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WHIPLASH

THE JOURNEY OF THE BOOMERANG

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I dedicate this book
to my ancestor
Jean-Baptiste Squerré,
to my parents, who when
I was a child, they encouraged
my creativity, and to my wife
and children, who have always
encouraged me to write.

Part One

The Time Portal

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DOCTOR EVANS F. DÜGER, astrophysicist, and enthusiast of the theories of Albert Einstein, and, as you might have now guessed, a gentleman of German origin, had made a rather astounding discovery. He was amusing himself with his "Boomerang" on the rail line that led to the old Parisch Mills Co. flourmill, situated a few miles from Rusty Valley, a little town in California, near the Nevada border, where he lived. It was here that he found one of those famous invisible passages, a "wormhole" that made time travel possible.

Düger, whose eccentricity, joviality and exuberance contrasted with his white unkempt hair was an inventor in his fifties. He had bought a 1969 Ford Shelby GT 500 at the national classical car exposition in Detroit. He had since then modified the car for his physics experiments, and his own personal amusement.

Besides the fact that the car already had a 425 horsepower engine, Düger had already added another 90 hp by use of a "nitro-kit" or NOS (Nitrous Oxide Systems), an invention of his own making. The injection of nitrous oxide (chemical compound N20 formula), initiated by the touch of a single button, located just above the gear box, on the dashboard, accelerated the vehicle to an unassisted velocity greater than 350 km/h, but that was not all. The Shelby had been placed on a 5 km rail line, and the engine had been combined with a six gear perfectly synchronized "Getrag" transmission, which gave it an overall speed of 382 km/h.

But the *trip* doesn't stop there. Once the Shebly had reached the 4.4 km. mark, (indicated by the large orange fluorescent colored button) Düger would then shift the

transmission into neutral and switch off the motor. He would then push another button which would cause a large 19 centimeter high-density polyethylene hook to emerge from the under chassis of the Ford. This elastic hook was made of an impact resistant polymer that was attached to steel cylinders. The cylinders were 15.8 centimeters in diameter by 1.2 meters in length and separated from each other by a distance of 38.1 centimeters. The hook would then catch onto a concrete form located on the rails. The concrete form had a depth of 1.8 meters and a length of 3 wooden rails beams, the height of cylinders was less than the height of the rails. The "elastic band" was attached to the head of the cylinders.

Then, the "Boomerang", as Düger called it, would be whipped into reverse by the giant elastic.

For the past few weeks, the doctor of relativity had been experimenting with more exciting trial runs, rather than performing some necessary physics calculations. He arrived on scene driving his Ford King Cab carrying the flamboyant sports coupe that he himself had built. He jumped out of the cabin dressed in silver overalls, ran to the back of the truck, and removed the wheel blocks supporting the Shelby. Gently, he lowered down the car with the help of an electric winch. The car glided down the two anti-slip tracks and landed gently onto the rails. While the car was descending, he calls out to Galileo, his Scottish Terrier companion:

– Galileo! Galileo! Come on boy, it's time!

His faithful companion arrived close to him and shaking his tail vigorously, he followed his North-American master on the railroad track while he finished the adjustment and fixing of the last rail brake-shoe around the driver's side:

– We're going for another journey. What do you say to that?

Galileo barked and shook his head as a sign of comprehension. He opened the passenger-side door and tilted back the seat for his faithful companion, who then jumped into the rear seat. The scientist adjusted the safety belt and the dog's helmet, which was made to measure for him. Then, after having installed it well, he sat in turn on the driver's seat and applied the same safety requirements. Düger, whose research on the possibilities of traveling in time had proven up to now unfruitful, spoke with his dog and said to him, a little disillusioned:

– Wormholes... hmm! If they're out there, where are they? How can we find them?

The dog, obviously in agreement, groaned and shook his head. The scientist, who had read and re-examined the various theories in connection with "Time travel", had said that because he had arrived at the terrible conclusion that it was not enough to have a machine to explore time, like in the famous "H. G. Wells" novel. But it was necessary that all this, namely the machine, the programming apparatus, the starting dates and arrival dates, as well as speed had to work in union with the one essential element of most of the space-time continuum: a "Time Gate". This wormhole, invisible to the naked eye, and undetectable by most of today's modern technology opens only during a short moment with precise regular intervals.

He then turned and started talking to his faithful companion before programming the onboard computer for a fictional time and date of a departure and arrival time. As he typed it in he thought of a time he would like to visit and said:

– Today is Monday October 26, 1987. Where do you want to this time Galileo? To attend the crossing of the Atlantic by Charles Lindbergh in 1927, or with the

inauguration of Ford Motor Company by Henry Ford in 1903? Or maybe a little further back... to meet the father of the electric bulb and inventor of the gramophone, Sir Thomas Edison ... 1883 perhaps?

Then, almost stopping this last time, envying more particularly this effervescent period of the inventive genius of man in this end of the XIXth century, he ruminated:

– Lord, I would have loved to live in this time and worked besides these men who, under the fire of their genius, discovered and operated for the very first time their inventions, dear Galileo... You cannot know how I would have loved to live in this era! One could also greet Abraham Lincoln the day of his election in 1860? Or besides, and you will agree with me, to prevent the unjust and stupid judgment by the Enquiry of the most eminent scientist after Leonard de Vinci, Galileo, in 1633?

Galileo answered at once by barking, he continued saying, to him, looking and answering his question:

– Good, in that case… let's go!

Nevertheless, the scientist would not differ from the opinion his scientific peers on a certain point, he added this warning:

– Only we will have to make the remainder of the way by foot and with some luck we can arrive in Italy, but we must overcome all dangers. Not to mention the rails no longer being there, we would smash through everything in our path, or after a short flight we would come crashing to the ground. Except of course, if the theory by Zinnerman, a scientific colleague who believed, in the existence of the famous "wormholes", whose tunnels also formed part of this universe, like our roads and motorways. They would enable us to go not only to a specific date or time in the past or future, but also anywhere on the planet. If they did not exist

yet at the place where we would go, they would be automatically formed by an extension in order to be able to return. The majority among us found his theory too fabulous and made fun about it. But if the theory proved to be true, Galileo, you can imagine the possibilities...

Finally, he released a sigh and finished his brief sermon by saying:

– Bah, what good is it... It's better to not to think of it too much.

Afterwards, while saying in a high voice, he tapped in the coordinates of the fictitious location, the date and time of departure and the date and time of arrival on an aircraft computer that was connected with the radio in the center of the dashboard. It was a kind of simulator that was called a "Temporal Transfuser". It consisted of a device that contained three gauges on top of an electrical mechanism. On this mechanism appeared the departure and arrival dates and times of the vehicle. When the programming was complete, the three transparent gauges started filling simultaneously with blue, yellow and green liquid crystals. He turned the key and started the powerful engine.

The challenge, although calculated was not unimportant, since it was to really cross what it had indicated as being the point of impact speed/time or ST threshold, i.e. the three gauges filled when it reached the a distance of 4.4 kilometers. The radio played music synchronized with the date and being and could easily play rock'n'roll or classical. This time, in connection with 1633, it was *Radetzky March* of Johann Strauss.

He put the vehicle into first and slackened the clutch, pressed on the accelerator and took off at high speed by successively shifting into the five other gears. Then, at a speed faster than 250 km/h, with a simple touch of the

finger, he injected an explosion of his famous “nitro kit”. This caused the car to propel at a break-neck speed of almost 380 km/h and having crossed the course of the 4.4 kilometers, he shifted the gear lever to neutral, turned off the engine then, the hook under the vehicle caught the elastic, and he was whipped into reverse. He called out:

– Boomerang! He yelled while laughing out loud, even if the vehicle was immobilized and the fun ride had finished.

His dog looked at him and wanted to almost to say him, if it had been able to speak: “Man… what a nutcase!” Then, his laughter growing blurred, he said to the pooch, while getting out of his Boomerang:

– We must leave now, Galileo, it will be soon eight o’clock and the night will be pitch black. And if you are like me... a heavy meal and a good hot bath is best after such a flight to recharge our batteries.

As soon as he had dismounted, he started to slacken the tension on the rail guides of the racing car so as to prevent, especially at the time of takeoff, the rims turning unnecessarily on the rails, thus avoiding overheating, warping, and an important loss of acceleration. Then, he used a spray can on the interior of the wheels in order to remove the residues of bits of tire that were over three lengths of rails on both sides. However, for the first time since he came there, an incident occurred. Galileo, who had remained between the two rails with approximately 60 meters behind the trailer containing the racing car, barked without stopping and did not seem to want to leave. With his hand on the handle of the door of car, the scientist was curious to know the reason to his companion’s incessant braking:

– It must be a skunk or something!

Reiterating his call to come to join him, he got up and called out to him, somewhat aggravated:

– That's enough now Galileo, come! There is nothing over there. That white striped animal is not worth the effort and you know it. She'll have the last word by spraying you with some of her sweet "perfume". Then I'd have to give you a tomato bath.

The dog, not hearing anything, continued his yapping. His master says to him, in a tone more threatening and convincing:

– OK, as you wish. I'll leave you here. Only, all the famished coyotes of the area will soon have you surrounded and will want you for an evening snack. And that, my boy, will not be fun for you, believe me.

He climbed back up into the pick-up, his elbow pressed on the edge of the lowered window pane, he murmured, finding Galileo's behavior abnormal and odd:

– No, but... what is it with him this evening? It's so unlike him...

Being unable to hear any more to hear of his dog's incessant barking, he added, opening the glove compartment and taking the flashlight as well as a pair of infrared goggles:

– Argh! This is too much, I'll have to check it out!

Descending the vehicle and coming towards him, torch in one hand, and the goggles in the other, he says to him:

– What is it you old Scot, are you sick? What you discovered, good heavens? The corpse of Jismond Ladurantaye, whom the police have been looking for, for two years? If it's not important, believe me, I will be annoyed.

Suddenly, Galileo stopped barking and started to advance, Düger says, while following him:

– Fine, good, as long as the discovery is worth it, or can progress science... I don't have a problem with that. I'm coming.