

The Trip ©1997

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I.

There was a flash of light, a blinding white light. He felt a strange tingling over his entire body, a feeling of pain and nausea, and then there was total darkness. He suddenly felt numb and cold and he had only one thought. "This is it. I'm going to die."

The day had started out as a very ordinary day. It was Saturday, the one day of the week he could sleep late. He was awakened by the sound of the phone ringing; it was Ted, his friend and fellow graduate student.

"Hey Jimmy! Man, you are never gonna believe this!" Ted had this annoying way of screaming over the phone.

"Ted, I'm not deaf... do you know what time it is?" Jimmy yawned in reply, looking at his alarm clock, and seeing that it was 8:13am.

"Time for you to get your butt out of bed, and get dressed... you and yours truly are meeting Dr. Wells at the *Round Rock Sub-Atomic Research Center* in 45 minutes... he has arranged a private tour in that big room where they keep the new particle accelerator."

"No way!" This time it was Jimmy who was screaming into the phone.

"Would I lie to you?"

As Jimmy cleared his throat to reply, Ted shouted, "Wait... there's more! Guess who else is going to be there? Does the name J. Marcus Morrison mean anything to you?"

Of course, the name meant something to him. Every physics student knew who Marc Morrison was; he was one of the top names in the physics community. The media was fond of calling him "the Einstein of the 21st century." Jimmy had often thought that to be an ambitious moniker, considering that it was only the 18th year of the 21st century. Nonetheless, Morrison was his personal hero. Jimmy had read everything that Morrison had ever written, especially his theories about time, space and thought.

Jimmy had always been a good student. He was, however, quite shy. At one time, he had dreams of being a Baptist minister, like his father, but when he was 14, he discovered his aptitude for math and science. By the time he was in high school, he was a genuine nerd.

He skipped the 4th and 8th grades and graduated from high school at age 16. Three years later, he graduated summa cum laude from The University of Texas with bachelor degrees in both mathematics and physics. He went straight into graduate school, and was now in his second year.

Jimmy and Ted were Dr. Wells' research assistants. They spent most of their time doing "busy work" for Dr. Wells, but sometimes late at night, they would just sit around, and talk about far-fetched theories with any of the professors who would listen.

When Morrison's book, *Beyond the Four* was published, it was met with mixed reactions from the scientific community. It was a well-established fact that reality *as we know it* consists of four dimensions, three dimensions of space, and the fourth dimension of time. Morrison's theory was that the fifth dimension was cognition, or pure thought. Morrison had developed a rudimentary hypothesis, but had so far been unable to prove his theory mathematically. Physicists and mathematicians around the world were

furiously trying to either prove or disprove what had become known as "Morrison's Theory of Pentadimensionism."

Ted thought that the theory was probably false, and that it was, in fact, science fiction. Jimmy however, was a firm believer. He spent every free minute of his time, trying to prove Morrison's theory mathematically. Jimmy believed that he had done exactly that.

And now he was actually going to meet J. Marcus Morrison in person! Jimmy had his mathematical formulas stored on the hard drive of his computer. He scrambled around his room looking for a blank datacoin on which to copy the files. Magnetic media were now obsolete; the current means of storing information was the *datacoin*, a round metallic disk about the size of a quarter that held up to 1000 GB of data. He found a datacoin that Ted had given him that had only one file on it. It was a copy of a three-dimensional screen saver program that used fractal geometry to make colorful 3D patterns that extended beyond the screen. Jimmy wanted the screen saver, so he didn't delete it; he just added his mathematical equation files to the same datacoin and rushed out the door.

II.

Jimmy was very nervous when Dr. Wells led them into the room where Morrison was sitting at a mainframe computer terminal. Dr. Wells introduced his research assistants to Morrison who shook their hands without even looking up from the computer terminal. Morrison was explaining the experiment that he was working on to Dr. Wells and the other scientists when Ted blurted out, as he was prone to do, "Hey, did you know

that Jimmy here has proven your theory? He has all the math worked out and everything."

Jimmy wished at that moment that the earth would swallow him. Ted had pulled some bonehead stunts in the past, but Jimmy could not believe that even Ted would do something that stupid.

Morrison looked up from his terminal, and said, "Really?" but it was in a very condescending tone of voice.

Ted was apparently too dim-witted to notice the lack of genuine interest in Morrison's voice and said, "He even brought his computations on a datacoin."

After a deep sigh, Morrison said, "May I see it?"

Jimmy fumbled into his pocket, and produced the datacoin and handed it to Morrison with his shaky hand. Morrison slipped the datacoin into the computer and started reading Jimmy's mathematical equations.

In layman's terms, Morrison's hypothesis was that all the known dimensions and any yet undiscovered dimensions, including the fifth dimension of pure thought, interface on the sub-atomic level.

The whole of Einsteinian Physics rests on the premise that the speed of light is the ultimate velocity, and that time moves only in one direction—forward.

However, five years ago, in 2013, physicists at M.I.T. proved the long-theorized existence of sub-atomic particles known as *tachyons* that move faster than light and backward in time. The experiment that Morrison was conducting was an attempt to produce a stream of tachyons in the particle accelerator.

But Jimmy's equations, if they were correct, proved mathematically that there was indeed an interface of all known dimensions at the sub-atomic level, and how to access that interface.

The experiment was ready to begin. The algorithms that Morrison hoped would initiate the tachyon stream were loaded into the mainframe. Morrison told Jimmy, this time with more sincerity in his voice, that he would look over his equations when he had time. Morrison, however, had absent-mindedly left Jimmy's datacoin in the computer.

The program was initiated, and Morrison was delighted to discover that a tachyon stream had indeed begun. The entire group of scientists was vigorously cheering this major milestone in the history of physics. Ted was jumping up and down and "whooping" as if he were at a basketball game, when he knocked over a large styrofoam cup of coffee that he had set on top of the mainframe.

There was a loud pop, followed by sparks and the unmistakable smell of ozone, and smoke started pouring from the computer. Morrison ran over to shut down the computer, but when he touched the instrument panel, he received an electrical shock powerful enough to render him unconscious. Everyone in the room ran for cover. Ted was in the corner in a fetal position, crying.

The coffee had apparently shorted out several key functions of the mainframe, including the directory path, and the emergency shutdown. The green light in the drive that held Jimmy's datacoin suddenly came on and the computer started mixing Jimmy's equations randomly with the algorithms that were controlling the tachyon stream.

Apparently, the two programs were not compatible, and the tachyon stream was soon out of control. Jimmy was the only one standing and he ran over to the terminal and

tried to do what Morrison had failed to do, to shut the mainframe off, and stop the tachyon stream. But it was too late, the particle accelerator overloaded, and exploded, sending a high-level tachyon wave directly into the control room. The explosion shattered the shatterproof glass and Jimmy was hit with the full force of the blast.

There was a flash of light, a blinding white light. He felt a strange tingling over his entire body, then a feeling of pain and nausea, and then there was total darkness. He suddenly felt numb and cold and he had only one thought. "This is it. I'm going to die."

III.

The next thing that Jimmy realized was that he no longer felt the floor under his feet. Then he slowly began to perceive a sense of movement, but he could not tell in which direction he was moving. There was nothing but darkness all around him; then he saw a faint white spot in the distance. The spot gradually grew larger; Jimmy was not sure if he was moving toward the spot or if the spot was moving toward him.

Eventually he could see that spot was actually a pinwheel figure that looked something like pictures he had seen of galaxies. He moved closer and closer, until he was in the middle of the spiral, and he had a sense that he was falling. At first, there was only black and white, and then bright colors started forming in bizarre geometric patterns all around him. It was like a computer screen saver, except that it was all around him in every direction. He was not an observer, from the outside world looking into a computer screen—he was there.

He felt the strange tingling sensation again, then he realized that he had struck something solid. Then he heard a voice that said, "Sir? Are you OK? Did you fall?"

IV.

Jimmy then realized that what he had struck was the floor, and that it was all over; it must have been some kind of hallucination. He looked up to see a pretty young girl in a nurse's uniform standing over him. He rose to his feet, and looking around, realized that he was in a hospital. His first natural thought was that he had been injured at the research center and had been taken to a nearby hospital.

But something was wrong, he had never seen this hospital before, and everyone was dressed so strangely, like he had seen in old reruns of the *X Files*. He picked up a newspaper from a nearby desk, and looked at the front page, hoping at least to discover where he was. He saw that the paper was titled *The San Marcos Daily Record*, then his heart almost stopped when he read the date: June 15, 1997, the day of his birth!

Suddenly, there was a commotion down the hall as the paramedics were rolling a pregnant woman through the emergency room double doors. Jimmy's blood went cold when he saw the woman; his mouth dropped and he softly uttered a single word: "Mom?"

He knew that it was his mother, but she looked so young. He could no longer deny it; he had somehow been transported back in time 21 years!

He stumbled over to the maternity waiting room and sat down to gather his thoughts. The only explanation that made any sense to him was that when his equations combined with the algorithms, that were regulating the tachyon stream, it caused a modulation of the tachyon wave that extended the sub-atomic interface of all dimensions to reality as we know it. It probably only happened for a microsecond, but it was enough to send him into a time-space warp. Since tachyons move backward in time, Jimmy traveled backward in time to the time and place of his birth.

But why that exact time and place? Was the moment of his birth a sort of temporal speed bump that threw him out of the time stream?

Just as Jimmy was thinking about all the possibilities, he heard a familiar voice; it was his father. James Belmont Sr. was still in college when Jimmy was born; he had not yet decided to devote his life to the service of God and his fellow man. Jimmy was further shocked to see that his father was wearing a tee-shirt with the words "Stone Temple Pilots", and that he had purple hair!

The nurses were helping Jimmy's father put the surgical mask on, when another man walked up holding a camcorder. Jimmy thought, "They recorded my birth on tape—how sick!"

Jimmy's nervous father whimpered, "I can't do this... why do I have to be in there?"

The other man said, "Because that's the politically correct thing to do... show the world that you are a sensitive man who is not afraid to show his feelings."

Jimmy gazed at his father, who was standing there, sweating, looking so unsure of himself; it was a real revelation, he had never seen his father show the least bit of self-doubt. Jimmy also wondered to himself, "What the heck does *politically correct* mean?" As his father went into the delivery room, Jimmy realized for the first time who the other man was; he was his grandfather, Benjamin Belmont.

Jimmy's grandfather died in 2009, when Jimmy was only 12 years old. One of the regrets of Jimmy's life was that he never really knew his grandfather. The only thing that he really remembered about him was that he was that he had a long white ponytail on an otherwise bald head, and that he said "far out" a lot.

Suddenly Jimmy was shocked out of his private thoughts to hear his grandfather's voice. "Well young man, are you also an expectant father?"

Jimmy replied, "Oh, no sir... I'm here to see a friend."

Jimmy's grandpa sat just a few feet away, and Jimmy shifted nervously in his seat. "Ben Belmont," he said, extending his hand to Jimmy.

"Jimmy... Smith," Jimmy said, feeling very awkward.

Noticing that his grandfather was a chain smoker, Jimmy thought that it was no wonder that he was only 65 when he died.

For the next hour or so, Jimmy and his grandfather talked about politics, philosophy, religion, just about every subject imaginable. The elder Belmont finally said to Jimmy, "You know, I get the funniest feeling that I know you from somewhere."

Jimmy shrugged and said, "Well... maybe..."

Then they heard the distinctive cry of an infant coming from the delivery room nearby, and Jimmy suddenly felt queasy; then he started feeling the strange tingling again. Jimmy's grandfather got up and walked toward the delivery room door. Jimmy ran down the hall and into the men's room. He barely made it past the door when he fell to his knees.

It was happening again. He started seeing the swirling colors around him, and again he felt himself lose contact with the floor. Soon he was falling through the swirling vortex, just as before. After what seemed to be just a few minutes to Jimmy, he began to experience contact with reality again. He felt something violently scratch his face; then he realized that he had fallen into a clump of bushes.

As Jimmy regained his senses, he looked around and saw people everywhere, and he heard some kind of very loud, very annoying sound. He noticed that the people were dressed even stranger than in the hospital, and that some people were actually naked, and sliding around in a big mud puddle. He walked a few feet forward and saw a huge stage, with a large banner across the top, displaying a picture of a dove sitting on a guitar neck, and a single word—*Woodstock*.

V.

Jimmy was feeling dizzy, so he sat on the ground. A few minutes later, someone spoke to him. "Hey Man, this concert is really groovy," the stranger said. He looked at the stranger and saw his own face, only a few years older, except with shoulder length hair and long sideburns.

"Hey what's up, man? I'm Benny." This time Jimmy was not even surprised... until what happened next. Benny reached into his pocket and pulled out a hand-rolled cigarette, lit it, took a drag, then held it out to Jimmy.

"Uh... no thank you," Jimmy said. Not only had Jimmy been raised by a strict Baptist minister, but he knew all the scientific reasons that recreational drugs were bad. He could not believe it—Grandpa was a dopehead.

Eventually Jimmy began to relax; he even drank some punch that Benny offered him. During the break before Jimi Hendrix started his set, a group of people were telling wild stories about "trips" they had taken. Benny asked Jimmy, "Hey Jimmy, have you ever tripped?"

Jimmy replied, "I guess you could say... I'm on one now." Jimmy was feeling really relaxed and uninhibited; maybe it was from just breathing the air.

He proceeded to inform the group of listeners that he was from the future, that he had been hurled backward in time because of an accident at a sub-atomic research facility, and that Benny was really his grandfather. Not one person called him a liar, or acted as if they even doubted his story—they all thought that his story was really cool.

By this time, Jimi Hendrix had taken the stage, and Jimmy was feeling really strange. He was getting thirsty, so he drank some more of Benny's punch. On the stage, Hendrix was playing his guitar behind his head, and the crowd was going wild.

Then... the people near Jimmy started staring at him; there were colors swirling all around him. Jimmy rose to his feet, made the hand gesture with two fingers that Benny had taught him, then vanished. "Far out!" Benny said.

VI.

Jimmy continued his odyssey, stopping briefly in 1905, 1841, and 1769. He tried to control when and where he stopped, but he couldn't. He appeared in Salem, Massachusetts in 1697, right in the town square. He was arrested and forced to stand trial on the charge of witchcraft—he was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged. Fortunately, he disappeared mysteriously from his jail cell before the sentence was carried out.

He ended up in England in the 14th century, where he met a group of people in an old inn who were telling stories to pass the time. He particularly enjoyed the story the miller told. He thought about telling his story about time travel, but decided that in this case, it would not be a good idea.

Jimmy's grandfather had mentioned Woodstock in their conversation in the hospital. It was beginning to become apparent to Jimmy that Morrison's theory was

correct—there really was a relationship between time, space, and thought. Most of the times and places that Jimmy had been transported to thus far were triggered by his thoughts, but not all of them.

Then Jimmy remembered that Ted's screen saver program was also on the datacoin. The screen saver program used fractal geometry in random sequences to create colorful patterns. Maybe this had contributed to the arbitrary stops that Jimmy had made in the time stream, sort of like traveling through a garden hose with randomly placed holes in it.

He was never in one time and place for more than a few hours. He was becoming increasingly tired and despondent. The further back in time he went, the more he began to wish that the explosion had just killed him. Each time he arrived in a new time and place, he found the people he met to be increasingly hostile toward him.

Finally, his depression was so great that while in the time stream he gave up hope, and had the thought that he could not take it any more. Suddenly, he found himself landing in water. Jimmy was in the ocean.

He had no idea where on the earth he was, or when—there was no land in sight. Despite his wish to die, Jimmy found himself fighting desperately to stay alive. He furiously used all of his will power just to keep his head above water until his strength was gone. Jimmy cried out, "Oh my God... I don't want to die... help me Jesus!" Jimmy passed out and sank into the bottomless depths.

VII.

Jimmy found himself on a dirt road, surrounded by olive trees. He was still soaking wet from the ocean, but the sun was warm, and he was beginning to feel better. He walked about a mile and saw a group of people in the clearing ahead.

There was what appeared to be about a hundred or so people listening to a man who was speaking to them. Jimmy could not understand the language the man was speaking, but he knew where he was, and when, and who the man was.

Jimmy waited until the crowd dispersed and the man was alone, except for several men who stood near him. Jimmy did not have to count them to know that there were twelve of them. Jimmy slowly walked toward the man.

The man was over six feet tall, with long brown hair and a beard. He was more masculine and muscular than he is usually depicted in paintings. When he saw Jimmy, he said something to the other men, and they walked off in different directions, leaving him alone with Jimmy.

"Are you lost my son?" the man said, this time in English. "I was," replied Jimmy, "But it was all worth it to get to meet you face to face." The man smiled, "This is not your time, James. You will meet me again, but when the time is right—for now, your journey is over, it is time for you to go home." Then the man touched Jimmy lightly on his forehead.

VIII.

Jimmy jumped up, gasping for breath; his body and his sheets were soaking wet. He sat on the edge of his bed and looked at his alarm clock; it was 8:07AM. Jimmy rubbed his head, and said, "This is absolutely the last time I am going to eat a large pizza with everything on it before I go to bed."

He then began to piece everything together. His computer screen was erupting in beautiful geometric patterns; he had installed the screen saver that Ted had given him after all. He thought back to the swirling white pinwheel pattern, and laughed out loud—"Twilight Zone."

Jimmy had once thought that he had proven Morrison's theory mathematically, but Dr. Wells showed him in about five minutes that his computations were flawed, and Jimmy never bothered with it again after that.

Jimmy had books on his shelves about Woodstock, The Salem Witch Trials, The Canterbury Tales, and the videotape of his own birth that he never could bring himself to watch.

He walked over to his desk drawer, and pulled out a picture of Jesus, that his grandmother had given him on his last birthday and put it on his wall, on an empty nail.

He sat on the side of his bed and stared at the floor. The phone rang and Jimmy not only jumped, but actually made an audible "Huh?" He looked at the clock; it was 8:13; he picked up the phone.

"Hey Jimmy! Man, you are never gonna believe this!" Ted had this annoying way of screaming over the phone. Jimmy stared into space, and then hung up the phone.