Out of Time

CLIFF BALL

Out of Time sample

Chapter One

They had to escape from this period in time. The people they were visiting in the 1600's definitely thought they were witches and the spawn of the devil. Historians warned the school teacher about visiting Salem, Massachusetts, during the Salem Witch Trials, especially with a dozen twelve year olds in her care. The teacher had Doctor John Hawking and Captain Erickson with the class, but, the villagers were chasing after them, and there was no way to get to the shuttle without significantly changing history. All Mrs. Hanson wanted was to show her class, through the Interactive History program, what made these particular Puritans so paranoid, and what happens to people when they were accused of witchcraft. Well, they certainly got more than they bargained for.

Hawking was loudly complaining, "This is utterly stupid. We should have had a military backup when we go to time periods such as these. With all the threats to us from the Puritans and the Native Americans, neither of which tolerate strangers on their lands, we're in constant danger. I'm going to file a protest with the President, and insist we get some military assistance."

"What about interfering with time by bringing advanced weapons, armor, and everything involved with a military operation?" asked Erickson.

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“We have the technology to make our weapons appear to be muskets, so why not? We can then have the soldiers wear whatever uniforms from whatever time we’re in, and that will solve that!” insisted Hawking.

“Well, let’s worry about that when we get back.”

After leading the witch hunters through the forest for over an hour, the time travelers managed to finally lose them. The school kids thought this was really cool, while their teacher was frantic. Erickson led them all back to the holographically disguised shuttle, which was disguised to look like a small house. Once they were back inside, and everyone was accounted for, Erickson piloted the shuttle back to the *USS Einstein*, which was waiting in orbit. On the ship, Mrs. Hanson and her class went to the room that was a temporary classroom, while Hawking and Erickson went to the bridge. On the bridge, Erickson was asked by Yeager, “How did it go, Captain?”

“It didn’t go very well. One of the villagers got it into their head that we were more than just strangers, so we were accused of witchcraft. Mrs. Hanson tried to argue that we weren’t witches, which made them even angrier, especially since it was a woman who was arguing with them. So, within minutes we had the whole angry-mob-with-fire-and-pitchforks coming after us. After our little disappearance, we might as well be witches to them. Remind me never to let any historian or school teachers convince us to let them travel to Salem of the 1690’s. Now, we can return home and see what other adventures we have in store for us.”

The *USS Einstein* traveled forward to 2157, so that the sixth graders could do their e-book reports on what happened in the Salem Witch Trials of 1692. After Hawking and the others returned from the first missions

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through time, the government decided that there would be a no-interference policy for the past, a sort of Grandfather Paradox Policy. The idea was, through the previous experience, that if anyone interfered in anything significant to the timeline, that when you returned to your period of time, you may not exist because your ancestors may not have survived a certain period in the time you tried to fix. Hawking said this was all theory and he didn't know if the person would disappear from history if they returned to the present, but he didn't want to find out.

Contaminating the timeline without meaning to could be a real possibility with the Interactive History program the Department of Education had thought up recently. Too many American children knew far too little about their history, so with the use of a time traveling starship, they could learn from first-hand experience. Hawking disagreed with this, but convinced Congress to pass a Grandfather Paradox Act, making sure nobody would interfere in the natural flow of history. Sure, Hawking was becoming rich and famous because of this. School districts, historians, and others paid him to take them back in time, but he still cared about not contaminating the timeline.

Hawking was also worried about when those rogue time travelers from the beginning of his first trips through time were supposed to interfere with the original missions, but he had no idea when in the future they were from. Another worry was the fact that the *Time Tripper* had been built without his knowledge; he wondered what other things had he done that the government had turned around and gone behind his back to do one their

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own? He would never know. Now, government contracts were going to the lowest bidder for the next generation of time traveling starship.

These new ships, with Commander Robinsons' help, could go faster than the speed of light, if they needed to use the suns' gravity to jump through time, which didn't happen very often, since they almost always found fluid time access points. Robinson had also experimented with using black holes to travel through time, which wasn't quite working out the way he thought the experiments would. All the black hole experiment did was make the ship stay stuck in the event horizon, going nowhere, so now Robinson would have to invent a whole new way to get the ship unstuck from a black holes' event horizon.

Hawking made sure he held the patents to his time device, which required the new stardrives to work; he wanted no one to go behind his back and build another timeship without his knowledge. President Williamson assured the scientist that anything having to do with the secrets of time travel was now solely Hawkings' responsibility; there were no longer secret government labs or secret time traveling missions. Doctor Hawking still wanted to know what kind of missions the *Time Tripper* had been on previous to Hawking taking control of it to go back to Roswell in 1947, but all Williamson would say is that it was classified higher than the security clearance that Doctor Hawking had been given by the powers-that-be.

Hawking had been asked by some Smithsonian Institute historians if he could take them to observe moments like the Boston Massacre, the signing of the Constitution, the War of 1812 and the British burning the White

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House, the various battles of the Civil War, and other significant happenings in American history. They wanted to record everything for posterity, on video, so that the Smithsonian Museum could accurately portray everything instead of guessing on a few moments in history.

He was a bit overwhelmed with all the requests for his time and the attention he was receiving, so he finally hired a secretary and an agent, so that he wouldn't have to deal with everything so directly. How he ended up as the go-to-guy for trips through time, he wasn't sure; all he wanted to do originally was to figure out how to time travel. Since he enjoyed history, it really didn't bother him all that much to go back in time and show everyone how history had happened. What bothered him was, what would happen if someone messed up the timeline like he and the others did the first time they went through time, would they be able to fix it again? So, he started reflecting on how he went through this whole time travel scheme the first time.

Many years earlier…..

"Computer simulations are complete. The theories on time travel could become scientific fact once we find a suitable spaceship to complete the experiment. Has anyone located the suitable ship we need for time travel?"

"Yes sir, Doctor Hawking. NASA engineers have searched every shipyard and have found a ship similar to what you were looking for. At the moment, it's a derelict ship about to be mothballed by the current owners. They buy old military ships and use the parts off of those ships for colony and passenger ships. They're asking for quite a bit of money before they'll

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even consider selling the ship to us. Would that be a problem?" asked the NASA official.

"No, no, that is not a problem. I have quite a number of investors, so money is of no concern to me. I'll inform them of the ship in question, and then I shall go out to take a look at the ship before I make a decision. Now, what's next?"

The year was 2156, and the scientist was Doctor John Hawking, a brilliant astrophysicist, quantum mechanics theorist, and was considered the ultimate expert on time travel. The United States government and its science community had long ago abandoned the banning of cloning, so the unborn Doctor was an almost complete genetic copy of one Professor Stephen Hawking, one of the greatest scientific minds of the late twentieth to early twenty-first centuries. As the clone of Hawking was maturing inside of his mother, scientists were uploading into the clones' unborn brain, various facts and theories so a great scientist could be born. John Hawking was born in the year 2121, in Silicon Valley, California, to Raymond and Allison Hawking, who were direct descendants of Stephen Hawking. At the age of four months, the clone exhibited his brilliance by forming a complete, coherent sentence in less than a week after voicing his first word. At two years old, John was writing and coming up with his own theories, along with mathematical equations nobody had ever seen before, on his rather low-tech family computer. When he was ten, he graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a Bachelor's of Science in Physics, and then went to Cal Tech, graduating from there at the age of twelve with a Master's in Quantum Mechanics.

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However, John became somewhat rebellious at fourteen and decided he didn't want to what everyone wanted him to do, so he decided to become a real teenager and act like one. His parents were thrilled with the idea, but his rebelliousness irritated government scientists who were counting on him to deliver the greatest idea in human history. John was introduced to drag racing by his father; he found that he enjoyed it, and so he began racing vintage cars from the early twentieth to mid twenty-first century, becoming a regular fixture at drag-strips across the country. Car owners in NHRA, NASCAR, and Formula One watched the future scientist, since he was a brilliant racer, and offered him chances to drive their various vehicles, but, John declined knowing what his future held for him.

On one fateful, clear summer day, he was gearing up for a race in a 2007 Chevrolet Corvette Z06 against a major rival driving a 2010 Ferrari. John had tweaked the 454 cubic inch engine he had installed so he could get as much power out of it as possible. The two racers made their way into their respective cars, waited for the green light to go, and when they were given the green light, both cars shot off like bullets. Near halfway, John was going over two hundred miles an hour, when his Corvette shuddered and began to flip over. Fortunately for John, his car was equipped with the most advanced safety equipment currently available; however, when his car stopped flipping over four hundred yards from where it began to flip, it appeared that he hadn't survived the crash. The car itself appeared as if it had been sent to the crusher in a junkyard. John woke up three days later in the hospital intensive car unit and learned the extent of his injuries. His left

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leg had multiple breaks; a hip had multiple fractures, a broken collarbone, fractured sternum, five broken ribs, a broken arm, and a concussion.

While healing from his multitude of injuries, he began watching numerous old science fiction movies and television shows, mostly because he had always been fascinated by the accuracy of new technologies some of those shows seemed to have predicted. What particularly intrigued him was time travel, especially the various methods used by the shows. The best ideas dealt with spacecraft sling-shotting around a star or black hole; the worst idea, even if it was a really entertaining movie series, was the use of a car and some nuclear fuel to travel through time, which didn't seem too practical to his way of thinking. Another none too bright idea was the use of a quantum machine, where a person stood inside and leaped through time letting the space-time continuum take them wherever and not having any control over a destination. Knowing that no scientist in quite some time had worked on time travel theories or had even built anything, John knew he would have to start from scratch.

Young Mr. Hawking started his quest by researching anything and everything written on the space-time continuum by Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking, and other scientists who worked on quantum theory, wormholes, or anything involving the space-time continuum. Einstein's Theory of Relativity was a good foundation to start from as was Stephen Hawking's mathematical equations of quantum mechanics. John thought that time itself wouldn't slow down the faster an object went at light speed, he theorized normal time would flow at the same rate as it had always done. So, in effect, if a person left Earth on the month of February and traveled for four

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months at the speed of light or faster, that same person would arrive back on Earth in the month of June the same year. However, add the gravitational effects of either a star or black hole and someone could quite possibly travel back and forth through time, which could add time to your trip if you end up back in your original timeline. Stay in the past for a month, and when you return to the future, an hour would be added, at least in theory.

John also worked on a theory about time being fluid, rather than linear. The theory was that time flowed around us, including the past and future, so the past and future were happening at the same time as the present, just in different dimensions. Figuring out how to access those dimensions was going to be difficult, predicted the young scientist, but he was up to the challenge.

John presented his theories and complete science paper to the science community at the age of twenty-six, ten years after his unfortunate drag racing wreck. Taking only an hour to present his theory and how it could be achieved, John also took the time to answer questions from his colleagues. For the most part, the scientists were skeptical, but the biggest interest in the time travel theories came from the United States government and NASA. Mainstream scientists thought the whole idea of time travel was foolish and not worthy of their attention. NASA, after more than a century of working on superstring theories, speed of light travel, and whether black holes and wormholes could send a person to the past, was more than ready to help John Hawking. The United States government was interested because of the historical research they could do, at least that's what they told Doctor Hawking.

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Eight years of conducting simulations on supercomputers and refining the matter-antimatter fuel the colonies in deep space used, all that was lacking was a spaceship. The device invented by Hawking for time travel was the size of a four-cylinder engine. Its job was to communicate to the ships' computer where in time the ship was and when to shut down the engines. If the device worked wouldn't be known until it was used for the first time. Over the years, Hawking had even managed to persuade businesses to become investors for the project. He had Microsoft supply the software, IBM the computers, and various other high tech companies he could use to buy the spaceship once it was found. After his final computer simulation was complete and the NASA engineer had told Hawking about the found ship, Hawking arranged for his private shuttlecraft to take him to the coordinates of the ship graveyard.

The history of the ship, as told to Hawking, had a rather violent past. Commissioned in 2129, the *USS George Patton* was built as a dreadnought Star Destroyer class warship. China had declared war over a planet in Alpha Centauri, even though the United States had colonized the planet two years before. China wasn't remotely interested in Alpha Three until mass quantities of minerals not found on Earth were discovered and then China decided to have some interest in the planet. The war began when a squadron of fighters attacked and destroyed an American frigate ship on its way to Alpha Three, and then proceeded to attack an orbital weapons platform being built in orbit above Alpha Three. The colonists, who had some foresight about needing to defend the colony, had purchased one pulse cannon from the military, and then activated it and destroyed six of the ten

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ships attacking the platform. China then tried to attack installations in the Sol System, trying to cripple the American space program. Before the war, technologies such as a complete shield grid for ships and subspace communications weren't considered important. Communications between Earth and a starship two light years away would take four hours both ways and sometimes the messages were badly degraded by the time the communication was received. Shields consisted only of deflectors for debris and at times weren't very effective. Ships returned to Earth pockmarked and even seriously damaged by space debris.

As Hawking's shuttle approached the shipyards, which orbited the Mars moon of Phobos, he read how the *Patton* had ended up in the graveyard. In a battle close the Alpha Centauri System, the *Patton* destroyed or disabled six Chinese Dreadnought Super Carriers before a fighter from one of those carriers sent two missiles into an exhaust manifold of the *Patton*. Once the missiles exploded, life support was destroyed, along with communications; there was no control over the weapons, the engines became damaged, and created a major hull breach that couldn't be contained. The Captain put the *Patton* on automatic pilot in the direction of the Sol System before he and the rest of the crew died from asphyxiation. Fourteen months later, the *Patton* arrived near Jupiter as a ghost ship and was towed back to Earth, where the crew was buried and the ship towed to Mars and forgotten by the powers that be.

As the shuttle made a pass around the *Patton*, Hawking saw the breaches in the hull; burn marks where fires had raged, and a large hole where the missiles had exploded inside the warship. The *Patton* was a

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technological marvel for the time, advanced technology that worked quite well for seventeen years and had yet to be improved on. The design of the ship was a combination of an Earth bound World War two battleship and a second-generation NASA space shuttle, making it tough, yet an agile warship. Hawking docked the shuttle at the *Patton's* docking port and then boarded the *Patton* so he could personally inspect the interior. While he was docking, NASA contacted him and told Hawking that an engineer would be joining him on the *Patton*.

The NASA engineer and Hawking boarded the *Patton* at the same time, they shook hands, and Hawking said, "I'm Doctor John Hawking, and you are?"

"It's an honor to finally meet you, Doctor Hawking. I'm Lieutenant Dennis Robinson, United State Air Force, attached to NASA to help you out. Now that we're on board the *Patton*, as far as I can tell from what little I've seen so far, it'll take at least six months to overhaul this ship. So, where should we begin?"

As Hawking turned on his flashlight since the ship had no power, he responded with, "Would the backup power generators function now after all these years, and where would it be?"

"I'm not sure the backups would power up at the moment, but we'll find that out in a few minutes. Engineering is where the generator is located, two decks below us. Let's get going."

The two men located an access hatch a few minutes later, which would lead directly to Engineering. Ten minutes later, they stepped onto the Engineering deck and they began to look for the generator. As they

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searched, both men passed near the huge hull breach and if it wasn't for the gravity boots they wore, both men could have stumbled and floated out of the ship and into space. The engine room was in a horrible mess; the fusion engine was beyond repair, one of the exhaust manifolds had ripped through the deck and destroyed all the life support systems. This caused a massive fire, but since the hull had been punctured, the fire didn't spread further, but still caused a lot of damage. Support beams and fiber optic cables were hanging dangerously, the beams looked ready to fall loose and cause even more damage. Robinson found the generator, booted up the computer with his mobile computer system, which brought the ships' power online, albeit a bit slowly, grid by grid. After making sure nothing would short circuit. Robinson and Hawking decided to make their way to the bridge, five decks up and ten sections forward.

As they entered the bridge, both men came to the realization that nobody had been here in nearly fifteen years. Robinson went over to a computer station and logged on. There was an artificial intelligence program, but, after all these years, the engineer thought the AI may have corrupted; it didn't matter though, since an upgrade would be installed once Hawking made his decision. After touring the bridge, Hawking said, "Lieutenant, I have made my decision, this is the ship I want. I will take care of the arrangements and I assume the government has you overhauling this ship, so I'll trust you with the new engines and the installation of my time device. Please contact our shuttles and we can begin a new era in human history."

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The *USS George Patton* was bought by Hawking's investors and towed to the *Luna Shipyards*, orbiting Earth's moon and in geosynchronous orbit over the Tranquility Sea United States Air Force Base. A small contingent of Air Force and Army engineers were assigned to overhaul the *Patton* and install everything Hawking wanted installed. Since this project was classified, security was considered top priority, so Homeland Security assigned more personnel to the *Luna Shipyards* to make sure nothing was leaked to the media, until such a time when the general public would be informed of the project.

As Hawking worked on his program to launch the ship back through time, he also worked with the creator of the newest version of the artificial intelligence matrix to make sure the AI accepts the possibility of time travel. Unlike the previous version that was installed in the *Patton*, this matrix would be friendlier and would take orders like it was programmed to do. After all, according to Isaac Asimov's Laws of Robotics, robots and the like were to obey humans no matter what. Finally, six months later, the ship was ready for its first real world test in time travel and the new name for the ship would be announced at an upcoming press conference.

The date was September 10, 2156, when Doctor John Hawking announced his breakthrough to Earth, Mars, and all points outward that contained human civilization. There was a select group in person for the conference at the *Luna Shipyards*, while the rest were either watching on television or on the internet, waiting for the rumored momentous announcement this crackpot scientist was going to make. When Hawking was finally ready, he began by saying, "Ladies and gentlemen, in person

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and those watching from around the colonized galaxy, welcome to this press conference on the topic of my scientific breakthrough.

"Many of you have been wondering for all these months and maybe even years, on what I've been doing, and some may even know what this is about. Well, the United States government and NASA have helped me realize my dream by helping me make my theories on time travel a reality in the here and now. As of three days ago, we have a working starship capable of time travel. The first real world test will begin after this conference. First off though, let me explain how I came to make a theory into reality.

"When I was a teenager, I was involved in a serious car wreck, which landed me in the hospital for many months and no way of leaving my room on my own. In that time, I began to watch a lot of science fiction movies and old television shows, which led me into reading the theories of time travel and the space-time continuum. I meticulously researched everything on what I saw in those movies and came upon one that seemed realistically plausible. Some plots dealt with launching though time using a stars' gravitational field or a black hole. The one I was particularly interested in used matter-antimatter for fuel and launched the ships into impossibly faster-than-light speeds. Currently, our ships are powered by fusion, so the top speed hovers at seventy-two million miles an hour. Due to the limits of this technology, there is no way to get any more power than that out of the engines. Matter-antimatter stardrives will be able to reach just above the speed of light, which, with current technology available, is as fast as we can go. Now, I'm open for questions."

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“Doctor Hawking, Mike Louis of CBS News, Mars Bureau. Has this project cost the American taxpayer any money and will humans pilot the ship in its first real test?”

“The American taxpayer has not and will not pay for this. I have numerous investors who have paid for all my research and the ship we are using. If needed and requested, I will provide a list of investors and what they donated within the week. As for the first test, androids will be the test subject as to reduce risk to humans,” answered Hawking.

“Doctor Hawking, do you honestly think antimatter is worth the risk to time travel?” asked a scientist over the net.

“Yes, I do. Matter-antimatter has been used as a source of power in our colonies for over fifty years. In the right hands, it is very safe.” reassured the Doctor.

“What about the fact that the first ever use of that material blew up half of the moon Io late last century?” asked the same scientist.

“Something like that won’t happen, everything is much, much safer now. From my research, that particular explosion was a result of poor management, not from a particular fault of the matter-antimatter. Like I said, it’s very safe in the right hands.” Hawking insisted.

“Doctor, have you named your ship?” asked someone else.

“We have named it the *USS Albert Einstein*, after the famous early twentieth century scientist who came up with the Theory of Relativity.”

After a few moments of silence, Hawking asked, “Anyone else have any other questions?”

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“I do, Doctor. I’m Professor Jerry Tyler of Cal Tech. You want us to believe you took ideas from two hundred year old science fiction movies on how to travel through time; what do you think we are, children?”

“Of course I do not think any of you are children. I happen to think the people of the twentieth century had wonderful and unique ideas on what they thought the future might be like. Quite a few technological advances came out of watching or reading science fiction, because scientists like us wondered if they could make fiction into science fact. I think as long as rules are set on time travel, we should have no problems.”

“Are you trying to reassure yourself or us on all of these so-called security measure which are supposedly in place?” asked Louis.

“I never said anything about security measures. What are you talking about?” asked a bewildered Hawking.

“Do you know about Colonel Drayka?” persisted the newsman.

“I’ve heard of him, why do you want to know?”

“I believe he stole secrets and classified documents from NASA, under the nose of the Department of Homeland Security, and took those to the Japanese Technology First Society. They are a known terrorist group, considered by everyone, including Japan, as too extreme. Since obviously they’ll get word about time travel, they could use the same technology themselves, go back in time, and destroy any country Japan has tangled with, either in war or trade. Do you realize what might happen then?” Louis questioned.

“Mr. Louis, this is not as bad as you’d like everyone to think. The JTFS is no real threat; their goals are simply not attainable. They’re a bunch of

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hooligans looking to gain publicity, which it seems, they have. Anyone have any other questions before the test begins?"

"Where is the *Einstein* going in time?" a text-based message from the net asked.

"The ship will travel back to 1969 to witness the first moon landing by Neil Armstrong. The androids will be sure to record everything so we can make sure they actually went to 1969. From our perspective, they will be gone for approximately ten minutes so we can tell they left to begin with." remarked Hawking.

"Wouldn't the *Apollo* astronauts see the *Einstein*?" asked Louis.

"What a preposterous thing to think. The *Einstein* will orbit Venus and view the historical even from there. Nobody should even see the ship, considering all it will be is an observer of an event in the past," Hawking looked at the time, "now it is time to launch the ship."

The *USS Albert Einstein* undocked from the Shipyards and flew out to open space between Earth and Mars. The ships' computer, with the help of Hawkings' time device, scanned subspace for a wormhole or a tear in time. Ten minutes later, the time device activated the new stardrive when, according the data that Hawking was receiving, the computer found a tear in time. As the *Einstein* built up the energy to open a ripple in time, the ship became distorted, rainbows of light appeared around it, and the *Einstein* flashed out in a bright, white light. The whole scene was broadcast in real time by a ship that was recording the event from a few million miles away. Seconds later, the *Einstein* was in 1969.

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As the *Apollo 11* astronauts began to land on the moon, the *USS Einstein* began orbiting Venus. The radio receiver on the timeship tuned into the old NASA frequency right as Neil Armstrong was beginning to speak his most famous words, “One small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.” The *Einstein* stayed for another hour and promptly left for 2156 to complete its mission.

Meanwhile, on Earth, at Mount Wilson Observatory in California, an astronomer had been scanning the various planets in the solar system when noticed a large object orbiting Venus. With his powerful telescope, the astronomer zoomed in on what appeared to be a spaceship of some sort. He took pictures of the ship until it departed, and then he went to develop those same pictures. When the pictures developed, what he saw troubled him, so he called NASA. NASA informed him that he should show up at Edwards Air Force Base in two days with the photos and to not be tardy.

Two days later, the astronomer, Carl Sagan, arrived with the pictures at Edwards. A military policeman escorted Sagan to the base briefing room, where he saw five men, one of which was Governor of California, Ronald Reagan. Two of the others were dressed like Marines and the other two were men in black suits, and strangely enough, wearing their sunglasses inside. One of the Marines, who had the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, came over to Sagan and introduced himself, “Mr. Sagan, thank you for coming. I’m John Glenn and we are here to see what you have in those photographs.”

“I’m honored to meet you, Lieutenant Colonel. These photos are of a spaceship orbiting Venus at the same time as the moon landing. For the

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hour or so it orbited Venus, I closely observed it and took these pictures. When I developed these, I realized NASA should be informed and here I am."

"What were your findings, Mr. Sagan?" asked Reagan.

"I found the name of the ship, whose flag it seems to travel under, what appeared to be a NASA symbol, and quite possibly the year this ship is from," remarked Sagan.

"Could you be a bit more specific?" asked one of the men in black.

"Who, may I ask, are you?" demanded Sagan.

"Who we are is of no importance to you as long as you cooperate and ask the right questions. Now, go on and answer the question, Mr. Sagan."

Must be the FBI, Sagan thought to himself, then out loud, "Very well. The name of the ship is the *USS Albert Einstein*, flown under the flag of the United States. A number, 2156 AD, was present, so I assume that's the year it came from."

"You're kidding!" blurted the other Marine.

"No, I'm certainly not. Take a look for yourselves," Sagan then handed the photos to Glenn, "what do you think?"

"I'd say it's better than having something the Soviet Union built being out there." Glenn understated.

"Were the *Apollo 11* astronauts threatened in any way?" asked Reagan.

"I don't think so. A ship bearing the name of Albert Einstein, appearing to observe the first moon landing, must be for historical research or something to that effect. Einstein and his Theory of Relativity dealt with the space-time continuum; maybe a scientist in the future finally figured it

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out and conducted their first time travel test. Mind you, this is all conjecture and I'm just guessing." remarked Sagan.

"President Nixon wants all of this to be considered classified and never to be talked about. Mr. Sagan, we will need these pictures of yours and we will be watching you in the future. Thank you for your cooperation gentlemen and good day." remarked the talkative man in black as they both walked out of the briefing room.

One hundred and eighty seven years later, the *Einstein* approached the *Luna Shipyards*. The media, after watching for the return, decided to leave once the ship successfully returned from the past. As the time ship docked, an Air Force airman approached Hawking with a rusty box and said, "Mr. Hawking, I was told to bring this to you."

"What is it?" asked the scientist.

"That would be none of my business, sir. All I was told was to deliver this to you and leave. Here you are, sir." the airman left after he handed Hawking the box.

Hawking looked at the box, and saw at the top where it had *"USS Einstein, 2156*" written there. Hawking undid the latch, opened the box, found a manila envelope with a typewritten note, all dated July 23, 1969. Hawking read the note and then looked at the people who were involved in his project with an odd look.

"What's wrong, Doctor?" asked Congressman Miller, who supported Hawking in Congress.

"According to this note, an astronomer based at Mount Wilson Observatory saw our ship orbiting Venus. He took pictures, told NASA, the

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governor of California, John Glenn, and two federal agents. The pictures are in this envelope."

"You were right about the *Apollo* astronauts not seeing the *Einstein*, but, I guess you didn't figure on someone watching the other planets at the same time. Who saw our ship anyway?" asked Charlie O'Brien, computer programmer for the *Einstein*.

"According to this note, Carl Sagan saw the *Einstein*. I would say we now know how he came up with all those interesting ideas on the future. These pictures show the *Einstein* in clear detail, including the name, flag, and year. What we need is a way to disguise the ship from being seen, maybe some sort of holographic imaging system. Now that the ship has docked, we'll download and review all of the data gathered from the trip through time." stated Hawking.

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