

Tomorrow Town
by Kim Newman

This way to the Yeer 2000.

The message, in Helvetica typeface, was repeated on arrow-shaped signs.

"That'll be us, Vanessa," said Richard Jeperson, striding along the platform in the indicated direction, toting his shoulder-slung hold-all. He tried to feel as if he were about to time-travel from 1971 to the future, though in practice he was just changing trains.

Vanessa was distracted by one of the arrow signs, fresh face arranged in a comely frown. Richard's associate was a tall redhead in hot pants, halter top, beret, and stack-heeled go-go boots—all blinding white, as if fresh from the machine in a soap-powder advert. She drew unconcealed attention from late-morning passengers milling about the railway station. Then again, in his lime day-glo blazer edged with gold braid and salmon-pink bell-bottom trousers, so did he. Here in Preston, the fashion watchword, for the eighteenth consecutive season, was "drab."

"It's misspelled," said Vanessa. "Y-double-E-R."

"No, it's F-O-N-E-T-I-K," he corrected. "Within the next thirty years, English spelling will be rationalised."

"You reckon?" She pouted, skeptically.

"Not my theory," he said, stroking his mandarin moustaches. "I assume the lingo will muddle along with magical illogic as it has since the Yeer Dot But orthographic reform is a tenet of Tomorrow Town."

"Alliteration. Very Century 21."

They had travelled up from London, sharing a rattly first-class carriage and a welcome magnum of Bollinger with a liberal bishop on a lecture tour billed as "Peace and the Pill" and a working-class playwright revisiting his slag-heap roots. To continue their journey, Richard and Vanessa had to change at Preston.

The arrows led to a guarded gate. The guard wore a British Rail uniform in shiny black plastic with silver highlights. His oversized cap had a chemical lighting element in the brim.

"You need special tickets, Ms and Mm," said the guard.

"Mm," said Vanessa, amused.

"Ms," Richard buzzed at her.

He searched through his pockets, finally turning up the special tickets. They were strips of foil, like ironed-flat chocolate bar wrappers with punched-out hole patterns. The guard carefully posted the tickets into a slot in a metal box. Gears whirred and lights flashed. The gate came apart and sank into the ground. Richard let Vanessa step through the access first. She seemed to float off, arms out for balance.

"Best not to be left behind, Mm," said the guard.

"Mm," said Richard, agreeing.

He stepped onto the special platform. Beneath his rubber-soled winkle-pickers, a knitted chain mail surface moved on large rollers. It creaked and rippled, but gave a smooth ride.

"I wonder how it manages corners," Vanessa said.

The moving platform conveyed them towards a giant silver bullet. The train of the future hummed slightly, at rest on a single gleaming rail which was raised ten feet above the gravel railbed by chromed tubular trestles. A hatchway was open, lowered to form a ramp.

Richard and Vanessa clambered through the hatch and found themselves in a space little roomier than an Apollo capsule. They half-sat, half-lay in over-padded seats which wobbled on gyro-gimbals. Safety straps automatically snaked across them and drew tight.

"Not sure I'll ever get used to this," said Richard. A strap across his forehead noosed his long, tangled hair, and he had to free a hand to fix it.

Vanessa wriggled to get comfortable, doing a near-horizontal dance as the straps adjusted to her.

With a hiss the ramp raised and became a hatch-cover, then sealed shut. The capsule-cum-carriage had berths for eight, but today they were the only passengers.

A mechanical voice counted down from ten.

"Richard, that's a Dalek," said Vanessa, giggling.

As if offended, the voice stuttered on five, like a record stuck in a groove, then hopped to three.

At zero, they heard a rush of rocketry and the monorail moved off. Richard tensed against the expected g-force slam, but it didn't come. Through thick-glassed slit windows, he saw green countryside passing by at about twenty-five miles per hour. They might have been on a leisurely cycle to the village pub rather than taking the fast train to the future.

"So this is the transport of tomorrow?" said Vanessa.

"A best-guess design," explained Richard. "That's the point of Tomorrow Town. To experiment with the lives we'll all be living at the turn of the century."

"No teleportation then?"

"Don't be silly. Matter transmission is a fantasy. This is a reasonable extrapolation from present-day or in-development technology. The Foundation is rigorous about probabilities. Everything in Tomorrow Town is viable."

The community was funded partially by government research grants and partially by private sources. It was projected that it would soon be a profitable concern, with monies pouring in from scientific wonders developed by the visioners of the new technomeritocracy. The Foundation, which had proposed the "Town of 2000" experiment, was a think tank, an academic-industrial coalition dedicated to applying to present-day life lessons learned from contemplating the likely future. Tomorrow Town's two-thousand-odd citizen-volunteers ("zenvols") were boffins, engineers, social visionaries,

health food cranks, and science fiction fans.

Three years ago, when the town was given its charter by the Wilson government, there had been a white heat of publicity: television programmes hosted by James Burke and Raymond Baxter, picture features in all the Sunday colour supplements, a novelty single ("Take Me to Tomorrow" by Big Thinks and the BBC Radiophonic Workshop) which peaked at Number 2 (prevented from being Top of the Pops by The Crazy World of Arthur Brown's "Fire"), a line of "futopian fashions" from Carnaby Street, a heated debate in the letter columns of New Scientist between Arthur C. Clarke (pro), Auberon Waugh (anti) and J. G. Ballard (hard to tell). Then the brouhaha died down and Tomorrow Town was left to get on by itself, mostly forgotten. Until the murder of Varno Zhoule.

Richard Jeperson, agent of the Diogenes Club—least-known branch of the United Kingdom's intelligence and investigative services—was detailed to look into the supposedly open-and-shut case and report back to the current Prime Minister on the advisability of maintaining government support for Tomorrow Town.

He had given Vanessa the barest facts.

"What does the murder weapon of the future turn out to be?" she asked. "Laser beam? Poisoned moon rock?"

"No, the proverbial blunt instrument. Letting the side down, really. Anyone who murders the cofounder of Tomorrow Town should have the decency to stick to the spirit of the game. I doubt if it's much comfort to the deceased, but the offending bludgeon was vaguely futurist, a stylised steel rocket ship with a heavy stone base."

"No home should be without one."

"It was a Hugo Award, the highest honour the science fiction field can bestow. Zhoule won his murder weapon for Best Novelette of 1958, with the oft-anthologised 'Court Martian.' "

"Are we then to be the police of the future? Do we get to design our own uniforms?"

"We're here because Tomorrow Town has no police force as such. It is a fundamental of the social design that there will be no crime by the year 2000."

"Ooops."

"This is a utopian vision, Vanessa. No money to steal. No inequality to foster resentment. All disputes arbitrated with unquestionable fairness. All zenvols constantly monitored for emotional instability."

"Maybe being 'constantly monitored' leads to 'emotional instability.' Not to mention being called a 'zenvol.' "

"You'll have to mention that to Big Thinks."

"Is he the boss-man among equals?"

Richard chuckled. "He's an it. A computer. A very large computer."

Vanessa snapped her fingers.

"Ah-ha. There's your culprit. In every sci-fi film I've ever seen, the computer goes power-mad and starts killing people off. Big Thinks probably wants to take over the world."

"The late Mm Zhoule would cringe to hear you say that, Vanessa. He'd never have deigned to use such a hackneyed, unlikely premise in a story. A computer is just a heuristic abacus. Big Thinks can beat you at chess, solve logic problems, cut a pop record, and make the monorail run on time, but it hasn't got sentience, a personality, a motive, or, most importantly, arms. You might as well suspect the fridge-freezer or the pop-up toaster."

"If you knew my pop-up toaster better, you'd feel differently. It sits there, shining sneakily, plotting perfidy. The jug-kettle is in on it, too. There's a conspiracy of contraptions."

"Now you're being silly."

"Trust me, Richard, it'll be the Brain Machine. Make sure to check its alibi."

"I'll bear that in mind."

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They first saw Tomorrow Town from across the Yorkshire Dales, nestled in lush green and slate grey. The complex was a large-scale version of the sort of back-garden space station that might have been put together by a talented child inspired by Gerry Anderson and instructed by Valerie Singleton, using egg boxes, toilet roll tubes, the innards of a broken wireless, pipe cleaners, and a lot of silver spray-paint.

Hexagonal geodesic domes clustered in the landscape, a central space covered by a giant canopy that looked like an especially aerodynamic silver circus tent. Metallised roadways wound between trees and lakes, connecting the domes. The light traffic consisted mostly of electric golf carts and one-person hovercraft. A single hardy zenvol was struggling along on what looked like a failed flying bicycle from 1895 but was actually a moped powered by wing-like solar panels. It was raining gently, but the town seemed shielded by a half-bubble climate control barrier that shimmered in midair.

A pylon held up three sun-shaped globes on a triangular frame. They radiated light and, Richard suspected, heat. Where light fell, the greenery was noticeably greener and thicker.

The monorail stopped outside the bubble, and settled a little clunkily.

"You may now change apparel," rasped the machine voice.

A compartment opened and clothes slid out on racks. The safety straps released them from their seats.

Richard thought for a moment that the train had calculated from his long hair that he was a Ms rather than a Mm, then realised the garment on offer was unisex: a lightweight jumpsuit of semi-opaque polythene, with silver epaulettes, pockets, knee- and elbow-patches, and modesty strips around the chest and hips. The dangling legs ended in floppy-looking plastic boots, the sleeves in surgeon's gloves.

"Was that 'may' a 'must'?" asked Vanessa.

"Best to go along with native customs," said Richard.

He turned his back like a gentleman and undressed carefully, folding and putting away his clothes. Then he took the jumpsuit from the rack and stepped into it, wiggling his feet down into the boots and fingers into the gloves. A seam from crotch to neck sealed with velcro strips, but he was left with an enormous swathe of polythene sprouting from his left hip like a bridal train.

"Like this," said Vanessa, who had worked it out.

The swathe went over the right shoulder in a toga arrangement, passing under an epaulette, clipping on in a couple of places, and falling like a waist-length cape.

She had also found a pad of controls in the left epaulette, which activated drawstrings and pleats that adjusted the garment to suit individual body type. They both had to fiddle to get the suits to cope with their above-average height, then loosen and tighten various sections as required. Even after every possible button had been twisted every possible way, Richard wore one sleeve tight as sausage skin while the other was loose and wrinkled as a burst balloon.

"Maybe it's a futopian fashion," suggested Vanessa, who—of course—looked spectacular, shown off to advantage by the modesty strips. "All the dashing zenvols are wearing the one-loose-one-tight look this new century."

"Or maybe it's just aggravated crackpottery."

She laughed.

The monorail judged they had used up their changing time, and lurched off again.

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The receiving area was as white and clean as a bathroom display at the Belgian Ideal Home Exhibition. A deputation of zenvols, all dressed alike, none with mismatched sleeves, waited on the platform. Synthesised Bach played gently and the artificial breeze was mildly perfumed.

"Mm Richard, Ms Vanessa," said a white-haired zenvol, "welcome to Tomorrow Town."

A short Oriental girl repeated his words in sign language.

"Are you Georgie Gewell?" Richard asked.

"Jor-G," said the zenvol, then spelled it out.

"My condolences," Richard said, shaking the man's hand. Through two squeaking layers of latex, he had the impression of sweaty palm. "I understand you and Varno Zhoule were old friends."

"Var-Z is a tragic loss. A great visionary."

The Oriental girl mimed sadness. Other zenvols hung their heads.

"Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" segued into the "Dead March" from Saul. Was the Muzac keyed in somehow to the emotional state of any given assembly?

"We, ah, founded the Foundation together."

Back in the 1950s, Varno Zhoule had written many articles and stories for science fiction magazines, offering futuristic solutions to contemporary problems, preaching the gospel of better living through logic and technology. He had predicted decimal currency and the vertical-takeoff aeroplane. Georgie Gewell was an award-winning editor and critic. He had championed Zhoule's work, then raised finances to apply his solutions to the real world. Richard understood the seed money for the Foundation came from a patent the pair held on a kind of battery-powered circular slide rule that was faster and more accurate than any other portable calculating device.

Gewell was as tall as Richard, with milk-fair skin and close-cropped snow-white hair. He had deep smile and frown lines and a soft, girlish mouth. He was steadily leaking tears, not from grief but from thick, obvious reactalite contact lenses that were currently smudged to the darker end of their spectrum.

The other zenvols were an assorted mix, despite their identical outfits. Most of the men were short and tubby, the women lithe and fit—which was either Big Thinks's recipe for perfect population balance or some visionary's idea of a good time for a tall, thin fellow. Everyone had hair cut short, which made both Richard and Vanessa obvious outsiders. None of the men wore facial hair except a red-faced chap who opted for the Puritan beard-without-a-moustache arrangement.

Gewell introduced the delegation. The oriental girl was Moana, whom Gewell described as "town speaker," though she continued to communicate only by signing. The beardie was Mal-K, the "senior medico" who had presided over the autopsy, matched some bloody fingerprints and seemed a bit put out to be taken away from his automated clinic for this ceremonial affair. Other significant zenvols: Jess-F, "arbitrage input tech," a hard-faced blonde girl who interfaced with Big Thinks when it came to programming dispute decisions, and thus was the nearest thing Tomorrow Town had to a human representative of the legal system—though she was more clerk of the court than investigating officer; Zootie, a fat little "agri-terrain rearrangement tech" with a bad cold for which he kept apologising, who turned out to have discovered the body by the hydroponics vats and was oddly impressed and uncomfortable in this group, as if he weren't quite on a level of equality with Gewell and the rest; and "vocabulary administrator" Sue-2, whom Gewell introduced as "sadly, the motive," the image of a penitent young lady who "would never do it again."

Richard mentally marked them all down.

"You'll want to visit the scene of the crime?" suggested Gewell. "Interrogate the culprit? We have Buster in a secure store-room. It had to be especially prepared. There are no lockable doors in Tomorrow Town."

"He's nailed in," said Jess-F. "With rations and a potty."

"Very sensible," commented Richard.

"We can prise the door open now you're here," said Gewell.

Richard thought a moment.

"If you'll forgive me, Mr Jep-ah, Mm Richard," said Mal-K, "I'd like to get back to my work. I've a batch of anti-virus cooking."

The medico kept his distance from Zootie. Did he think a streaming nose reflected badly on the health of the future? Or was the artificial breeze liable to spread sniffles around the whole community in minutes?

"I don't see any reason to detain you, Mm Mal-K," said Richard. "Vanessa might pop over later. My associate is interested in the work you're doing here. New cures for new diseases. She'd love to squint into a microscope at your anti-virus."

Vanessa nodded with convincing enthusiasm.

"Mal-K's door is always open," said Gewell.

The medico sloped off without comment.

"Should we crack out the crowbar, then?" prompted Gewell.

The cofounder seemed keen on getting on with this: to him, murder came as an embarrassment and an interruption. It wasn't an uncommon reaction. Richard judged Gewell just wanted all this over with so he could get on with things, even though the victim was one of his oldest friends and the crime demonstrated a major flaw in the social design of Tomorrow Town. If someone battered Vanessa to death, he didn't think he'd be so intent on putting it behind him—but he was famous for being sensitive. Indeed, it was why he was so useful to the Diogenes Club.

"I think as long as our putative culprit is safely nailed away, we can afford to take our time, get a feel for the place and the setup. It's how I like to work, Mm Gewell. To me, understanding why is much more important than knowing who or how."

"I should think the why was obvious," said Gewell looking at Sue-2, eyes visibly darkening.

She looked down.

"The arbitration went against Buster, and he couldn't accept it," said Jess-F. "Though it was in his initial contract that he abide by Big Thinks's decisions. It happens sometimes. Not often."

"An arbitration in a matter of the heart? Interesting. Just the sort of thing that comes in a box marked 'motive' and tied with pink string. Thank you so much for mentioning it early in the case. Before we continue the sleuthing, perhaps we could have lunch. Vanessa and I have travelled a long way, with no sustenance beyond British Rail sandwiches and a beverage of our own supply. Let's break bread together, and you can tell me more about your fascinating experiment."

"Communal meals are at fixed times," said Gewell. "The next is not until six."

"I make it about six o'clock," said Richard, though his watch-face was blurred by the sleeve-glove.

"It's only f-five by our clock," said Sue-2. "We're on two daily cycles of ten

kronons. Each kronon runs a hundred sentikronons."

"In your time, a kronon is 72 minutes," explained Gewell. "Our six is your ..."

Vanessa did the calculation and beat the slide rule designer, "twelve minutes past seven."

"That's about it."

Richard waved away the objection.

"I'm sure a snack can be rustled up. Where do you take these communal meals?"

Moana signalled a direction and set off. Richard was happy to follow, and the others came too.

The dining area was in the central plaza, under the pylon and the three globes, with zinc-and-chrome sheet-and-tube tables and benches. It was warm under the globes, almost Caribbean, and some zenvols wore poker players' eyeshades. In the artificially balmy climate, plastic garments tended to get sticky inside, which made for creaky shiftings in seats.

An abstract ornamental fountain gushed nutrient-enriched, slightly carbonated, heavily fluoridized water. Gewell had Moana fetch a couple of jugs for the table, while the meek Sue-2 hustled off to persuade "sustenance preparation" techs to break their schedule to feed the visitors. Vanessa cocked an eyebrow at this division of labour, and Richard remembered Zhoule and Gewell had been planning this futopia since the 1950s, well before the publication of *The Female Eunuch*. Even Jess-F, whom Richard had pegged as the toughest zenvol he had yet met, broke out the metallised glass tumblers from a dispenser by the fountain, while Gewell and the sniffing Zootie sat at their ease at table.

"Is that the building where Big Thinks lives?" asked Vanessa.

Gewell swivelled to look. Vanessa meant an imposing structure, rather like a giant art deco refrigerator decorated with Mondrian squares in a rough schematic of a human face. Uniformly-dressed zenvols came and went through airlock doors that opened and closed with hisses of decontaminant.

Gewell grinned, impishly.

"Ms Vanessa, that building is Big Thinks."

Richard whistled.

"Bee-Tee didn't used to be that size," said Jess-F. "Var-Z kept insisting we add units. More and more complicated questions need more and more space. Soon, we'll have to expand further."

"It doesn't show any telltale signs of megalomania?" asked Vanessa. "Never programs Wagner for eight straight hours and chortles over maps of the world?"

Jess-F didn't look as if she thought that was funny.

"Bee-Tee is a machine, Ms."

Sue-2 came back with food. Coloured pills that looked like Smarties but tasted like chalk.

"All the nutrition you need is here," said Gewell, "in the water and the capsules. For us, mealtimes are mostly ceremonial, for debate and reflection. Var-Z said that some of his best ideas popped into his head while he was chatting idly after a satisfying pill."

Richard didn't doubt it. He also still felt hungry.

"Talking of things popping into Zhoule's head," he said, "what's the story on Buster of the bloody fingerprints?"

Jess-F looked at Sue-2, as if expecting to be contradicted, then carried on.

"Big Thinks assessed the dispute situation, and arbitrated it best for the community if Sue-2 were to be pair-bonded with Var-Z rather than Buster."

"Buster was your old boyfriend?" Vanessa asked Sue-2.

"He is my husband," she said.

"On the outside, in the past," put in Jess-F. "Here, we don't always acknowledge arbitrary pair-bondings. Mostly, they serve a useful purpose and continue. In this instance, the dispute was more complicated."

"Big Thinks arbitrated against the arbitrary?" mused Richard. "I suppose no one would be surprised at that."

He looked from face to face and fixed on Sue-2, then asked: "Did you leave Buster for Mm Zhoule?"

Sue-2 looked for a cue, but none came.

"It was best for the town, for the experiment," she said.

"What was it for you? For your husband?"

"Buster had been regraded. From 'zenvol' to 'zenpass.' He couldn't vote."

Richard looked to Jess-F for explication. He noticed Gewell had to give her a teary wink from almost-black eyes before she would say anything more.

"We have very few citizen-passengers," she said. "It's not a punishment category."

"Kind of you to clarify that," said Richard. "I might have made a misconception otherwise. You say zenpasses have no vote?"

"It's not so dreadful," said Gewell, sipping nutrient. "On the outside, in the past, suffrage is restricted by age, sanity, residence and so on. Here, in our technomeritocracy, to register for a vote—which gives you a voice in every significant decision—you have to demonstrate your applied intelligence."

"An IQ test?"

"Not a quotient, Mm Richard. Anyone can have that. The vital factor is application. Bee-Tee tests for that. There's no personality or human tangle involved. Surely, it's only fair that the most useful should have the most say?"

"I have a vote," said Zootie, proud. "Earned by applied intelligence."

"Indeed he does," said Gewell, smiling.

"And Mm Jor-G has fifteen votes. Because he applies his intelligence more often than I do."

Everyone looked at Zootie with different types of amazement.

"It's only fair," said Zootie, content despite a nose-trickle, washing down another purple pill.

Richard wondered whether the agri-terrain rearrangement tech was hovering near regrading as a zenpass.

Richard addressed Sue-2. "What does your husband do?"

"He's a history teacher."

"An educationalist. Very valuable."

Gewell looked as if his pill was sour. "Your present is our past, Mm Richard. Buster's discipline is surplus."

"Doesn't the future grow out of the past? To know where you're going you must know where you've been."

"Var-Z believes in a radical break."

"But Var-Z is in the past too."

"Indeed. Regrettable. But we must think of the future."

"It's where we're going to spend the rest of our lives," said Zootie.

"That's very clever," said Vanessa.

Zootie wiped his nose and puffed up a bit.

"I think we should hand Buster over to you," said Gewell. "To be taken outside to face the justice of the past. Var-Z left work undone that we must continue."

"Not just yet," said Richard. "This sad business raises questions about Tomorrow Town. I have to look beyond the simple crime before I make my report. I'm sure you understand and will extend full cooperation."

No one said anything, but they all constructed smiles.

"You must be economically self-supporting by now," continued Richard, "what with the research and invention you've been applying intelligence to. If the Prime Minister withdrew government subsidies, you'd probably be better off. Free of the apron strings, as it were. Still, the extra cash must come in handy for something, even if you don't use money in this town."

Gewell wiped his eyes and kept smiling.

Richard could really do with a steak and kidney pie and chips, washed down with beer. Even a Kit-Kat would have been welcome.

"Have you a guest apartment we could use?"

Gewell's smile turned real. "Sadly, we're at maximum optimal zenvol residency. No excess space wastage in the living quarters."

"No spare beds," clarified Zootie.

"Then we'll have to take the one living space we know to be free."

Gewell's brow furrowed like a rucked-up rug.

"Zhoule's quarters," Richard explained. "We'll set up camp there. Sue-2, you must know the way. Since there are no locks we won't need keys to get in. Zenvols, it's been fascinating. I look forward to seeing you tomorrow."

Richard and Vanessa stood up, and Sue-2 followed suit.

Gewell and Jess-F glared. Moana waved bye-bye.

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"What are you looking for?" Vanessa asked. "Monitoring devices."
"No," said Richard, unsealing another compartment, "they're in the light fittings and the communicator screen, and seem to have been disabled. By Zhoule or his murderer, presumably."

There was a constant hum of gadgetry in the walls and from behind white-fronted compartments. The ceiling was composed of translucent panels, above which glowed a steady light.

The communicator screen was dusty. Beneath the on-off switch, volume and brightness knobs and channel selector was a telephone dial, with the Tomorrow Town alphabet (no Q or X). Richard had tried to call London but a recorded voice over a cartoon smiley face told him that visiphones only worked within the town limits. Use of the telephone line to the outside had to be approved by vote of zenvol visioneers.

In a compartment, he found a gadget whose purpose was a mystery. It had dials, a trumpet and three black rubber nipples.

"I'm just assuming, Vanessa, that the co-founder of Tomorrow Town might allow himself to sample the forbidden past in ways denied the simple zenvol or despised zenpass."

"You mean?"

"He might have real food stashed somewhere."

Vanessa started opening compartments too.

It took a full hour to search the five rooms of Zhoule's bungalow. They discovered a complete run of Town Magazeen, a microfilm publication with all text in fonetik, and a library of 1950s science fiction magazines, lurid covers mostly promising Varno Zhoule stories as backup to Asimov or Heinlein.

They found many compartments stuffed with ring-bound notebooks which dated back twenty years. Richard flicked through a couple, noting Zhoule had either

been using fonetik since the early '50s or was such a bad speller that his editors must have been driven to despair. Most of the entries were single sentences, story ideas, possible inventions or prophecies. Tunel under Irish See. Rokit to Sun to harvest heet. Big lift to awbit. Stoopids not allowd to breed. Holes in heds for plugs.

Vanessa found a display case, full of plaques and awards in the shapes of spirals or robots.

"Is this the murder weapon?" Vanessa asked, indicating a needle-shaped rocket. "Looks too clean."

"I believe Zhoule was a multiple Hugo winner. See, this is Best Short Story 1957, for 'Vesta Interests.' The blunt instrument was ..."

Vanessa picked up a chunk of ceramic and read the plaque, "Best Novelette 1958." It was a near-duplicate of the base of the other award.

"You can see where the rocket ship was fixed. It must have broken when the award was lifted in anger."

"Cold blood, Vanessa. The body and the Hugo were found elsewhere. No blood traces in these quarters. Let's keep looking for a pork pie."

Vanessa opened a floor-level compartment and out crawled a matt-black robot spider the size of an armoured go-kart. The fearsome thing brandished death-implements that, upon closer examination, turned out to be a vacuum cleaner proboscis and limbs tipped with chamois, a damp squeegee, and a brush.

"Oh, how useful," said Vanessa.

Then the spider squirted hot water at her and crackled. Electrical circuits burned out behind its photo-eyes. The proboscis coughed black soot.

"Or maybe not."

" 'I have seen the future, and it works,' " quoted Richard. "Lincoln Steffens, on the Soviet Union, 1919."

" 'What's to become of my bit of washing when there's no washing to do,' " quoted Vanessa. "The old woman in The Man in the White Suit, on technological progress, 1951."

"You suspect the diabolical Big Thinks sent this cleaning robot to murder Varno Zhoule? A Frankensteinian rebellion against the Master-Creator?"

"If Bee-Tee is so clever, I doubt it'd use this arachnoid doodad as an assassin. The thing can't even beat as it sweeps as it cleans, let alone carry out a devilish murder plan. Besides, to use the blunt instrument it would have to climb a wall, and I reckon this can't manage stairs."

Richard poked the carapace of the machine, which wriggled and lost a couple of limbs.

"Are you still hungry?"

"Famished."

"Yet we've had enough nourishment to keep body and spirit together for the ten

long kronons that remain until breakfast time."

"I'll ask medico Mal-K if he sees many cases of rickets and scurvy in futopia."

"You do that."

Richard tried to feel sorry for the spider, but it was just a gadget. It was impossible to invest it with a personality.

Vanessa was thinking.

"Wasn't the idea that Tomorrow Town would pour forth twenty-first-century solutions to our drab old 1970s problems?"

Richard answered her. "That's what Mr Wilson thought he was signing up for."

"So why aren't Mrs Mopp Spiders on sale in the Charing Cross Road?"

"It doesn't seem to work all that well."

"Lot of that about, Mm Richard. A monorail that would lose a race with Stephenson's Rocket. Technomeroticratic droit de seigneur. Concentrated foods astronauts wouldn't eat. Robots less functional than the wind-up ones my nephew Paulie uses to conquer the playground. And I've seen the odd hovercraft up on blocks with 'Owt of Awder' signs. Not to mention Buster the Basher, living incarnation of a society out of joint."

"Good points all," he said. "And I'll answer them as soon as I solve another mystery."

"What's that?"

"What are we supposed to sleep on?"

Around the rooms were large soft white cubes which distantly resembled furniture but could as easily be tofu chunks for the giants who would evolve by the turn of the millennium. By collecting enough cubes into a windowless room where the lighting panels were more subdued, Richard and Vanessa were able to put together a bed-shape. However, when Richard took an experimental lie-down on the jigsaw-puzzle affair, an odd cube squirted out of place and he fell through the gap. The floor was covered with a warm fleshy plastic substance that was peculiarly unpleasant to the touch.

None of the many compartment-cupboards in the bungalow contained anything resembling twentieth-century pillows or bedding. Heating elements in the floor turned up as the evening wore on, adjusting the internal temperature of the room to the point where their all-over condoms were extremely uncomfortable. Escaping from the Tomorrow Town costumes was much harder than getting into them.

It occurred to Richard and Vanessa at the same time that these spacesuits would make going to the lavatory awkward, though they reasoned an all-pill diet would minimise the wasteful toilet breaks required in the past. Eventually, with some cooperation, they got free and placed the suits on hangers in a glass-fronted cupboard which, when closed, filled with coloured steam. "Dekontaminashun Kompleet," flashed a sign as the cabinet cracked open and spilled liquid residue. The floor was discoloured where this had happened before.

Having more or less puzzled out how the bedroom worked, they set about tackling the bathroom, which seemed to be equipped with a dental torture chamber and a wide variety of exotic marital aids. By the time they were done playing with it all, incidentally washing and cleaning their teeth, it was past ten midnight and the lights turned off automatically.

"Nighty-night," said Richard.

"Don't let the robot bugs bite," said Vanessa.

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He woke up, alert. She woke with him.

"What's the matter? A noise?"

"No," he said. "No noise."

"Ah."

The Tomorrow Town hum, gadgets in the walls, was silenced. The bungalow was technologically dead. He reached out and touched the floor. It was cooling.

Silently, they got off the bed.

The room was dark, but they knew where the door—a sliding screen—was and took up positions either side of it.

The door had opened by touching a pad. Now that power was off, they were shut in (a flaw in the no-locks policy), though Richard heard a winding creak as the door lurched open an inch. There was some sort of clockwork backup system.

A gloved hand reached into the room. It held an implement consisting of a plastic handle, two long thin metal rods, and a battery pack. A blue arc buzzed between the rods, suggesting lethal charge.

Vanessa took the wrist, careful not to touch the rods, and gave a good yank. The killing-prod, or whatever it was, was dropped and discharged against the floor, leaving a blackened patch and a nasty smell.

Surprised, the intruder stumbled against the door.

As far as Richard could make out in the minimal light, the figure wore the usual Tomorrow Town suit. An addition was an opaque black egg-shaped helmet with a silver strip around the eyes which he took to be a one-way mirror. A faint red radiance suggested some sort of infra-red see-in-the-dark device.

Vanessa, who had put on a floral bikini as sleepwear, kicked the egghead in the chest, which clanged. She hopped back.

"It's armoured," she said.

"All who defy Buster must die," rasped a speaker in the helmet.

Vanessa kicked again, at the shins, cutting the egghead down.

"All who defy Buster must die," squeaked the speaker, sped-up. "All who de ... de ... de ... de ..."

The recorded message was stuck.

The egghead clambered upright.

"Is there is a person in there?" Vanessa asked.

"One way to find out," said Richard.

He hammered the egghead with a bed-cube, but it was too soft to dent the helmet. The intruder lunged and caught him in a plastic-and-metal grasp.

"Get him off me," he said, kicking. Unarmoured, he was at a disadvantage.

Vanessa nipped into the en-suite bathroom and came back with a gadget on a length of metal hose. They had decided it was probably a water-pick for those hard-to-clean crannies. She stabbed the end of the device at the egghead's neck, puncturing the plastic seal just below the chin-rim of the helmet, and turned the nozzle on. The tappet-key snapped off in her fingers and a high-pressure stream that could have drilled through cheddar cheese spurted into the suit.

Gallons of water inflated the egghead's garment. The suit self-sealed around the puncture and expanded, arms and legs forced out in an X. Richard felt the water pressure swelling his captor's chest and arms. He wriggled and got free.

"All who defy Buster ..."

Circuits burned out, and leaks sprouted at all the seams. Even through the silver strip, Richard made out the water rising.

There was a commotion in the next room.

Lights came on. The hum was back.

It occurred to Richard that he had opted to sleep in the buff and might not be in a decorous state to receive visitors. Then again, in the future taboos against social nudity were likely to evaporate.

Georgie Gewell, the ever-present Moana and Jess-F, who had another of the zapper-prod devices, stood just inside the doorway.

There was a long pause. This was not what anyone had expected.

"Buster has escaped," said Gewell. "We thought you might be in danger. He's beyond all reason."

"If he was a danger to us, he isn't any longer," said Vanessa.

"If this is him," Richard said. "He was invoking the name."

The egghead was on the floor, spouting torrents, super-inflated like the Michelin Man after a three-day egg-eating contest.

Vanessa kicked the helmet. It obligingly repeated "All who defy Buster must die."

The egghead waved hands like fat starfish, thumbing towards the helmet, which was sturdier than the rest of the suit and not leaking.

"Anybody know how to get this thing off?" asked Richard

The egghead writhed and was still.

"Might be a bit on the late side."

Gewell and Jess-F looked at each other. Moana took action and pushed into the room. She knelt and worked a few buttons around the chin-rim of the helmet. The egghead cracked along a hitherto unsuspected crooked seam and came apart in a gush of water.

"That's not Buster," said Vanessa. "It's Mal-K, the medico."

"And he's drowned," concluded Richard.

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"A useful rule of thumb in open-and-shut cases," announced Richard, "is that when someone tries to murder any investigating officers, the case isn't as open-and-shut as it might at first have seemed." He had put on a quilted double-breasted floor-length jade green dressing gown with a Blakeian red dragon picked out on the chest in sequins.

"When the would-be murderer is one of the major proponents of the open-and-shut theory," he continued, "it's a dead cert that an injustice is in the process of being perpetrated. Ergo, the errant Buster is innocent and someone else murdered Mm Zhoule with a Hugo Award."

"Perhaps there was a misunderstanding," said Gewell.

Richard and Vanessa looked at him.

"How so?" Richard asked.

Wheels worked behind Gewell's eyes, which were amber now.

"Mm Mal-K might have heard of Buster's escape and come here to protect you from him. In the dark and confusion, you mistook his attempted rescue as an attack."

"And tragedy followed," completed Jess-F.

Moana weighed invisible balls and looked noncommittal.

It was sixty-eight past six o'kronon. The body had been removed and they were in Zhoule's front room. Since all the cubes were in the bedroom and wet through, everyone had to sit on the body-temperature floor. Vanessa perched decorously, see-through peignoir over her bikini, on the dead robot spider. Richard stood, as if lecturing.

"Mm Jor-G, you were an editor once," he said. "If a story were submitted in which a hero wanted to protect innocent parties from a rampaging killer, would you have allowed the author to have the hero get into a disguise, turn off all

the lights and creep into the bedroom with a lethal weapon?"

"Um, I might. I edited science fiction magazines. Science fiction is about ideas. No matter what those New Wavers say. In sf, characters might do anything."

"What about 'All who defy Buster must die'?" said Vanessa.

"A warning?" Gewell ventured, feebly.

"Oh, give up," said Jess-F. "Mal-K was a bad 'un. It's been obvious for desiyears. All those speeches about 'expanding the remit of the social experiment' and 'assuming pole position in the larger technomeritocracy.' He was in a position to doctor his own records, to cover up instability. He was also the one who matched Buster's fingerprints to the murder weapon. Mm and Ms, congratulations, you've caught the killer."

"Open-and-shut-and-open-and-shut?" suggested Richard.

Moana gave the thumbs-up.

"I'm going to need help to convince myself of this," said Richard. "I've decided to call on mighty deductive brainpower to get to the bottom of the mystery."

"More yesterday men?" said Jess-F, appalled.

"Interesting term. You've been careful not to use it before now. Is that what you call us? No, I don't intend to summon any more plods from the outside."

Gewell couldn't suppress his surge of relief.

"I've decided to apply the techniques of tomorrow to these crimes of the future. Jess-F, I'll need your help. Let's take this puzzle to Big Thinks, and see how your mighty computer does."

Shutters came down behind Jess-F's eyes.

"Computer time is precious," said Gewell.

"So is human life," answered Richard.

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The inside of the building, the insides of Big Thinks, was the messiest area Richard had seen in Tomorrow Town. Banks of metal cabinets fronted with reels of tape were connected by a spaghetti tangle of wires that wound throughout the building like coloured plastic ivy. Some cabinets had their fronts off, showing masses of circuit boards, valves, and transistors. Surprisingly, the workings of the master brain seemed held together with a great deal of Sellotape, string, and blu-tak. Richard recognised some components well in advance of any on the market, and others that might date back to Marconi or Babbage.

"We've been making adjustments," said Jess-F.

She shifted a cardboard box full of plastic shapes from a swivel chair and let

him sit at a desk piled with wired-together television sets. To one side was a paper towel dispenser which coughed out a steady roll of graph paper with lines squiggled on it.

He didn't know which knobs to twiddle.

"Ms Jess-F, could you show me how a typical dispute arbitration is made. Say, the triangle of Zhoule, Buster, and Sue-2."

"That documentation might be hard to find."

"In this futopia of efficiency? I doubt it."

Jess-F nodded to Moana, who scurried off to root through large bins full of scrunched and torn paper.

Vanessa was with Gewell and Zootie, taking a tour of the hydroponics zone, which was where the body of Varno Zhoule had been found. The official story was that Buster (now, Mal-K) had gone to Zhoule's bungalow to kill him but found him not at home. He had taken the Hugo from its display case and searched out the victim-to-be, found him contemplating the green gunk that was made into his favourite pills, and did the deed then and there. It didn't take a computer to decide it was more likely that Zhoule had been killed where the weapon was handy for an annoyed impulse-assassin to reach for, then hovercrafted along with the murder weapon to a public place so some uninvolved zenvol clot could find him. But why ferry the body all that way, with the added risk of being caught?

"Tell you what, Ms Jess-F, let's try BeeTee out on a hypothetical dispute? Put in the setup of Hamlet, and see what the computer thinks would be best for Denmark."

"Big Thinks is not a toy, Mm."

Moana came back waving some sheaves of paper.

Richard looked over it. Jess-F ground her teeth.

Though the top sheet was headed "Input tek: Buster Munro," this was not the triangle dispute documentation. Richard scrolled through the linked print-out. He saw maps of Northern Europe, lists of names and dates, depositions in non-phonetic English, German and Danish, and enough footnotes for a good-sized doctoral thesis. In fact, that was exactly what this was.

"I'm not the first to think of running a hypothetical dispute past the mighty computer," said Richard. "The much-maligned Buster got there before me."

"And wound up recategorised as a zenpass," said Jess-F.

"He tried to get an answer to the Schleswig-Holstein Question, didn't he? Lord Palmerston said only three men in Europe got to the bottom of it—one who forgot, one who died, and one who went mad. It was an insanely complicated argument between Denmark and Germany, over the governance of a couple of border provinces. Buster put the question to Big Thinks as if it were a contemporary dispute, just to see how the computer would have resolved it. What did it suggest, nuclear attack? Is that why all the redecoration? Buster's puzzle blew all the fuses."

Richard found the last page.

The words "forgot died mad" were repeated over and over, in very faint ink. Then some mathematical formulae. Then the printer equivalent of scribble.

"This makes no sense."

He showed it to Jess-F, hoping she could interpret it. He really would have liked Big Thinks to have got to the bottom of the tussle that defeated Bismarck and Metternich and spat out a blindingly simple answer everyone should have seen all along.

"No," she admitted. "It makes no sense at all."

Moana shrugged.

Richard felt a rush of sympathy for Jess-F. This was painful for her.

"BeeTee can't do it," said Richard. "The machine can do sums very fast, but nothing else?"

Jess-F was almost at the point of tears.

"That's not true," she said, with tattered pride. "Big Thinks is the most advanced computer in the world. It can solve any logic problem. Give it the data, and it can deliver accurate weather forecasts, arrange schedules to optimise efficiency of any number of tasks ..."

"But throw the illogical at it, and BeeTee just has a good cry."

"It's a machine. It can't cry."

"Or arbitrate love affairs."

Jess-F was in a corner.

"It's not fair," she said, quietly. "It's not BeeTee's fault. It's not my fault. They knew the operational parameters. They just kept insisting it tackle areas outside its remit, extending, tampering, overburdening. My techs have been working all the hours of the day ..."

"Kronons, surely?"

"... all the bloody kronons of the day, just trying to get Big Thinks working again. Even after all this, the ridiculous demands keep coming through. Big Thinks, Big Thinks, will I be pretty, will I be rich? Big Thinks, Big Thinks, is there life on other planets?"

Jess-F put her hands over her face.

" 'They'? Who are 'they'?"

"All of them," Jess-F sobbed. "Across all disciplines."

"Who especially?"

"Who else? Varno Zhoule."

"Not any more?"

"No."

She looked out from behind her hands, horrified.

"It wasn't me," she said.

"I know. You're left-handed. Wrong wound pattern. One more question: what did the late Mm Mal-K want from Big Thinks?"

Jess-F gave out an appalled sigh.

"Now, he was cracked. He kept putting in these convoluted specific questions. In the end, they were all about taking over the country. He wanted to run the whole of the United Kingdom like Tomorrow Town."

"The day after tomorrow, the world?"

"He kept putting in plans and strategies for infiltrating vital industries and dedicating them to the cause. He didn't have an army, but he believed Big Thinks could get all the computers in the country on his side. Most of the zenvols thought he was a dreamer, spinning out a best-case scenario at the meetings. But he meant it. He wanted to found a large-scale Technomeritocracy."

"With himself as Beloved Leader?"

"No, that's how mad he was. He wanted Big Thinks to run everything. He was hoping to put BeeTee in charge and let the future happen."

"That's why he wanted Vanessa and me out of the story. We were a threat to his funding. Without the subsidies, the plug is pulled."

"One thing BeeTee can do is keep track of figures. As a community, Tomorrow Town is in the red. Enormously."

"There's no money here, though."

"Of course not. We've spent it. And spent money we don't have. The next monorail from Preston is liable to be crowded with dunning bailiffs."

Richard thought about it. He was rather saddened by the truth. It would have been nice if the future worked. He wondered if Lincoln Steffens had any second thoughts during the Moscow purge trials?

"What threat was Zhoule to Mal-K?" he asked.

Jess-F frowned. "That's the oddest thing. Zhoule was the one who really encouraged Mal-K to work on his coup plans. He did see himself as, what did you call it, 'Beloved Leader.' All his stories were about intellectual supermen taking charge of the world and sorting things out. If anything, he was the visionary of the tomorrow takeover. And he'd have jumped anything in skirts if femzens wore skirts here."

Richard remembered the quivering Sue-2.

"So we're back to Buster in the conservatory with the Hugo award?"

"I've always said it was him," said Jess-F. "You can't blame him, but he did it."

"We shall see."

Sirens sounded. Moana put her fingers in her ears. Jess-F looked even more stricken.

"That's not a good sign, is it?"

.

The communal meal area outside Big Thinks swarmed with plastic-caped zenvols, looking up and pointing, panicking and screaming. The three light-heat globes, Tomorrow Town's suns, shone whiter and radiated hotter. Richard looked at the backs of his hands. They were tanning almost as quickly as an instant photograph develops.

"The fool," said Jess-F. "He's tampered with the master controls. Buster will kill us all. It's the only thing he has left."

Zenvols piled into the communally-owned electric carts parked in a rank to one side of the square. When they proved too heavy for the vehicles, they started throwing each other off. Holes melted in the canopy above the globes. Sizzling drips of molten plastic fell onto screaming tomorrow townies.

The sirens shrilled, urging everyone to panic.

Richard saw Vanessa through the throng.

She was with Zootie. No Gewell.

A one-man hovercraft, burdened with six clinging zenvols, chugged past inch by inch, outpaced by someone on an old-fashioned, non-solar-powered bicycle.

"If the elements reach critical," said Jess-F, "Tomorrow Town will blow up."

A bannerlike strip of paper curled out of a slit in the front of Big Thinks.

"Your computer wants to say goodbye," said Richard.

SURKIT BRAKER NO. 15.

"Not much of a farewell."

Zootie walked between falling drips to the central column, which supported the three globes. He opened a hatch and pulled a switch. The artificial suns went out. Real sunlight came through the holes in the canopy.

"Now that's what computers can do," said Jess-F, elated. "Execute protocols. If this happens, then that order must be given."

The zenvol seemed happier about her computer now.

Richard was grateful for a ditch-digger who could read.

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"This is where the body was?" he asked Zootie. They were by swimming-pool-sized tanks of green gunk, dotted with yellow and brown patches since the interruption of the light source. "Bit of a haul from Zhoule's place."

"The body was carried here?" asked Vanessa.

"Not just the body. The murder weapon too. Who lives in that bungalow?"

On a small hill was a bungalow not quite as spacious as Zhoule's, one of the mass of hutches placed between the silver pathways, with a crown of solar panels on the flat roof, and a dish antennae.

"Mm Jor-G," said Moana.

"So you do speak?"

She nodded her head and smiled.

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Gewell sat on an off-white cube in the gloom. The stored power was running down. Only filtered sunlight got through to his main room. He looked as if his backbone had been removed. All the substance of his face had fallen to his jowls.

Richard looked at him.

"Nice try with the globes. Should have remembered the circuit-breaker, though. Only diabolical masterminds construct their private estates with in-built self-destruct systems. In the future, as in the past, it's unlikely that town halls will have bombs in the basement ready to go off in the event that the outgoing Mayor wants to take the whole community with him rather than hand over the chain of office."

Gewell didn't say anything.

Vanessa went straight to a shelf and picked up the only award in the display. It was another Hugo.

"Best Fan Editor 1958," she read from the plaque.

The rocketship came away from its base.

"You killed him here," said Richard, "broke your own Hugo, left the bloody rocketship with the body outside. Then, when you'd calmed down a bit, you remembered Zhoule had won the same award. Several, in fact. You sneaked over to his bungalow—no locks, how convenient—and broke one of his Hugos, taking the rocket to complete yours. You made it look as if he were killed with his own award, and you were out of the loop. If only you'd got round to developing the glue of the future and fixed the thing properly, it wouldn't be so obvious. It's plain that, though you've devoted your life to planning out the details of the future, your one essay in the fine art of murder was a rushed botch-up job done on the spur of the moment. You haven't really improved on Cain. At least, Mm Mal-K made the effort with the space suit and the zapper-prod."

"Mm Jor-G," said Jess-F, "why?"

Good question, Richard thought.

After a long pause, Gewell gathered himself and said "Varno was destroying Tomorrow Town. He had so many ... so many ideas. Every morning, before breakfast, he had four or five. All the time, constantly. Radio transmitters the size of a pinhead. Cheap infinite energy from tapping the planet's core. Solar-powered personal flying machines. Robots to do everything. Robots to make robots to do everything. An operation to extend human lifespan threefold. Rules and regulations about who was fit to have and raise children, with gonad-block implants to enforce them. Hats that collect the electrical energy of the brain and use it to power a personal headlamp. Non-stop, unrelenting, unstoppable. Ideas, ideas, ideas ..."

Richard was frankly astonished by the man's vehemence. "Isn't that what you wanted?"

"But Varno did the easy bit. Once he'd tossed out an idea, it was up to me to make it work. Me or Big Thinks or some other plodding zenvol. And nine out of ten of the ideas didn't work, couldn't ever work. And it was always our fault for not making them work, never his for foisting them off on us. This town would be perfect if it hadn't been for his ideas. And his bloody dreadful spelling. Back in the '50s, who do you think tidied all his stories up so they were publishable? Muggins Gewell. He couldn't write a sentence that scanned, and rather than learn how he decreed the language should be changed. Not just the spelling, he had a plan to go through the dictionary crossing out all the words that were no longer needed, then make it a crime to teach them to children. It was something to do with his old public school. He said he wanted to make gerunds extinct within a generation. But he had these wonderful, wonderful, ghastly, terrible ideas. It'd have made you sick."

"And the medico who wanted to rule the world?"

"Him too. He had ideas."

Gewell was pleading now, hands fists around imaginary bludgeons.

"If only I could have had ideas," he said. "They'd have been good ones."

Richard wondered how they were going to lock Gewell up until the police came.

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The monorail was out of commission. Most things were. Some zenvols, like Jess-F, were relieved not to have to pretend that everything worked perfectly. They had desiyears-months, dammit!--of complaining bottled up inside, and were pouring it all out to each other in one big whine-in under the dead light-heat globes.

Richard and Vanessa looked across the Dales. A small vehicle was pattering along a winding, illogical lane that had been laid out not by a computer but by wandering sheep. It wasn't the police, though they were on the way.

"Who do you think this is?" asked Vanessa.

"It'll be Buster. He's bringing the outside to Tomorrow Town. He always was a yesterday man at heart."

A car-horn honked.

Zenvols, some already changed out of their plastic suits, paid attention. Sue-2 was excited, hopeful, fearful. She clung to Moana, who smiled and waved.

Someone cheered. Others joined.

"What is he driving?" asked Vanessa "It looks like a relic from the past."

"For these people, it's deliverance," said Richard. "It's a fish 'n' chip van."

The End

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Notes

1. Since the Year Dot: Since time immemorial.
2. Dalek: A trundling cyborg giant pepperpot featured in the long-running BBC-TV science fiction programme Doctor Who, introduced in 1963. The Daleks' distinctive mechanical voices were much-imitated by British children in the 1960s. Their catch-phrase: "ex-ter-min-ate!"
3. The Wilson Government: Harold Wilson was Labour Prime Minister of Great Britain from 1964 to 1970 and again from 1974 to 1976. A Maigret-like, pipe-smoking, raincoated figure, he famously boasted of "the white heat of technology" when summing up British contributions to futuristic projects like the Concorde. At the time of this story, he had been succeeded by the Tory Edward Heath, a laughing yachtsman.
4. James Burke and Raymond Baxter: The hosts in the 1960s of BBC-TV's long-running Tomorrow's World, a magazine programme covering the worlds of invention and technology. They were also anchors for UK TV coverage of the moon landings.
5. The Sunday colour supplements: A UK publishing phenomenon of the 1960s, magazines included with Sunday newspapers. The pioneering rivals were The Sunday Times and The Observer.
6. The BBC Radiophonic Workshop: The corporation's sound effects department, responsible for Dalek voices and the Doctor Who theme. Their consultants included Pink Floyd and Michael Moorcock.
7. The Crazy World of Arthur Brown: "I am the God of Hell Fire," rants Arthur on his single "Fire," which was Number One in the UK charts in 1968. An influence on Iron Maiden and other pioneer heavy metal groups, Arthur was also a devoted surrealist-cum-Satanist. He never had another hit, but is still gigging.
8. New Scientist: UK weekly magazine, scientific sister publication to the left-leaning political journal New Statesman.
9. Arthur C. Clarke: Now Sir Arthur C. Clarke, author of Childhood's End,

screenwriter of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, writer on scientific topics, and Sri Lankan resident. Known in the UK as host of Arthur C. Clarke's *Mysterious World*, a TV series about Fortean phenomena that is twenty years on the template for much X Files-ish fringe documentary programming.

10. Auberon Waugh: Crusty conservative commentator, son of the satirical novelist Evelyn Waugh. In the 1960s, his waspish journalism was most often found in *The Spectator* and the *Daily Telegraph*.

11. J. G. Ballard: Major British novelist, a key influence in the so-called New Wave of British sf in the 1960s.

12. Varno Zhoule: British s-f author, most prolific in the 1950s, when he published almost exclusively in American magazines. His only novel, *The Stars in Their Tracks*, is a fix-up of stories first seen in *Astounding*. His "Court Martian" was dramatised on the UK TV series *Out of the Unknown* in 1963.

13. The Diogenes Club: First mentioned by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in "The Greek Interpreter" and revealed as a government agency by Billy Wilder and I. A. L. Diamond in *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, the Diogenes Club has employed various investigators of the odd and paranormal for over a century. Richard Jeperson and Vanessa have also appeared in "End of the Pier Show" (*Dark of the Night*, edited by Stephen Jones; also Kim Newman's collection *Seven Stars*), "You Don't Have to Be Mad ..." (*White of the Moon*, edited by Stephen Jones; also *The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror: Thirteenth Annual Collection*, edited by Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling, and *Seven Stars*), "The Biafran Bank Manager" (*Dark Detectives*, edited by Stephen Jones; also *Seven Stars*), and the forthcoming "Egyptian Avenue" (*Embrace the Mutation*, edited by Bill Sheehan).

14. Gerry Anderson: TV producer famous in collaboration with his wife, Sylvia, for the 1960s technophilic puppet shows *Fireball XL-5*, *Stingray*, *Thunderbirds*, and *Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons*. His 1970s live-action *Space 1999* has not achieved the lasting place in UK pop culture attained by the "supermarionation" shows.

15. Valerie Singleton: Presenter of the BBC-TV children's magazine programme *Blue Peter*. Well-spoken and auntie-like, she famously showed kids how to make things out of household oddments without ever mentioning a brand name (a co-host who once said "Biro" instead of "ball-point pen" was nearly fired).

16. Smarties: Chocolate discs inside shells of various colours, available from Rowntree & Company in cardboard tubes. Still a staple "sweet" (i.e., candy) in the UK; similar to M&Ms.

17. The Tomorrow Town Alphabet: Q and X are replaced by KW and KS; the vestigial C exists only in CH and is otherwise replaced by K or S. E.g.: "The kwik brown foks jumped over the layzee dog."

18. *The Man in the White Suit*: Film directed by Alexander Mackendrick, starring Alec Guinness. An inventor develops a fabric that never wears out or gets dirty, and the clothing industry tries to keep it off the market.

19. "Can't even beat as it sweeps as it cleans": The UK slogan for Hoover vacuum cleaners in the 1970s was "it beats as it sweeps as it cleans."

20. Michelin Man: Cheery advertising mascot of the tire company, he consists of white bloated tires.

21. The Schleswig-Holstein Question: Bane of any schoolboy studying O-level

European history in 1975. It's a key plot point in George Macdonald Fraser's novel Royal Flash. O levels -- tricky exams taken at 16. A levels-- trickier exams taken at 18. Both superseded by GCSE exams, which those of us who have O and A levels think of as worthless bits of paper any clot can get, like American high school diplomas.

22. Muggins: A sap, a patsy.

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