

3 Oct 74

Dear Nonesuch.

This is an account of the first peculiar meeting between Dr. Chalmers, Questar and Quanta.

Questar and Quanta had been living for a while in a nice valley in a mountain land. Their parents had said it was a nice, quiet place and time. Father had gone hunting each day, and Mother had been catching up on her gardening.

One day Questar and Quanta were sitting in their favorite tree, telling each other stories. All at once they began to notice a red shimmering shape out in the valley. First it was transparent; then it grew opaque and turned from red to silver. Out of a hatch climbed a man in a fedora hat and a suit with wide lapels.

He stood there in the sun for a minute, half out of the hatch. Then he waved to them unexpectedly.

"Goodbye, Questar and Quanta!" he called out.

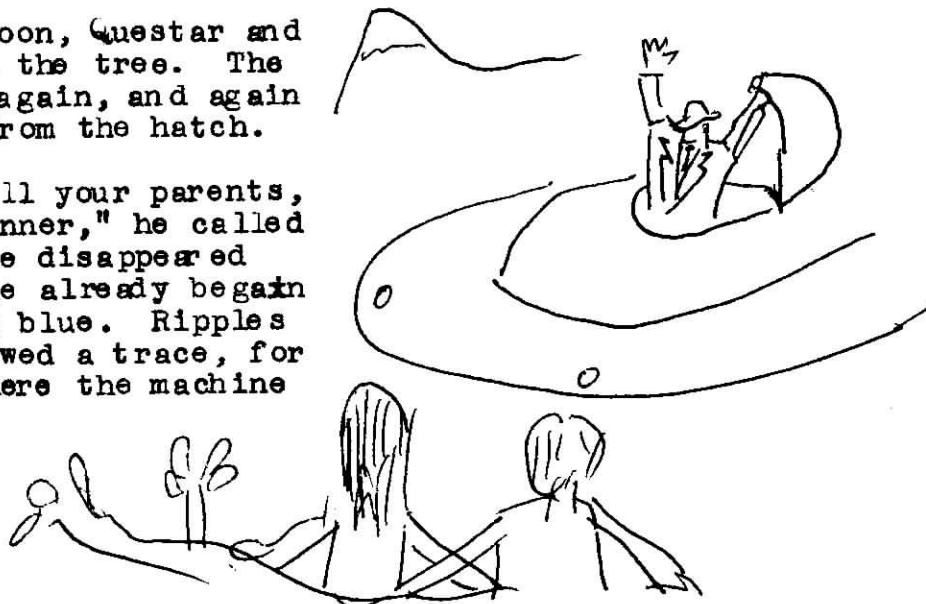
The twins waved uncertainly. They were very puzzled. They watched as Dr. Chalmers climbed back down and closed the hatch. Then the machine began shimmering again, and turned transparent and blue this time; then it disappeared. The air seemed to quiver momentarily where it had been; then all was as it had been before in the beautiful valley.

"What was that?" Questar and Quanta asked each other in unison.

At dinner they told their father about it. "I know," he said calmly. "I suspect we'll see him again."

The next afternoon, Questar and Quanta were again in the tree. The red shimmering came again, and again Dr. Chalmers arose from the hatch.

"I forgot to tell your parents, thank you for the dinner," he called out. "Whoops!" and he disappeared below, as the machine already began to turn a shimmering blue. Ripples in the air again showed a trace, for a few moments, of where the machine had been.



Questar and Quanta were even more puzzled. They told their parents about it that evening.

"I think we are going to have company soon," said Father. "It seems that a clumsy time-traveller may be operating in this valley."

Two nights later, the twins were just coming out of their tree after the dinner-bell when they saw the red shimmer in the twilight. This time Dr. Chalmers climbed out of the vehicle. "I really appreciate this," said Dr. Chalmers, as he stepped across the line onto the Enchanted Property.

"I hope you enjoy ~~it~~ visiting us," said Quanta very politely. While neither of the children knew who this man was, they knew he must be in some wise extraordinary, for ordinary people could never step onto the Enchanted Property-- or if they did, they would become confused, and not see it as it was. Only time travellers like them, they knew, could visit them.

"Remarkable," said Dr. Chalmers, looking at their tree. "Wonderful," he said, as he stepped through the garden, looking at its different flowers.

Hearing the strange voice, Mother and Father both stepped out the front door. They were surprised to see Dr. Chalmers, but acted as hospitable as they could. "Welcome," said Mother.

"We knew you'd come," said Father with a gentle smile.

Father

At dinner, ~~they~~ asked Dr. Chalmers about his curious machine. "That's the Submaroodle Toodle," ~~he~~ said Dr. Chalmers. "I mean the Submaroodle Two."

"Oh?" asked Father politely.

"It seems to be an improvement ~~at~~ over the Submaroodle One," said Dr. Chalmers. ~~XX~~ "The time travel seems to be controllable."

"I hope so," said Father, puffing his pipe.

A boop-boop-booping noise was heard outside.

"Whoops," said Dr. Chalmers. "Sorry to eat and RUNNNNNNN--" and run he did, out the door. The twins and their parents hurried to the door, just in time to see Dr. Chalmers leap into the Submaroodle Two as it was shimmering blue and transparent.



Next day Father did not go hunting. They all worked in the garden, watching the valley.

Late in the afternoon, all four were resting under the children's tree. Then the shimmering began. Father stood up to watch.

"I never thought I'd see this," he said. "One of the earliest time machines."

They watched Dr. Chalmers climb from the silver vehicle. "Oh, hello there, ~~X~~" said Dr. Chalmers. "Hello," said Mother and Father.

Dr. Chalmers came over. "How do you do," he ~~x~~ said. "I'm Dr. Chalmers, from the twentieth century." My instruments showed there were other time travellers nearby, and pointed at you."

"Welcome," said Father. "You seem not to know the time travellers' etiquette, so I must tell you: we do not tell others where we have come from or where we have been. But we salute each other thus:" and he tapped the end of his nose.

"Goodness," said Dr. Chalmers, tapping his own nose. Then his machine began to go boop-boop-boop. "Whoops!" he cried, "that's the ~~xxxxx~~ extemporaneous alarm!" He began running toward the machine.

"Do come visit us for dinner," ~~xxxx~~ called out Father, smiling.

"Thank you!" called Dr. Chalmers from the cockpit, already blue and transparent, including his hat. Then he was gone.

The children stared at where he had been.

"Now I get it," said Quanta.

"He was going backwards a day at a time, wasn't he," said Questar.

Father did not answer directly. "You will meet other time travellers," he said.

Quanta stood watching where the Submaroodle had been. "Father!" she asked. "That was one of the ~~x~~ very first, wasn't it!"

"You have much to learn," said Father.

Everyone looked at him.

~~x~~ "Time travelling is a lonely kind of life," he said. "But we have each other."

They all squeezed each other's ~~xx~~ hands, and looked at the mountains. And at their own garden.

Love, your own 