

Steven E. Domingues II
(805) 264-1263
Steven@stevendomingues.com

The Wormhole (Sample)

By

Steven E. Domingues II

5,793 Words

Contents:

- I Proof
- II Lesser and Greater
- III Paradoxes?
- IV Coffee House Conundrum
- V Tethering Device

I: Proof

I sat down on my bed, the shattered remains of my life scattered around me. I had nobody to talk to, nobody to share the revelations that were screaming through my head. I called the only person I could. The only logical minded person I knew to understand the hypothesis I was about to propose. I called my girlfriend; and I explained everything.

I grew up with H.G. Wells.

Okay, let me explain.

I grew up with a literary piece from H.G. Wells, The Time Machine. I had this old paperback copy, the cover was ripped and torn, held on by a piece of clear packing tape that my mother had applied for me. The book itself had been gifted to me by my father, known only to me as a scientist and professor. In fact, I often, when alone, called him that: the professor. My young mind of seven years could not fathom the realities of what the professor called "wormie holes."

The book was read to me for years, as I had not yet developed the patience or vocabulary necessary for the novella. The story was always changing as well. Unknown parts of the book were revealed to me as I grew older, my mother protecting my fragile mind from the worst of it.

I dragged that old book with me wherever I went. For my thirteenth birthday, I was given a rare first edition of the book. My uncle had won some money a few weeks earlier and was showering our family with expensive gifts. The cloth cover was embossed with a sphinx and simple typography explaining the title and author. I never opened that book. Well, not for several years. It came into my possession in a sealed Plexiglas case, and was proudly displayed on my shelves well into my college years; my war-torn paperback fed my need to read and re-read this story.

My college career was fueled by the explanation from the professor on what his work with "wormie holes" was really about. I was intrigued by Quantum Mechanics and devoured any piece of literature that came my way: magazines, news reports, the Discovery Channel. All the long nights and missing appearances from school plays and award ceremonies were finally explained to me; to study these sciences was a lifetime devotion, and if I was built the same way he was, genetically speaking, then I would need to devote my life as well. I cornered the professor one night, a week before my final pre-grad year was to begin. I asked him the nature of his work, and why he had abandoned his family. He told me not of his work, but of the changes to the world his work would bring. The professor hoped that one day, his son would be able

to join him, and they would make discoveries together.

Unfortunately, he gave this impassioned speech the day before he died. It was a simple action, a mugging gone wrong. He was staying late at the University, running experiments that could hypothetically change our lives forever. He forgot a notebook in his car and was found the next morning, lying on the wet asphalt, a gunshot wound in his stomach and his wallet and cell phone missing. His car was found a week later, driven until it had run out of gas and abandoned on the side of the road.

My mother never recovered from the incident. His life insurance policy made us unintentionally wealthy, and I found that my tuition for my post graduate studies at the university would be paid for, as long as I followed in the professor's footsteps. The decision was to be delayed until my final year, as they were unsure if I could live up to his legacy. The Dean gave me this special privilege, because of my father's other promise; the school retained the right to publish any findings that he, and now I, made.

After graduation, I left my mother to go to school at the University, still unsure if I was to follow in his wake. I found pieces of my unknown father's life all over the science wing of the campus: medals, pictures, awards; all things that I only knew as distractions from his family, from me.

I was surprised, however, when I found that my father had left a letter for me in his untouched office at the University. His office was to be left as it was, not to be touched, until confirmation of his son attending the school. The door was shut and locked, awaiting me. My first day on campus, I was brought to the door by the Dean, and a key was placed in my hand. He explained that one of my father's last requests was that any experiment, documentation, or files that he left was to remain untouched. The Dean told me this with a twinkle in his eye; once the works were finished and published, the University would be world famous.

I explored the office for three hours. Most of the time I spent in the office was simply standing in the room, or reading papers on shelves. His theories were radical, but backed up by numerous experiments. There were several unpublished papers in his filing cabinet. If they had been published when he was alive, the science community would be rocked to the core. Before I left the room I noticed an envelope on his dusty chair. A scrap of paper was entombed within, his familiar all caps scrawl simply read:

"THE TRAVELER HAS SEEN ME, RELEASE HIM."

For years I had wondered why he never had a name. The

Traveler was the unnamed character in the Wells novella, a well known persona in my life. My father being of a sound scientific mind would never allude that he had been seen by a fictional character or that said fictional character was somehow trapped and in need of release. He had been speaking in code, his life must have had more secrets than any of us had ever known. I spent many nights with that scrap of paper in hand, turning it over and over, thinking, wondering and hypothesizing.

A week later, the University needed a response on continuing my father's experiments. The night before the imposed deadline, earlier tonight that is, I reached for my familiar copy of The Time Machine. The book, which sat in its tidy space near my alarm clock next to the dormitory bedding, was gone. I searched my room for twenty minutes, sure that I wouldn't find it. While disturbed at the thought that I had somehow misplaced the book that had been with me for so many years, my gaze drifted across the room. The Plexiglas enclosed first edition's gleaming surface shined into my eyes. Not thinking, I reached for the missing book on my nightstand, the bookmark I had been using was the note my father left me. Feeling stupid, I let my arm drop to my side and instead stepped forward to the first edition.

The book was trapped; the traveler was in the book. If I

released the book, I released the traveler and perhaps my father. I didn't know what this meant, the insane implications. What was in the first edition that wasn't in the aged paperback that I had been carrying around with me all these years? There couldn't be anything of significance inside; it had been sealed since well before it came into my possession. Yet, somehow it all fit. The riddle left to me after my father's death pointed to this bibliophile treasure.

I spent the next two hours attempting to pry the Plexiglas apart to release the book.

I borrowed a hammer from a janitor's closet down the hall, and slammed my way into the Plexiglas. I was careful, however, not to damage the book. If I was wrong, and my wild ideas and wild hammer swings brought forth nothing, I still wanted to keep the book safe.

Taking the book from the wreckage of its once forever tomb, I slowly opened the front cover. The book, a true first edition, as stated by the copyright pages and certificate of authenticity that was shoved unceremoniously into the first few pages drew my attention away from the weight of the book. The book itself was small, a meager 5"x7", and just under an inch thick. Its weight was certainly not what was expected. I turned a few more pages, my eyes gazing and appreciating the old typeface and familiar text. I was then horror struck when

I turned a page and found a void. Someone had carved out the middle of the book, the same way a cartoon thief would hide a chisel in a bible. There were pages of yellow paper folded into a tight bundle and a flash drive with a tag tangling from one end; a message was scribbled upon it. Watch me FIRST!!!

"Don't worry about that, just some rules and food for thought for the experiments, plus some documentation. Here's your book back, sorry I stole it, but it's the only way I would look in there."

Turning around, I looked in absolute horror at myself. This was no trick and no mirror. Thoughts flashed though my mind. Had I been drugged? Was I having a mental breakdown? This had to be a dream, or some horrific nightmare. The man standing before me was, undeniably, me. Older it seemed; thicker muscles, and hair that was long and unkempt. I was also wearing my favorite shirt, though it looked worn and the right sleeve was singed and patched together.

Although my logical brain knew the answer already, too much film and television required I ask, "Who are you?"

"Ah yes, the typical question; too many movies, me."

"How did you know I-"

"I remember what I, er, we were feeling today. Sorry, it's a bit odd talking to oneself, especially when the Greater remembers the event. It's so much de ja vu that it's giving me

a headache."

"Greater?"

"Yeah, that's how we decided to call each other." I shrugged, "not you and I, of course, but when bouncing through time, saying 'chronologically older me was slapped by chronologically younger you' was quite a mouthful, so we settled on Greater and Lesser, a reference to experience, the true way to measure time in ones own mind."

"I don't-"

"Greater me just gave Lesser me a book. Get it?" The man, who was becoming familiar as me, tossed my missing paperback book onto the dorm bed. It bounced and the bookmark slid out, coasting to the floor.

"Dad insisted that this be the way that we meet, something about discovery being more important than simply being told. Anyway, we've got a lot to do. Well, Lesser me has a lot to do, Greater me has to get back to work. Enjoy the book." Greater me nodded at the destroyed first edition and winked. "Don't worry, we come to terms. And yes, Dad is alive."

II: Lesser and Greater

"Then, he walked out of the room. I heard a noise, like a

bang or pop. I ran out and he was gone, no trace. I swear to you, that is exactly how it happened." The phone trembled in my hands as I waited for her response.

"I don't know Daniel. This is quite the story. And you're positive this is no dream or hallucination, I mean, theoretical time travel is one thing, but this sounds like a little bit o' crazy."

"I know, I know. Just, come over, okay. We can take a look at the flash drive and see what the hell is really going on. I, I just need an anchor, you know, someone to make it real and not just insanity floating all around me."

"So, you're serious then? This isn't an elaborate prank or..."

"No! Dammit, listen to me. That was me in here - that was me. Not a vision or a hallucination. I swear to you Kelly, this is by far the weirdest and most intriguing thing that has ever happened to me." As I spoke to her, I started picking up the pieces of broken Plexiglas and papers that had loosened themselves from the neatly folded bundle. One of them was a picture of me and Kelly. We were smiling next to an odd cylindrical structure. It appeared to be 7 or 8 feet tall, and was composed of a series of chrome cylinders of differing diameters. There were a few nodules here and there, breaking up the smooth chrome surface. The top foot of the device was

tapered and the base was thick, perhaps 3 feet in diameter. It was hard to tell because of the tubes and wires sprouting from it. There also appeared to be a fine mist around our feet, the cables snaking into it and disappearing.

"Look, just come over, you have to see this. I found a photo."

"A photo?"

"Yeah, and it looks like I don't have to worry, it appears you will be coming over."

"What do you mean?"

I flipped the photo over. It was dated 5/29/77. There was also a series of alpha-numeric and Greek letters printed in the bottom corner. "Because you're in this photo and it was taken 31 years ago."

Kelly arrived at my dorm room 20 minutes later. She was dressed in pajama pants and a sweatshirt. Her book bag was slung over her shoulder and she clicked a pen in her right hand, a habit she picked up during late night study sessions.

"Do you think you should see the campus psychol-"

I sprang up from my bed when she came in and ran to her. I embraced her, I embraced her for coming and believing in me, and I embraced her because I knew that somewhere, sometime, I had already done this.

"Look, look at this. Do you have your notebook? Take notes, I know you'll want to take notes."

"Daniel, what is all this?" Kelly looked around my room. I watched her gaze cross the room; over the pile of forgotten plexiglass on the floor, around the old ruined book beside it and finally stopping on the bed, where I had been sifting through the notes. They were my father's notes.

"My father's notes, I think these were the notes he was allegedly going to his car to retrieve the day he was killed, you know, shot or whatever." I reached down and picked up a page. The bottom was clearly labeled with a page number. This one was 23. The left side of the page had two dates. One was a day number and the other was a date. "Look here: 'Day 64, September 13, 1990: Watched Daniel go to kindergarten. I can't believe I missed this the first time around. He looks happy to be here. Joan is crying. I have to stop these personal trips, but I can't seem to tear myself away from the life that I was never a part of. Besides, who needs to hurry when they have a time machine?' isn't that nuts? I mean, he was there, you know. Can you believe he was actually there? All those years I thought he never cared."

"Daniel, I hate to do this to you, but," Kelly looked up from the paper I had shoved under her nose, "this really isn't proof. I mean, anyone could have written this."

"Yeah? Look at the bottom of the page." Kelly took the paper from me and squinted. She sighed and pulled her glasses out of her bag. She tried to rub the lenses clean with her sweatshirt, but they stayed scuffed. She read in silence, her eyes widening as her lips mouthed the words.

"But this - how could - this has to be a trick." Written on the bottom of the page, in Kelly's handwriting was the short message: "The proof you're looking for will walk in any second. Use the cloth the optometrist gave you to clean your glasses, that sweatshirt never gets them completely clean."

"Daniel, this is seriously fucked up. I know I wear this sweatshirt a lot, but if you want to tell me-"

"Look, it's your handwriting. I couldn't fake that, how could I? You know my writing is atrocious. Besides, aren't you excited now?"

"What do you mean? Daniel, this can't be real, it isn't possible. Remember Hawking? If time travel was possible, then why aren't we bombarded with people visiting the past?"

"You're missing the point. Look, it says the proof you're looking for will walk in any second. Aren't you excited?"

"This, this can't, Daniel, someone has played a joke on you, a cruel, cruel joke. Nobody is going to come in here. Time travel isn't possible. The physics don't exist. We can't do it. And if we could-"

"Then we'd be bombarded with Time Travelers." A person I could only describe as Greater Me walked into the room and finished Kelly's sentence. She whirled around and stared at him. Her pen, which she had been clicking while I was trying to explain things to her dropped to the ground. "Hey Kelly, it's good to see you again. I need to ask you a favor, I have a book that needs to be sealed in Plexiglas about 12 years pre-now, but I need you to scribble a little something for me." Greater me bent down and picked up the pen she had dropped. Then, Greater me pulled a small package from his rear pocket. He winked at me and unwrapped the first edition of The Time Machine. He opened it and untied the bundle of notes. He flipped through to page 23 and handed it to Kelly. The bottom of the page was blank. "I think you know what to do."

Kelly took the pen and paper from Greater me and scribbled a note at the bottom of the page. She then grabbed that same page from me and looked at them both. They were identical. Greater me smiled his thanks, took the page from Kelly and turned to leave, re-wrapping the package. "Wait a sec." I said.

"Yeah?"

"Why didn't you stay here? Why did you leave and then come back to have her write that?"

"I was here before? Today?"

"Yeah, you took my book, made me look for it and find the notes in the first edition. Oh shit."

"Huh, I guess I must have," he looked around and then nodded at the pile of broken Plexiglas on the floor, "hmmm. Well, I guess I have a little trip to make." Greater me pulled his right sleeve up to reveal a metal device strapped to his forearm. It encircled his forearm from just above the wrist to nearly the elbow. There was a 2 inch by 4 inch screen embedded in the underside of his arm that was only accessible when he turned his hand palm up. He tapped and stroked the screen, looked up at us, smiled and hopped a few inches into the air. There was an absence of light and then a pop, as air rushed into the void that he left.

III: Paradoxes?

Kelly and I sat on my bed, our faces inches from the laptop screen between us. The flash drive from the future, or the past, it was hard to keep track of, was plugged in. We had decided to follow the instructions and bundled the pages of notes back together, including the photos. The flash drive had a series of folders, numbered. The first was labeled "1 - Watch Me FIRST" and I clicked on it. There was a video file inside, labeled the same as the folder. I clicked on it to

play. A video started. It was grainy, looked like it had been originally filmed with an 8mm camera. My father stood in front of an easel, a white board placed on it. He spoke.

"Hello, I am Dr. Fuller. I am here to lecture the theoretical physics of wormhole travel."

The video lasted for 35 minutes. He explained that by creating a wormhole and keeping it stable, one could travel through it for as long as it has existed. He hypothesized that if he were to open a wormhole in 1975 and kept it open until 1985, then he could travel to any time in-between. The wormhole left a path through the fourth dimension, a rope one should be able to tether to and climb forwards and backwards through time. If the wormhole was left open indefinitely, then, we would see people from the far flung future visit. However, it would be completely impossible to travel beyond the existence of the wormhole, which ruled out killing Hitler as a child or seeing the end of the universe.

"This is amazing," Kelly said "I mean, we know he succeeded, right? Unless this is a more elaborate trick than you've let on to. Do you have an older twin?"

"Older twin? That doesn't make any sense."

"I know, just a, joke. A bad joke I guess." She smiled shyly at me, then her eyes widened. "But, that means there is a wormhole open right now, and it must exist at least a few

years into the future.”

“Yep.”

“So, we’re guaranteed to exist in the future, right?”

Kelly stood up, excited.

“Yeah, well, I am for sure. I suppose you are to, to an extent, you were in that old photo.” I watched her. Whenever she got this excited about something, I was sure to get into trouble.

“Let’s rob a bank.”

“What?!”

“Look, if you rob a bank, and get caught, then you’d be in jail for several years, which means you wouldn’t be able to come back and talk to yourself, right? Well, that means if we rob a bank, then we’ll get away with it.” Kelly knelt before me, her eyes aglow with logic and fallacy.

“Paradoxes.”

“Yeah, Paradoxes.”

“There’s probably something in here about that, I mean, it’s important, right? I’d imagine, well, I know, the first thing I’d want to do is go back to that night and save my father’s life. But, I obviously didn’t do that, because then he’d be alive, right?”

“Yeah, and you’d have no reason to go back and save him.”

“Paradox.”

"Paradox."

"Want to get some coffee? I think this is going to be a long night." I helped Kelly up, then stooped back over my bed, collecting the time lost paperwork.

"Sure. Um, real quick, why did you tell yourself about this? I mean, sure, time travel is probably the greatest discovery of our time, but, why? I mean, are you supposed to do something? Have you already done it? Is what you're about to do what has always happened? Is this just you tying up loose ends? Why muck around in the past? Wouldn't you go into the future, you know, find those hover-boards?"

"Yeah, I don't know. Hopefully, this," I tapped the computer screen, "will tell us what we need to do, or need to have already done, from their perspective. Watch one more before we go?"

"Yeah, want me to click on folder 2?" Kelly touched the mouse sensitive square on my laptop and navigated to the next folder.

The folder was labeled "2." Inside was another video file, this one was labeled "Paradoxes, stop trying to ruin everything, Kelly" We both stared at the screen and laughed.

"I guess we should get used to this," Kelly said and clicked on the file. The video that opened was much crisper in visual and audio quality. Greater me and Greater Kelly were

sitting at a table. The video camera was low, probably just sitting on the table. Greater us looked a little ashamed, like they had just been scolded.

"Paradoxes." Greater me said, and sighed, holding back a smile.

"The universe exists at all points in space and time. Well, not really, but, just think of it that way." Greater Kelly looked a little embarrassed, "You cannot change the past, because it has already happened. Even though you haven't been there, a Greater you has, so there is no change."

"So, you can't go a day in the future and get the winning lottery numbers. I can say this, because I haven't won the lottery." Greater me smiled, a bit too widely, at the camera, and glanced at Kelly. "Which means you never did, which, I remember."

"To sum up," Kelly looked to the edge of the camera at something off screen, "don't go on any flights of fancy, I mean, we already know what you've done, just don't go overboard." Greater me, unable to hold his laughter in any longer, burst out with a loud guffaw and slammed his hand over his mouth. "And don't listen to him, although, I know you will." The video ended and Kelly and I looked at each other.

"Wonder what that was about."

"Dunno, I guess we'll find out. Coffee?" I reached

forward and closed the laptop.

"I don't know, I did just tell myself not to listen to you." Kelly smiled at me, mischievously.

"Suit yourself." I shrugged and got up from the bed, collecting my laptop and taking it with me.

"Hey, wait for me!"

IV: Coffee House Conundrum

We packed the laptop and the post-now notes. (Hearing the Greater me refer to "pre-now" had got me thinking about the way I needed to start thinking about time.) After taking a side trip to Kelly's apartment so she could change her clothes, we walked back to the campus and to the coffee shop. It was more a study hall cram house than a coffee shop. They were able to make the strange sugary concoctions that the common man wanted, but their specialty was the "All-Nighter" a special espresso blend that could keep you up, well, all night. We both ordered one and looked for a spot in the busy room.

Even though it was 12:46 in the morning, the place was packed. Most of the students had ear buds in their ears, blasting music or a lecture, distractions from the distractions. The only free table was next to an older

gentleman, who was hunched over his notes and coffee. He didn't look up as we sat down, set up the laptop and notes and started whispering to each other. Kelly pulled out her notes (which I noticed had extensive scribbles regarding paradoxes), and flipped to the next page, wrote a few words and sipped on her coffee. I smiled at her and opened the next file.

The room was too loud for us to hear Greater me talk, so we pulled out our own ear buds and shared them. The file, labeled "3 - an explanation of why we don't share information"

"Okay, now, this is going to get tricky, but it's another one of those very important things that you're not going to be able to wrap your heads around, but doesn't really matter, because the universe takes care of it for you." Greater me took a large breath and continued. "Imagine if Greater me came back and handed Lesser you a watch. Then, three years from now, Lesser you has become Greater you and you still have that same watch. Then Greater you goes back and gives it to Lesser you. Where did the watch come from?" He leaned in closer to the camera, "It's impossible because something can't come out of nothing. Also, one can't tell their past selves information that would lead them to tell their past selves that same information. Where did the information come from?" Greater me leaned back from the camera and smiled. I noticed a bandage on his arm. "Well, that's it. Don't worry about this particular

paradox; it never happens because it can't. So, just remember that if we meet and you start asking questions, I probably can't answer them, but I'll get one hell of a headache, so, knock it off." The video ended, and we pulled the ear buds out.

Kelly and I looked at each other. "Well, that answers that." Kelly scratched out some of her notes. "So, I guess, whatever is about to happen, just happens and we have no warning."

"Looks like time travel is a pain in the ass. Your own personal timeline can't really be affected-" I sipped on my coffee.

"-unless it already was-" Kelly sipped some of her own caffeinated drink.

"-which you haven't done yet, but must."

"My head hurts."

"Mine too."

"Just wait until something goes wrong." The man sitting behind us spoke into our ears. We both looked back and saw another version of me. A Greater-greater me. He was older, maybe late forties or early fifties. He, I, bore a striking resemblance to my, our, father. He was dressed simply, and had a spiral notebook he was writing in.

"What? Another one? Damn, how many times am I going to

come back and talk to me?"

"Don't worry, kid, this meeting wasn't planned. Hi Kelly, it's good to see you again. Don't think too much about paradoxes, they take care of themselves. Just get yourself started on this," Greater me shoved his jacket sleeve up and showed us the device on his arm. It was arguably the same device I had seen on a Greater me earlier that night. This one was blackened, scratched with age. The screen had a crack running through it, and there was a panel missing, blackened circuits showing through.

"What's that?"

"Guess, kid."

"Is, is that the tether?"

"Yep. Hasn't been invented yet." Greater me winked.

"So, that's what-"

"Uh-huh"

"I guess I better get busy."

"Yep, but don't worry, you have plenty of time. I'm just glad you're finally getting around to it."

V: Tethering Device

After accepting my role in continuing my father's work, Kelly and I dove into his research. As Great-Greater me (I had

come to think of the eldest version of me that popped in unexpectedly in this parlance) had said, we needed to invent the device that made time travel possible. He couldn't help us, of course, but was able to confirm or deny if we were on the right track.

We first had to detect the wormhole, which we thought would be easy enough, as we knew where the machine was. My father had a warehouse on campus, a large building that had previously been a farm equipment storage facility. It had been renovated at some time in the 1960's and turned into a lab. There were offices along one wall, but also a huge open space that contained a refrigeration unit that housed the cylindrical device I had seen in the photo from 1977.

Kelly and I used some of my family's life insurance money along with my dad's grant money to update the computers and workstations. We were able to afford top of the line computers with multi-core processors, large plasma displays and prototype programs for us to run our simulations and models.

We were sitting at one of the larger workstations several days after the last of the equipment we had ordered was installed, running a simulation and trying to detect the wormhole when Great-greater me walked in.

"Hello Kelly, Me, how is the work coming along?" He asked us this like he usually did, but his voice was strained, and

his eyes flicked to his watch. I had the sinking feeling that he was expecting something.

"We've got this computer hooked up to the microwave spectrometer, but we're not getting any readings."

"Yeah, you probably wouldn't. Do you have a machine to detect Negative Energy?"

"Negative Energy?" Kelly looked at me and old me. "Isn't that sci-fi?"

"Well, it was, until, you know--"

"My dad." I said.

"Our dad." Great-Greater me said.

"Yeah. So, how do we detect--"

"Yeah, how do you detect something that isn't there?"

Kelly looked both defiant and interested. She clicked her pen.

"It's not in the notes?" Great-Greater Me looked around for the copy of The Time Machine, but instead of finding the book (which I had re-sealed in another Plexiglas case, its notes now copied, laminated and in a binder) his eyes settled on the jacket I had draped over a chair. "Hey! I remember that jacket. It's the one with the little pocket inside the left breast, isn't it? I loved that jacket. Fit like a dream."

"Yeah, it's my, I guess our, favorite."

"Well, enjoy it while you can, it's going to- Argh!"

Great-Greater Me collapsed onto the floor, his hands grabbing

at his head.

"What's wrong, are you okay?" I rushed over to him and helped him into a sitting position. He held his head in his hands, his breathing shallow.

"Another case of the De-ja-vus, I guess. That was a strong one, I think that means-"

There was a sudden rush of air as a Greater Me appeared a few feet away from us, leaning over an empty workstation. He looked up at us, as we gawked back at him. "It worked! Oh my God, it worked! Finally!" He looked up at us, then down in recognized horror, as his arm first smoked, then burst into flame. Great-greater me grabbed the nearest thing in his reach, my favorite jacket, of course, and rushed towards Greater me to smother the flames.

Great-greater me tackled Greater me and they both tumbled to the ground, flames crawling up Greater me's arm. Kelly yelled something incomprehensible and ran toward a fire extinguisher. I could do nothing but watch as an older and a very older version of me tried to save each other's lives. As I stood stunned, watching them fumble with the flames, watched Kelly run with the fire extinguisher, I couldn't help but ask myself why the older version of me would try to save a younger versions life. Wasn't he immortal?

The scene slowed around me as I thought about the

problem. I had never thought about the consequences, or lack thereof, of knowing that I was going to live to be fiftyish. I suppose that I could jump out of a window or, like Kelly suggested, rob a bank. Maybe this is why I decided to test the TeDe myself, and not Kelly.

Not Kelly. I had never stopped to ask Great-Greater me about Kelly. Why didn't he talk about her? I got a horrible sinking feeling as I watched the love of my life spray white foam on two future versions of myself.