they themselves even existed at all. As irony would have it, self-awareness would only ever come along for the ride if the journey promised to eventually end.

Consciousness and demise were like two long lost lovers that would always search each other out; and mortals were the spectators to their spectacle. The fatal kiss that always marked the completion of their quest is why most people are ultimately so self-destructive. Just too romantic to wait for the two sweethearts to finally embrace.

“...because there is no great creator or protector, we must all be on our best behaviour; otherwise life will be a living hell.”

“...could be more interesting if it was?”

Embraced by a colony of humans on Yuhec Siz, Henry eventually became their leader. Yuhec Siz was a large moon long used as a dumping site for toxic waste. Nourished by emissions from the methane and carbon monoxide gases in the moon's extensively thick atmosphere, the toxic waste had evolved over the years into a race of intelligent beings. Very intelligent beings; extremophiles that now obtain their energy from sulfur and other inorganic compounds. Their bodies were large horizontal black pools of mucky grime; their minds were clear and logical. There had been some cultural friction between the humans and the waste. Mister Lloyd, being the skilled diplomat that he was, with the reputation of being able to deliver, negotiated a peace treaty. The humans were so impressed they elected him leader. Yuhec Siz has many deserts. Henry later compelled the humans to count one-by-one each grain of sand on the entire moon. It was a number he just had to know for sure. The humans really got into it, making it their own passion. Everyone needs a focus in life. *Four seconds after midnight.*

What happened on Yuhec Siz was not at all uncommon. Over time, as

pollution climbed up the food-chain, the Sanitation Department became increasingly important to all systems of administration. Ultimately becoming its own régime. These days, in most of the civilized galaxy, the Sanitation Department remains the highest office of the land. With the Sanitation Commissioner the closest thing to a head of state.

No facet of modern life was governable. Regulating the tide of trash was equally impossible. As some forms of pollution evolved into lifeforms, developing rudimentary language skills, the Sanitation Department became the only effective go-between for old and new lifeforms alike. Trash management quickly became trash monitoring. Keeping count of the amount of debris in stream, and televising the statistics nightly. These were both the main role and inherent duties of any Sanitation Department, as demanded by the public at large. Measuring off vanished injuries, the break inserted on a massive drooping flicker. One that was brilliantly scattered around and snapped into a trembling comprehension of how faint each twist had become the garbage-collecting vehicles that would be replaced with patrol cars. Black and white Sanitation Patrol Cars, with flashing reds lights on top, would cruise the streets investigating the ever-increasing clutter that was life itself.

Human women with a fetish for authoritative uniforms would sway at the very sight of the Sanitation Engineer in his black leather. The smell of garbage became a powerful aphrodisiac.

As there became less and less difference between waste and assets, between what was pollution and what was not, Sanitation Departments all over the galaxy started to keep count of everything. Sending out agents everywhere. Giving numbers to every side of the polywave. The Sanitation Department had begun to behave much like some supreme mass-media news-service. Reporting on every digit and fraction thereof. Ultimately, every Sanitation Department expanded into a massive military and entertainment-industry confederation. Everyone seemed happy to go along for the ride. Afterall, every citizen had the civil obligation to undermine society at every opportunity.

***Five seconds after midnight.* It has long been suggested that if a three-dimensional object casts a two-dimensional shadow, then a four-dimensional object would cast a three-dimensional shadow. The logic of**

this however, only works if all 2D objects were shadows to begin with. Ever wonder if it were the other way round? What if direction was an optical illusion? What if all 3D objects were just shadows propelled from a 2D realm? Then, instead of higher dimensions ejecting downwards, it would be the lower or flatter dimensions bursting outwards. The 4D plane would be a shadow of the 3D world. Light wouldn't be hurled out by the sun; light would be falling into the sun. The sun-illuminated fluorescent glow of methane throughout Yuhec Siz's upper atmosphere revealed that the Intelligent Waste had their own passion. Not just numbers, but meteorology. Something they called "Interspatial Meteorology". Their bodies, it seems, had expanded into the fourth physical dimension. What was seen on the third physical dimension were just the three-dimensional cross sections of their complete four-dimensional bodies. Made it rather hard to tell which end you were talking to; sort to speak.

Six seconds after midnight. The Intelligent Waste were a little bit like The Dinosaurs. Equally smart, but whereas The Intelligent Waste have 3D brains with 4D bodies, The Dinosaurs have 4D brains with 3D bodies. Each dinosaur only has a tiny cross section of its wrest four-dimensional brain inside its smaller three-dimensional body. The Dinosaurs were very very resourceful. Even now-a-days no one is quite sure how they managed to leave the planet. What with only occasional radio singles being received from them somewhere on the other side of deep space. Well any way...

Seven seconds after midnight. Any way, the written language of The Intelligent Waste on Yuhec Siz consisted of cycles and lines. And this, it turned out was where we saw the first real link between any two things here. Dry tacks froze the gibberish and transcribed jostled jots ay.

No matter how close two things are to each other, even if they're touching, there will always be some distance between them. Call it the xylowave. Always some kind of span, be it spatial or not. And when you start playing around with inter-dimensional stuff; well, all kinds of things can go aloft. Their arrays of tall doubt intersected with a long-delayed journey. He considered it a privilege in the passenger seat. He struggled against the meaning that filled his eyes. Abruptly luxuriant, the past had been nailed shut. Material cumpers, even in three dimensions one doesn't have to move to travel. It may not sound like

much, but get to four or five dimensions and the fun really starts. Real good. Bartholomew Lau didn't realize just how good till he got his nose into a little fact-finding mission. He wanted to know, first hand, what had happen to those three cosmonauts who had managed to get themselves lost. Two humans and one waste. They had lift from Yuhec Siz, so that's were he would start looking. *Eight seconds after midnight.*

Wreckage wreckage everywhere. Like semen splattered on the face of a beautiful vaginafolk, the debris from various space-ship collisions were splashed all over the heavens. Now-a-days it was almost like there was more clutter in space than stars. Contorted twisted alloys squirmed between the celestial bodies. Specks of shattered compounds sheltered the contour of many orbits. While wreckage hurled outwards towards dust. Accidents. It's what gave life meaning.

Inside one nearby little space-wreck, this guy was jerking off in his girlfriend's face. With every impact of semen on her face, he'd make an explosion-like sound effect with his drool-filled mouth. Bubbles lathered in the ruin. She just sat there, daydreaming of electro magnetism. All the while he was pondering the wide open sky. Accidents. It's what gave life meaning.

Nine seconds after midnight. On his way to Yuhec Siz, Bartholomew met a fellow passenger, a genetic engineer. From the fresh little crater at the crown of his head, Bartholomew could tell that this genetic engineer had just been trepanned. As alien to each other as they were, the civilizations of the galaxy still had one thing in common. And that was trepanning. Everyone everywhere, for one reason or another, drilled into the cranium to expose the brain's membrane. Even the Intelligent Waste on Yuhec Siz have their own non-drilling non-cranium rendition of the practice. The more underdeveloped cultures thought of trepanation as some kind of medical operation. While the more enlighten cultures saw it purely as a spiritual rite of passage, symbolic of becoming one with the void.

The genetic engineer and he couldn't speak either's language, but during a conversation the two would understand the meanings of each other's politeness and sincerity. The genetic engineer was on his way to Yuhec Siz to study the nature of the intelligent wastes' evolution. The genetic engineer told him of...

Ten seconds after midnight. Bartholomew then remembered landing at the main spaceport on Yuhec Siz. There was no one else around anywhere. The spaceport hadn't officially open to the public yet. Vacant platforms lead to empty elevators. He found himself at the open doors of one elevator. Elevator number 15. He got in. The doors automatically shut. He turned around and pushed the button for the main terminal. The box hoisted his body downwards. His mind was elsewhere. The elevator doors opened to reveal kilometres of new unused spaceport facilities.

Bartholomew just stood there, in the three-piece suit he always travelled in. He had a matching wrestling mask. He never took that off. He couldn't, it had become his face.

His body walked out of elevator number five. His mind thought about eternity and infinity as being two different things. Eternity as energy. Infinity as anergy. Eternity as anti-time. Infinity as time. Eternity as a compilation of temporary occurrences; with infinity as the stationary void located in between the passing of events. His body continued to walk around the terminals. His mind continued elsewhere.

Nearby, youngsters were playing on the landing pads. The pavements were coated with a thick layer of transparent green jelly. The kids were gracefully cutting deep lines into the stuff. He noticed one boy playing fetch with a girl. The boy would toss a small ball and his girl would happily go after it. She'd chase after the ball on all fours. When she got to the ball she'd snatch it up with her mouth. Never using her hands, she'd bring it back to the boy. He'd pat her on her head and tell her what a good girl she was. They'd do it over and over, again and again. It was what kids did on Yuhec Siz, but all she wanted to do was drink the piss right out of his chill. She was a leather-popping, open-pussy, slim-lunged girlie-girl. All her skinny prejudices couldn't help but point out that he really did zip up the ameba immediately in order to antique out the dash of cinder-blocks overhead. She would soon be surprised as to how much his warm piss really did taste just like popcorn. Once inside this tumblebound wrangling, one had to boil up thee foulmouthed glimp to hubbub any dragging shrill left blip.

No grizzlie shrugs here. No sir weee! If life can be compared to an amusement park, a major difference between males and females is that,

men want to ride the roller coaster while women want to be the roller coaster. Men want to have fun, while women want to be fun. Men want to have a life. Women want to be life.

Biologically, such desires are the key to understanding both their success and their failure in the social context. For now, however, he quickly realized their rugged odor had mirrored a semicircle around the outskirts of evidence, finally drifting toward them in a swaggering luminescent clustering of attention.

It had become curiously obvious that neither of them were a twitch of anticipation.

The temperature instantly seemed a full three degrees Zighting; too hot for any one. Touched by his new concern, she kissed the importance of his matter-of-factly introspective eyes.

Eleven seconds after midnight. And there he was, looking beyond the sympathetic concrete of newly built landing pads. The landing pads were unaffected by his observation. Atoms occasioned independently of his thoughts.

He then remembered landing at the main spaceport on Yuhec Siz. At the start of the peace conference, an envoy from The Intelligent Waste told Henry Lloyd that first one has intention, then meaning, followed by the word, and then debate. "Yes..."; said Henry Lloyd. Adding that it was doubt which fueled the whole process. *Twelve seconds after midnight.*

Thirteen seconds after midnight. The envoy from The Intelligent Waste and Henry Lloyd went on to talk about the weather. For weeks. It was the logical thing to do. The Intelligent Waste are autonomous individuals who all live together as a homogenous jell of goo with their own unique kind of high and low pressures. As well as warm and cold fronts. Eventually the two diplomats settled down and got to the heft of the havoc.

Fourteen seconds after midnight. "We live in an age where the technician has replaced the philosopher. Is it a mistake to expect new hardware without some new software to go with it? Well... It ain't over till the fat worm gets the bird..."

Fifteen seconds after midnight. The main stream of The Intelligent Wastes' culture is called "The Flow". Human scholars who have studied The Intelligent Waste have noticed that the whole pattern of activity within The Flow is chaotic, but periodically settles toward an identifiable behaviour of some kind. However they could never tell which behaviour The Intelligent Waste would submerge towards. There was always more than one potential behaviour indicated, and The Flow would always move towards all of them simultaneously until one or two behaviours would dominated for a while. Later returning to complete chaos until finding another behaviour all over again. Scholars could never determine which behaviour The Flow would pursue because one behaviour was riddled with aspects of another. In fact, every behaviour, no matter how simple, would contain characteristics of another. Hence, any small turn could cause the entire Flow to erratically move towards a completely different behaviour then may have first been indicated. Human scholars called this attribute of The Flow "What Goes Around, Comes Around". It should be noted that during the peace talks scholars from The Intelligent Waste had come to a similar conclusion about human culture, and had entitled this phenomenon of humanity "History Repeating Itself".

Despite some misgivings, the peace conference had become a house built out of logic. Conclusion after conclusion being reached as this was the first substantial meeting between the two cultures. For example, it was decided that Humans and Intelligent Waste would team up together to go out and find where The Dinosaurs went off to; and why. The Humans wanted to know where The Dinosaurs were because it was part of their common history with the ancient beings. The Intelligent Waste wanted to know out of a kind of inter-dimensional camaraderie. ***Sixteen seconds after midnight.***

Seventeen seconds after midnight. They sent their top three cosmonauts, two humans and one waste, in a galaxy-class cruiser, this year's model.

Eighteen seconds after midnight. The disappearance of the cosmonauts was still front page news on Yuhec Siz. Public reaction, critical.

Nineteen seconds after midnight. Subsequently, some crackling hyperpigmented mold fastened through the plastic trash bags containing

the old scuttlebutt, and came up onto the midst of all this frantic revving. In other words, Bartholomew had made it over to the Top-Top Motel on the other side of the moon which was a rigid surface, dotted with towering pinnacles, plunging craters, steep cliffs, and massive jets violently spewing a dirty mixture of ooze and muck. There he met his usual contacts. The Top-Top was your typical road-side attraction; floor tiles were missing here and there. A rest-stop built to resemble a gigantic upright shovel sticking out of the ground. It was 30 stories tall; with the motel on bottom, and a revolving snack shop on top. Just in front of the motel was a small museum made to resemble a large pile of dirt. Inside you'd find an exhibit of junk found nearby on the freeway. Some outstanding stuff. All kinds of odd scraps and bits. Like hacks that groom, grease that plots and pincushions that gallows. The motel was run by this aging couple. A friendly enough pair who spoke to each other in a slang or jargon that nobody else could make heads or tails of. Absolutely no one. Where they came from was also not clear, but the service was so good that no one was all that concerned. Walk into their snack shop and before you could sit down to make an order, they'd come out with what you wanted. Or something close enough. "We are all solitude manifested in the flesh."

Down the hall in room number 58, Craig had never imagined that an ordinary bathtowel could take on such a delightfully sexy shape. The way that motel towel clunged to her curves. Letting out his breath as unobtrusively as possible, he leaned back against the pillow again, and smiled.

"Enjoy your shower?" he asked, eyeing her legs and thighs.

She stretched luxuriously, raising her slender arms above her wet raven hair, causing the towel to slip, revealing her circular form. She was naked, walking slowly to the double bed where he was lying.

Craig gulped as she came closer. The girl bent over him with a seductive smile. She made a little purring sound like a cat. Just like a cat!

Her moans were grinding against his utricle. Her bow-shaped lips approached his, when suddenly, he slapped her across the face. The sound of one hand clapping. Abruptly cutting another spin across a good number of dippings and swirlings, he almost instantly vanished after

swiftly beating her within a moment of her snatch. The girl, at first shocked, looked at him wide-eyed and then nodded agreeably. She got down on all fours, stuck out her tongue and licked the boots on his feet clear.

He would soon be attaching mouse-traps to each of her tits. Then he would attach mouse-traps to her pussy. He bound her flat on a table, and held burning candles over her body. The hot red wax dripped over her snared misshapen breast. He moved the candles over her face, slowly forming a gag over her mouth by allowing layers of wax to glaze her lips. She was biting down on her lips hard, trying to keep the wax out of her mouth. She was having the time of her life.

Bartholomew hoped he was about to have the time of his life. Bartholomew's usual contacts consisted of these three guys. Free agents, much like himself; not working for any side to any issue, but exploring life for that one great adventure. That one voyage where you'd find yourself stumbling into just the right balance of risks, opportunities, and possibilities. Both the kind you knew all too well, and the kind never before encountered. Their hodgepodes ruffled the restored breaks that were hidden in full view. Gathered by simple flashes splattered about, the jumbled mess rasped a dangling rope. It was that rope they were all after. Reluctantly, his laziness devoured the hysterical hostilities about. Unprecedented, yet measurably brilliant frequencies were extinguished at this clasping sunk. Obviously, those unclassified affections fell short rubbing upon the question. Regardless, the fumbled burnt brighter now that the sudden bursts of laughter reminded him he had swung the future to slam. Slammed smoothly brushing, his musingly wondering flashed steadfast. Gliding gently, they were now stirring gnaws among the clammy shrunks. These pointed peaks sweep down, billowing a xylowave that could only be increased by a somewhat more dangerous glimpse. A somewhat more dangerous glimpse than twenty seconds after midnight.

Twenty-one seconds after midnight. His three contacts all knew the reason for his visit to Yuhec Siz. Afterall, nearly every spy from every nearby star system was on Yuhec Siz for exactly the same reason. Everyone it seemed was after their one great adventure. Hoping that the disappearance of the cosmonauts would be the gateway for that one special flight. His three contacts were Grundy Blood-Smyth, a scholar of

geodesy; Grromp Man, a local television cameraman and Album Glance, a copper-breathing sponge. They could talk freely as they were all alone. Everyone else was out counting sand. The three of them told him of misplaced official reports and unofficial cover-ups. Nothing special, only the prevailing customary for such a gambol as this.

Twenty-two seconds after midnight. “Act One” uttered Album Glance.

Twenty-three seconds after midnight. “Cancel my ticket to dreamland, I won't be sleeping tonight.”

He had found himself on an rickety old freighter heading nearby where the cosmonauts were last heard from. Bundled in ball bearings, he nonplused every pattern. His would plunged into route. Numerous spies were on board; more spies than freight in fact. And who should he happen upon, but that genetic engineer from the flight to Yuhec Siz. The one studying the intelligent wastes' evolution. But then, he wasn't really that surprised seeing him there. Predetermined by accident, everyone was playing their role just right. They'd all be drunk on decay before long. *Twenty-four seconds after midnight.*

The freighter bypassed Get. A small rocky planet, very dead on the outside, but very hot inside. Over a million years or so the planet's centre slowly heats up so much that the entire mantle melts. Suddenly breaking up, and then collapsing into the planet's inner core. The whole planet will have twisted itself inside-out before the surface cools enough to turn solid again. A process that only takes a few years due to the heat lost to outer space. Afterwards, the planet's long cycle of burn and crash repeats itself.

Then, dazzling polywaves wrapped around numerous searing ramshackles, chattering any push against existence. Get had no moons, but it was orbited by countless space-wrecks.

Like semen splattered on the face of a beautiful vaginafolk, the debris from various space-ship collisions were splashed all over the heavens. Contorted twisted alloys squirmed between the stars. Specks of shattered compounds sheltered the contour of many orbits. While wreckage hurled outwards towards dust. Wreckage wreckage everywhere. Accidents. It's what gave life meaning, meaning enough to

cordially counter-realize the proper bandwidth into the time-sensitive mists of the analytical noise.

Inside one nearby space-wreck, this guy was jerking off in his girlfriend's face. With every impact of semen on her face, he'd make an explosion-like sound effect with his drool-filled mouth. Bubbles lathered in the ruin. She just sat there, daydreaming of electro magnetism. All the while he was pondering the wide open sky. Accidents. It's what gave life meaning.

***Twenty-five.* The genetic engineer told him; "Free will is the predictability of one's personality. Hey! If I didn't want kids when I was one, why would I want them now as an adult? Some would never climb up anything, anywhere, without a shovel at hand. Personality's the predictability of one's aesthetic bias. Motivation being the structure of aesthetic bias. A man's aesthetic bias being the involuntary characteristics in how one keeps on slipping between all the wreckage. The wreckage of whatever else is happening around and about the self. Involuntary characteristics as predetermined by the mind. Some call it style. No matter if its a diazwave independent of linear context or the taking of context out of context, these like all mental performances are the existing conditions for the calculation of measurements. The mind, as a wave form, randomly interacts with other wave forms. However, the only kind of wave form the mind can interact with are those of its own cross sections. The same goes for that of matter and nothingness. The cross sections, the components making up the wave forms the mind, matter and nothingness are wave forms in and of themselves. One type of wave form will make up the polywave of the mind. Another type makes up the polywave of matter. And the only other kind, makes up nothingness. Even a reoccurring event which happens once a year will still have only taken place eleven times in a decade. The accumulative effect is really a separate function from that of each of the components thereof. When counting, there are many instants in which it is efficient to include the final arrived point as a different number from those which were past by on the way. An object, as a context, is the accumulative effect of the accidental similarity between the movements of matter and nothingness. As a context, a man like any organism, is the accumulative effect of the accidental similarity between the movements of the mind, matter and nothingness. Existence, or the accidental similarity between the actions of the mind and the actions of an object within the context of**

a single event, is the overall general effect of how the mind and matter randomly vibrates in between the stillness of nothingness. Any destruction or object that may, or may not, occur during the act of measuring is a chance reflection of whatever measurements were being calculated. It's natural destruction which acts as the predictability of entropy. An answer as the predictability of an explanation..."

Talk about free will all you like. Reincarnation is just a metaphor for the limit of available personalities. It's an accumulative effect. Two persons living at consecutive times may choose all the same options under similar circumstances, but this is not because of a physical link between them. There's only so many ways something can fall together. There are only so many shades; only so many shapes. Even with the polywave, there's still a limit to the number of directions one can take. The only link between two people through reincarnation is coincidence. There's less to the world than meets the eye. Everything is just background noise hissing away everywhichway. In terms of the polywave, it is up to each of us to decipher for ourselves which directions lead somewhere and which lead nowhere.

Twenty-six seconds after midnight. Constant undercurrents of alien peat moss trickled through the hitherto unplumbed depths of stone-washed transparency. Likewise, his mind was elsewhere, but the genetic engineer went on anyway. No surprise there. Everyone was playing their role just right. Predetermined by accident.

Twenty-seven seconds after midnight. "What was that about a shovel?"

"The sky has a tendency to snag on itself. The subsequent rip is both disc-like in shape and metallic in appearance." Not the answer he wanted. *Twenty-eight seconds after midnight.*

Twenty-nine seconds after midnight.

Half a minute after midnight. The freighter was only going to cross near the last known course taken by the cosmonauts. He would have to hijack the freighter's only shuttle before any one else got to it. Timing would be everything.

Thirty-one seconds after midnight.

Appropriating the shuttle was uneventful enough. Bartholomew was now well on his way to the very last known spot where the cosmonauts were just before they vanished. *Thirty-two seconds after midnight.*

***Thirty-three seconds after midnight.* It was still far enough away that he could just let the autopilot do its thing, and just sit back and watch some television. He was far enough out to catch thirty year old broadcasts of his favourite late night talk show. “The Vincent Zellerbelli Show” on the Temporary Television Network. TTN, where their motto for the last 150 years had always been “Watch us now, we could be off the air tomorrow!”.**

***Thirty-four seconds after midnight.* “Tonight’s guest is an old friend; he’s just invented a new grease that plots; you know him, you love him; please give a warm welcome to, Album Glance!” Wild applause from the in-studio audience. Album is centre stage. Resting on a small square sheet of copper. He is illuminated by a single spot-light. He begins to speak to the audience. Bartholomew couldn’t take his eyes off the TV screen.**

***Thirty-five seconds after midnight.* “Album, tells us about your new grease...”**