



The Antigravity Train

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The second installment in A Matter of Time series

All the wonders of the universe were rushing by, but I was still so dazzled by our flight to the center of the galaxy I hardly noticed. As soon as I realized that a speck of light a long way to the right of a blazing orange star was getting larger, I snapped out of it. Minutes passed as that speck grew to a gossamer-wrapped blue ball.

“Where’re we going now, Amanda?”

“So, you’ve finally found your tongue.” She gave me an appraising look that drove home the vast differences between us. I only knew my life and the American east coast, whereas Amanda had personally witnessed hundreds of historical events spanning centuries and had visited dozens of worlds.

“Yeah.” I stretched a little, but I couldn’t keep my eyes off that ball as it continued to grow at an astounding rate. “You going to tell me or you want to keep it a surprise?”

“Earth, July 18th, 2032. Pembroke Park, New York.” She turned those awesome blue eyes on me. Her smile melted my heart. She was just so beautiful. How had I not noticed that before? Well yeah, I had, but with me hiding her from the Feds...well, I’d been distracted.

“What’s the hook?” My hand slid along the seat back until I could twine my fingers in the shimmering softness of her straw blonde hair resting so peacefully on her shoulders. It wasn’t like we were a couple...in fact I hardly knew her. She seemed to like me well enough, for a primitive. Why else would she allow me to tag along? She could’ve left me on my little island with no memory of her, but here we were, cruising from our first adventure to the next.

“The first real antigrav machine has been in operation for nearly a month now, and I thought we might visit with its inventor, Professor Artimus Brecklestein.”

“Sounds exciting. Some kind of proving ground?”

“No silly.” She smiled and pressed her cheek against my hand. “A theme park.”

“I saw an antigrav people mover at Disney World in Florida in ninety-eight. What’s so special about this one?”

“Today is the day when Professor Brecklestein reveals to the public the true nature of his invention. Something he’s begged for, but his keepers cited patent issues to keep it under cloak.”

As we hurtled through the upper atmosphere, I felt that twirling feeling in my belly again. Amanda had explained it was a residual affect of temporal displacement. We’d met in the fall of 2002 on Marker Island where I was hiding out from the world I knew. Not that it mattered anymore. I mean crimini! We were just at the center of the galaxy and witnessed the big bang that created...well...everything. Pretty darn hard for an antigrav machine to top that. Can you believe it? Me! At the center of the universe! Wish I could tell someone, but who’d believe it? Besides, I’d cut ties with my old life, old friends, associates. An only child, my mom and dad died years before in a plane crash.

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Turns out Amanda had been there before. As both a time and space traveler from the twenty-fourth century, she'd seen sights men only dream of. I know what you're thinking. How could a drop-dead gorgeous babe from the future fall for an ordinary dot.com millionaire like me? In her time, money is meaningless. Sure, I'm a long way from forty, not bad looking, trim and well read, but for gosh sakes, she had three hundred years on me. Well, I can't tell you. We just kind of clicked that day I rescued her from the Feds.

As if by magic, we popped out into a sunny spring day with fluffy clouds peppering the sky and the whole eastern seaboard spread out below. The ground was coming at us so fast I thought I was going to be sick. I closed my eyes and waited for the nausea to pass. We slowed and I peeked long enough to see us coming in for a landing at the edge of a car-filled asphalt slab. Until the temporal shift dissipated, we were invisible to outside observers.

I swallowed hard and loosed my grip on the seat back. "How we going to get in?"

"This is employee parking. We're coming in beyond the entrance checkpoint." She was so cool about it.

"How do we find the professor?"

"He'll be around, checking up on his creation. It's open to the park visitors now and I understand he plays engineer almost daily. It's not quite nine yet, so the front gates haven't opened. I suspect we'll find him on the train."

With a gentle bump, her boxy blue porter touched down at the farthest edge of the parking lot, in the shade of a small cliff carved from the side of a tree-flecked hill. Her porter was unusual in that it looked like a box with windows. But it had wheels (hidden under the slab sides) and cheap chrome around the bottom edge and windows. Not a very affective disguise, but the color was a common shade.

It was an easy walk to the nearest gate and from different points, the park's employees were heading that way. We passed through a ten-foot wall and found ourselves in a conclave of futuristic looking structures. Over the rooftops at some distance, I made out a Victorian era clock tower.

"What is this place?"

"The Gadget Zone." She took my hand in hers as naturally as if we'd been lovers for eons, and led me to the right. "It spotlights two hundred years of inventions with rides and games and period displays."

Just to clear something up, we weren't lovers. We'd only known each other for a few hours, though it seemed a lifetime, if you can excuse the cliché.

"Most everything looks plastic," I noted.

"Polyfiber. About the time you turn fifty, almost everything will be made of it."

"What's this stuff made from?"

"Plant matter, dead animals. Almost anything organic mixed with a carbon filament. Stronger than titanium and honeycombed, a thousand times lighter."

"Must have turned the markets on their ear. Who figured it out?"

"A high school kid discovered the process when a science project went screwy. He won the competition, but the process made the Web. Within days, people were whipping up batches from yard clippings and charcoal. Anyone with an ounce of creativity could make just about anything out of it. It's what made Professor Brecklestein's antigrav machine possible."

A minute later, we arrived at a train depot right out of Star Wars. All shiny metallic and shimmery pale-purple polyfiber, modeled after a turn of the century structure, but without the latticework and

sculpted wood trim. The dark purple platform decking was of a coarse, non-skid material that was easy to walk on. In a scooped channel, running along the far side of the platform, rested the train.

Bullet-shaped and silver, the cab, like the cars, was open on the sides. In the front left seat of the cab sat an elderly, salt and pepper-haired man in engineer coveralls. He was hunkered over a flat black panel backlit with colored patterns. A gentle hum permeated the warm, still air.

“Professor Breckelstein?” Amanda asked when she reached to edge of the platform and leaned down, still holding my hand.

“Uh?” He looked up as if he hadn’t expected anyone. His skin was pale, almost translucent and his hair neatly trimmed where it poked out from beneath his gray, blue and white striped cap.

“I’m Amanda Martin and this is Lucas Ericcson. We’re on special assignment, and great admirers of your work. Can we join you?”

A warm and inviting smile split his face. “Of course, dear.” He patted the seat beside him and Amanda dropped in.

I climbed in behind her and looked around for a seat belt, but there wasn’t one. In fact, there seemed no way to secure oneself. The bucket seats were an unexpected light maple and quite comfortable. Reminded me of my glider-rocker back home. I wondered why he hadn’t asked where we were on ‘special assignment’ from, but then, Amanda had that kind of affect on me, so why not him? I didn’t have much time to reflect on it. A mild hum grew until it resonated through my seat.

Without warning, the train lifted slightly and whisked from the station into a brilliantly lit tunnel. Before I could so much as catch my breath, we burst into sunlight. The train track, more like a depression, curved left, passed through an impeccably manicured wildflower garden, across a gated asphalt lane and into another tunnel. Multi-hued geodesic designs lined the semi-spherical silver walls. Illumination seemed to come from everywhere. We passed through a number of such tunnels with slightly different patterns. They separated villages that represented different eras in American history.

Seemed we'd hardly got started before we took a downward fork and passed into a cavernous underground tunnel, gloomy by comparison. I was a little disappointed the ride was so short. The train slowed and came to rest in a workshop. There were workbenches, lifting racks and additional cars in various stages of assembly. We were the only ones there.

“Well, Amanda...and Lucas, what do you think?”

“Truly awesome, Professor. Is this the prototype?” Amanda’s lips curved in a beguiling smile. Her eyes sparkled like a kid opening presents.

“Luke will do, Professor, and awesome hardly does your invention justice,” I lied. I was quite unimpressed. Ho hum.

He nodded and grinned. “Now, I’m sure you have questions?” He twisted to face Amanda, tucked a leg under him and adopted an inquisitive, expectant look. “Do you have an interview format you must follow? And a vidcorder?”

“No,” she demurred, “no particular format and no vidcorder. Just background for now.” Her eyes flashed up to his and he was instantly mesmerized. “There has to be hundreds of different train designs out there.” Amanda waved her hand, adding emphasis. “What makes yours so different? I mean, all we’ve seen so far, Professor, is that it pulls cars and rides smooth.” She smiled disarmingly. “Not to downplay your accomplishment.”

“Ah, I knew you’d ask that...my dear Amanda.” His grin spread until his whole face was involved. “The cars are rather ordinary in that they employ simple magnetics to keep them elevated from the track, but the cab...ah...that is what's unique.” His smiled turned wistful. For a moment I thought he

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was going to cry with joy. “It’s capable of independent flight. Without the burden of the cars, it can operate over any terrain at a maximum elevation of roughly seven meters.”

“You’ve tested it?”

His face fell. “Alas, no. Well...in a way. I’ve taken it from the delivery cradle to this track, but never outside. I’m afraid my keepers...the ones who’ve funded my research and the developers of this park, haven’t allowed it. Patents pending, you understand.”

“How fast?” I blurted. They both looked at me as if I’d intruded on a private conversation.

The professor flashed me a curious look, as if he were wondering what this babe was doing with a nothing like me. “I honestly don’t know. The track was designed for forty-five kph, though I daresay by adjusting the rail’s magnetic confinement, speeds of, say, one or two hundred kph are possible.” His expression became more puzzled than accusing. “Who did you say you work for?”

“Uh...” I began.

“Aeronautical Weekly.” Amanda laid a hand gently on his arm and drew his attention from me. Good save.

“After reviewing what data has been made available, our investigators assumed your invention, your antigrav train, could...well...fly.”

“In a manner of speaking, sure. With further research...” He became wistful again, “it could be capable of much greater altitudes. Perhaps hundreds of meters. The principle is the same, but the power requirement...would be enormous.”

Though I wasn’t sure of her motives, Amanda tossed in the clincher. “Could we take it for a test hop, professor? I’d love to drive it.”

He laughed, then looked surprised as he glanced up at a large red digital clock on the wall beyond her. “As a matter of fact, my nephews, Ronny and Tommy, should be at the station about now. They’re park employees, and sometimes work for me. I promised them they could be my engineers today.”

There was no doubt he was under Amanda’s spell.

“No reason why I can’t let you drive it. Its operation is quite simple.” He squirmed around in his seat and gripped the control stick. “See.” He pushed the stick forward and the train inched forward, then pulled it back and the train slid smoothly back. “By pushing this pedal,” he indicated a small black pedal where the gas pedal on a car would be, “you raise it.” The train lifted slightly, then settled back down as he released the pedal. “Quite simple really. Here.” He rose from the seat and indicated for Amanda to take his place. “You try it.”

She positively beamed at him and his pale, age-spotted cheeks flushed pink. “Why thank you, Professor.” No way could I conceal a smirk, though I tried, but the professor paid me no heed as he went around the front of the cab and took Amanda’s place.

Tentative, she moved the controls this way and that, measuring the respondent motion, then pushed on the floor pedal and eased the stick forward. She whooped with surprise when the train rushed forward. In moments, we were doing maybe thirty mph. The professor may use metric, but I was raised on good old American standard.

The track looped around and we soon slipped into the station from a tunnel entrance concealed by, what Amanda later informed me, was an optical scatter ray. Quite ingenious by itself. Amanda brought the train to a swift halt at a mark on the tunnel wall the professor pointed out. There were tourists milling about on the platform, and two teenage boys and two young girls in futuristic looking engineer costumes with red bandannas about their necks.

“I’ve got to take a short break...uh, for personal needs, Amanda.” He eased himself from the cab and

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stepped out onto the platform beside his nephews. “Ronny, Amanda here will make the first run, then you and Tommy will take over, okay?”

“Sure, Uncle Art.” The boy, sandy-hair cropped close with a silly little pony-tail and a rakish looking engineer’s cap, nodded.

“I expect you to abide by the OSHA limits. Is that clear?”

“Yes, sir.”

The boys climbed in beside us; me behind Amanda while the young girls guided passengers into the cars. The tourists were well behaved and chatted quietly among themselves, except for a pair of teen girls who jumped into the first open car, giggling over the nephews. Since I hadn’t paid much heed before, I checked out the train, though my angle of observation wasn’t the best. The cars, enclosed and windowless, were open front and back. The half doors wisped closed. A guide, a perky dyed blonde, gave us a thumbs up.

“Here we go!” Amanda cried, and we were off. With no more than a gently rising hum, the train lifted slightly and shot forward. In an instant, we were in daylight then back in a tunnel. We passed through several of these as the train made a four mile loop about the park and in no time, we were slowing and back at the station.

“You drive like a pro,” I told her as the passengers exited to our left before a new group boarded. She relinquished her seat to Ronny and joined me in the back while Tommy moved up front.

“Piece of cake. Must be somewhat automatic. The train slowed as we approached the station without my doing.”

“There are safety protocols wired into the system,” Tommy smiled at us, “OSHA requirements. I’m Tom, by the way.” He offered me his hand.

I shook it, then Amanda.

“This is Ron.”

“Hi, Ron,” Amanda said.

“Hi,” he tossed back, but didn’t look at us or offer his hand. With a ‘go ahead’ from the pretty dark-haired guide, we were off again. We rode the train eleven more times, then a red warning scrawled across a digital display before the driver. When we reached the station we off-loaded, but no passengers were lined up and the entrance side of the platform was blocked by red velvet chains.

“What gives,” I asked.

“A tech is going to replace a sensor up ahead. Must have just gotten here.” Tom pushed himself up and was about to get out when Amanda laid a hand on his shoulder.

“The professor says this cab is capable of independent flight. While we’re waiting, could we uncouple the cars and give it a test whirl? Once around the block, so to speak?”

Tom looked at Ron and Ron looked back, a mischievous smile growing. “I saw the professor move it when it was delivered. Seemed simple enough. What do you think?”

There was some hesitation and a worried frown crossed Ron’s face, but it faded into a thin-lipped smile. “We’ll get in trouble...may never drive the train again.”

“So? You gonna miss driving around in circles?”

“Maybe a little, but what the heck! Fasten your seatbelts!”

“There aren’t any,” I pointed out, getting a bit worried. “Amanda, you sure this is wise?”

Amanda gave me a look of disappointed exasperation. “Don’t be a clucker. Besides, who’s going to remember?”

The big question nobody seemed to get was, what if this kid couldn’t fly it, lost control. People

could die, including me. It was too late. The cab lifted and gently moved away from the cars, then swiftly gained speed. A warning flashed on the con as we hurtled through the first tunnel, then Ron did something and the cab veered right and up. Upturned faces flashed by as we skimmed across the park. Like he'd been born to it, Ron dodged trees and buildings and finally we jumped the fence and zoomed over parked cars like they were nothing.

"The hill!" Tom hollered and pointed.

Ron jerked back on the stick. The cab slurred to the right, then sloughed to the left. The end of the parking lot loomed. He gave out a tiny squeak, trying desperately to keep from crashing us. I guess he forgot the antigrav driver because the cab bounced off the cliff face where the hill was carved away, and came to rest several yards back. The high thrum diminished to a quiet hum.

"Whew!" Was all I could think to say. I'm not much of an adventurer and have never risked my life for pleasure. But, Amanda seemed to be trying very hard to change that. She patted my thigh and smiled at me, a glitter in her eye.

"Better takes us back," she told Ron, her eyes never leaving mine.

"Yeah." With that, Ron steered the cab more cautiously back the way we'd come. As we approached the wall, I saw security all over the place. Some looked ticked off, others kind of amused. A light bump and we were over the wall. There were throngs of visitors mulling about, no doubt talking about what they'd just seen. They stopped and stared as we shooshed overhead and before I knew it, Ron slipped the cab onto the track where we'd launched from, and eased it back into the tunnel to the station. There was a click as the cab engaged the lead car.

Tom and Ron climbed out with Ron obviously worried about being confronted by the security people. We all expected to be arrested, or at least escorted out of the park. However, Amanda wasn't finished yet. She jumped the seat and settled in to the driver's seat.

"In for a penny, in for a pound." She grinned and waved the boys back in. "Let's see how fast we can make it go!"

The boys looked at each other. "What the heck." Ron shrugged. They jumped in and I panicked. Just what the dickens was she up to now? Didn't she see the red warning flashing on the con?

With the cars in tow, Amanda shoved the stick all the way to the stop. The hum built to a loud thrumming as we shot down the track. We entered the first bend and I caught sight of gray coveralls waving madly as the tech leaped to safety. Something jarred the cab, but Amanda pressed on. The tunnels and open areas became alternating blurs. The wind whipped us, but she didn't slow down. The train rode up until we were sideways going through the curves and all I could assume is that somewhere, probably from a control center in the maintenance area, the professor was doing something to keep us from flying off.

"Two-twenty-five!" I heard her holler over the battering wind. "Two-thirty-five!...two- thirty-eight...holding at two-thirty-eight!"

We whipped through the station nearly sideways on, despite some kind of force that wanted to slow us down, and kept going. Halfway around again, Amanda eased off. By the time we got back to the station the whole plaza was filled with people. The velvet ropes were down and the platform so packed, the guides were having a tough go keeping the very boisterous mob under control. I caught snatches about what a thrill it would be to ride the bullet train. There was no security in sight, so they mustn't have figured out where the flying car had come from...yet.

We had barely come to a full stop when the throng surged forward, overwhelming the guides, and climbed aboard. They were all talking, some loudly, and all were excited. I was worried...scared was

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more like it. Like a kid sneaking a smoke in the school bathroom. At the back of the crowd, pushing their way through, was a small army of plain clothes and uniformed security people.

“Security!” I hissed at Amanda. I could see the guides trying hard to keep everyone else back, but the depot was packed and for a bit there I thought people might come crashing down on the tracks.

“Wagons, ho!” Amanda cried and off we went. Blurred flashes and were slowing for the station, but the depot was empty except for a wall of uniforms. Instead of stopping, she slammed the stick forward and we were out of there, but something was holding the speed down until we were past the station. At the fork the professor had taken, Amanda steered us off the main track and down into the maintenance bay.

The professor was waiting for us, but he wasn’t happy. “You know the security people are looking for you,” he glowered at Amanda as we eased to a stop.

“Get in, Professor. We’ve got one more ride to make and then we’ve got to leave.” She turned to the nephews. “Out, guys. Play it cool and you won’t be busted, okay?”

“Sure,” said Ron, and the boys jumped out and the professor slid in beside Amanda. Behind us, the passengers were darned animated: gesturing and talking and wondering aloud what was up. I heard the click as she disengaged the cars. Suddenly I found myself pressed back as the cab hurtled down the track.

We came out into bright daylight and back on the regular track. Amanda had the cab cranked up to full throttle and I could have sworn we were airborne. The wind whipped my hair back and forth and made it hard to keep my eyes open. I heard her call out the speed and like taking the wind out of the sail, we were slowing on the approach to the station.

“Crap,” Amanda said. The visitors were being held back and uniforms were still all over the place.

“Override,” Brekelstein hollered, and the cab zoomed so high through the station we scraped the roof. Back and forth, Amanda weaved through the plazas. All of a sudden, we were out of control. The cab bounded off the side of a building and spun through a stand of young pines. Branches snapped and needles stung my bare skin. I covered my head and ducked.

“They’re fighting us for control,” the professor hollered over the din, “security override, Baker, Baker, Alpha!”

The cab wobbled and dropped to the ground amid a throng of startled vacationers.

“Where the hell did you learn to drive!” I bellowed at Amanda, “Move over!” I jumped out and glared at her.

She gave me one of those disarming smiles that wasn’t going to work on me this time. Gathering that I was ticked, she climbed into the back and I took her place. Beneath me, the cab thrummed and for once I felt totally in control. I eased down on the pedal and jammed the stick forward. Like our tail was ablaze, the cab shot over the crowd and out the main gate. I steered to the right, to follow the highway, but realized I was on the wrong side! Cars were going everywhere as I careened between two semi’s and jammed down on the pedal.

We shot into the sky just in time to miss an overpass and zipped between light poles, down a ramp and onto a main road. Buildings flashed by. I hung in there just high enough to clear the cross wires. Panic had my heart in my throat and for once in my life, I thought I was going to die.

“Take us around back of the park!” Amanda hollered over the roar of the wind.

Where that was I hadn’t a clue, but I steered right and the cab sloughed and bounced off the side of a building, then careened back and forth a dozen times before breaking into open land. Nothing I did seemed to garner the reaction I desired and the cab spiraled across a clearing, then ricocheted off a

tree-capped knoll and zoomed down a narrow ravine like a mad corkscrew.

Panic gave way to angry determination as I fought the damn machine. I heard the professor from a long way off, “let go of the controls.”

I did. Just like that, the cab leveled out and stopped.

“Now, Luke,” he said, “ease the stick forward a little at a time. Stay on this tack until you come out on the other side of the woods, then follow the gravel road to the back side of the park.”

“Why didn’t you tell me to let go earlier!” I raged at him.

“Because I haven’t had so much fun in decades.” His smile was genuine. He stuck out his hand like the gesture would make everything better.

Amanda burst out laughing and after a bit, though red-faced and sweating, I forced a smile. The professor joined Amanda until I thought he would blow a gasket, but before long I was laughing as uproariously as they. Looking back, I’d have to say I wore my cowardice like a badge, but it’s hard to stay ticked off when you’re laughing.

My gut ached. I struggled for breath. When we finally quieted, I turned to the task of getting us back to the park. As easy as pushing a skateboard, I drove us out of the gully and down the gravel road towards the employee parking lot. All the while Amanda was explaining and explaining to him why he wouldn’t remember any of this.

“Will you remember?” he asked, so serious it sounded like he was discussing the burial of his next of kin.

“Of course. As crononauts, we’ll remember everything, even as your time stream returns to normal.”

“Then what you must do, is take me with you.”

“We can’t do that,” she told him, sugarcoating the rejection with that beguiling smile.

“Sure you can,” I said, “just like you did with me. Only...only we’ll just bring him along for a few seconds, then return him to when we arrived.” I shrugged. “Nobody but him and us will ever remember.”

“We can’t do that. With what he knows, he’ll alter the time line.”

“Didn’t you tell me that your historical records showed he figured it out on this date?”

“Well, sure.”

“No brainer. His discovery was initiated by our visit. Don’t you see? We were meant to be here, to do this.” By now, we were at the edge of the parking lot and coming up on Amanda’s porter.

“It seems a reasonable assumption,” she mused, her gaze flitting from me to Brecklestein. “but what if something else triggered his evolution?”

“Irrelevant.”

She glared reproachfully at me, as if I was forcing her to be bad, but I was darn sure she wouldn’t go along with it unless she agreed with me.

“Land beside the porter.”

“The what?” The professor asked, arching a brow.

“Our transportation device. You’ll have to keep your eyes closed though. We wouldn’t want to compromise future technological history, now would we?”

He closed his eyes and Amanda guided him over to her porter and helped him get in. I followed and squeezed in beside them. We only seemed to move a few feet, but when we got back out, the cab wasn’t there.

“Now, professor,” Amanda said, “no one will remember what happened, except us. Your nephews

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should be arriving at the train about now.”

“No one?” He walked around where we’d left the cab, genuinely confused that the cab wasn’t there.

“No one,” Amanda repeated, “and we’ve got to be going.”

“Well, it was nice meeting you...and you too, Luke.” He offered me his hand and I shook it.

“We had a great time.” I wasn’t kidding.

“Will I see you again?”

“Perhaps we’ll look you up when you invent the first antigrav interstellar vehicle. My porter has a drive built on your design.” She gripped his hand, then rolled her eyes at me when he brushed it aside and hugged her.

He jerked away, then rubbed his chin in puzzlement. “Interstellar?” He frowned. “How did you know...why this very morning...”

“She’s from the future, Professor.” Yeah, I chuckled at that, but I was just getting used to the idea myself.

“And you’re?” He glanced at me, but I could see the gears going as he turned his attention back to Amanda.

“From the past,” I said simply.

“So, my dear, I made the histovids?”

Amanda laughed. “We could tell you all kinds of things, but once we’re gone all that has transpired since you took a hop in my porter will be lost to you. Sorry.”

“Then I won’t remember this conversation?”

“No.”

“Could I see...look at your porter’s drive then?” That wistful look was back in his eyes. “Built on my design, eh?”

“Of course.” Amanda smiled after him as he was already past her. She motioned toward the porter and the hood lifted. We gathered around it and inside was a glowing turbine looking thing, all smooth and shiny silver and gold. It seemed to have a life of its own, not just some mechanical contraption.

He stared at it for a long time and I just knew he was going to come away with something, even if his memory was erased.

“Well, gotta go. Take care, professor.” Amanda, hesitated, then gave him a quick hug, but gave me a ‘what’s it going to hurt’ look.

“Yes, well, I won’t forget this day,” he said with a tear in his voice, “and I’ll never forget you, Amanda,” He jerked around and looked at me. “Or you, uh...Luke.”

“We’ll be seeing you, professor.” I grinned and held out my hand and he shook it with far more strength that I had expected. “In the future.”

“Yes, yes indeed.” He stepped back and turned to go as Amanda climbed in the porter and left the door open for me. “I’m going to go take my antigrav machine for a ride around the park...off the rails.” He hurried off and I had to hand it to him. This would be a banner day for him in more ways than just a visit from a pair of time travelers.

As soon as I climbed in beside Amanda, she gave me a quick hug and a peck on the lips, and we were off.

“What was that about?” Not that I minded, but it was an unusual display of affection on her part.

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“You’re coming along, Lucas Ericcson. I’m glad I picked you up.”

“Even though I’m a Neanderthal...speaking time-wise?” I smiled with all my heart as we zoomed into the clouds, leaving Earth, and a future time I shouldn’t have been witness to.

“But, you’re my Neanderthal. The guys from my time are far too cerebral. You’re just right.”

What could I say? I’m in love with a beautiful chick from the future and she was out to show me the time of my life. It would end someday, but in the meantime, what a kick!

“So, where we going to now?”

She turned and pulled a leg under her and rested her chin on her forearm on the seat back. “To a world I’ve heard about, but have no physical proof of its existence. A mechanical world.”

“A robot world?” This I had to see. “How long will it take to get there?”

“Long enough for us to get to know each other a little better.” There was a sweetness in her voice. An impetuous smile dimpled her cheeks. Outside, the clouds gave way to star-studded black and at that moment I didn’t give a darn what time we were in.