

On an Outing to Another Universe

By Joe Nobel

Today, I visited a parallel universe. Since it was a slow, boring week, with two rainy Tuesdays, I thought, why not?

I met a man there with an unusual name, John. I suppressed the urge to smile. After all, one doesn't go around saying the word "John," certainly not in polite company. Anyway, when John saw I was distraught when a food purveyor balked at my gold shells, he offered to buy me lunch in a place he called a restaurant.

"Hey, dude," John said. "C'mon, I'll buy you a hamburger."

I was taken aback at first. I assumed that dude meant a person wearing a conical traveler's hat, like I was. Only later did I gather that it was a term of affection for any particular stranger.

“Thank you, kind commoner,” I said.

When he looked at me strangely, I realized he might not be a commoner, even though he clearly wore a jacket with a zipper.

He led me to that restaurant, which was, in fact, just an eat-o-torium; it was next to the food purveyor. Apparently, in this universe there is a fine distinction between a food purveyor, in which one purchases food to take home, and an eat-o-torium, in which one eats the food on the spot. This eat-o-torium was located among many small establishments lined up in a row with places directly outside to stow ones mov-o-matic. It appears that everyone in this universe has a mov-o-matic for transportation.

We sat on round swiveling stools attached to the floor and we received our cutlery and napkins on what was called a countertop. A commoner on the other side of this countertop — obviously the proprietor — asked what we'd like. My new friend John said “burgers and fries.” I was wondering at that moment if that was the same as “hamburger”.

He asked if I wanted a cola with that.

Not knowing what a cola was, I hesitantly agreed.

The hamburger, it turned out, was a piece of fried, ground cow meat. Odd. It was served between two circular slices of bread, the top being semi-hemispherical. I learned that one could avail oneself of two different kinds of toppings which may be placed between the slice of fried cow meat and the top piece of bread. One topping was yellow and the other red. The red topping also served as a dip for the long thin strips of fried

potato, which were served along with this mysterious thing called a hamburger.

The cola was an interesting sight. It turned out to be a dark brown, almost black, liquid with lumps of ice served in a tall clear glass. It popped and fizzed as if it were a noxious chemical ready to explode. John took a sip of his through a hollow drinking cylinder made of plastic. Being the good explorer that I am, I did likewise. The fizzing and popping continued in my mouth. I felt the volatile concoction rumble and churn against my tongue and thought it would burn a hole in the roof of my mouth. When I saw John casually swallow his sip, I felt obligated to do likewise, out of politeness. I must confess though, my natural instinct was to spit it out. However, by the third sip, I had actually acquired a taste for this exotic beverage.

After ingesting as much fried cow meat as my stomach would tolerate, I confided in John that I was from another universe. He laughed, not believing me. Then I could see that he thought I was insane, or at the very least, less than forthright. I concede that his was a natural reaction for those who live in a universe where world-hopping does not exist.

“Take a look at this if you don’t believe me.” I pulled out an ionizing gob-bobble from my sleeve pocket. It was a common enough object, but I hadn’t seen any yet in this universe, so I took a chance in assuming this was a novelty.

“Holy crap,” he said. I didn’t understand the euphemism, but his expression more than made up for the lack of translation. “What the hell is that?”

I explained what a gob-bobble was and asked him if he’d like to have it. He accepted my little trinket as if it were a one-of-a-kind artifact.

“So, dude,” he said. “Since you’re here visiting our universe, would you like me

to show you around?”

I was surprised to see that he paid for our meals with paper money, just like in my universe. I see that some things are in common everywhere. He got back something called “change.”

John showed me his handful of change. They were small disks of shiny metal with faces engraved on one side. I waited for the change to change, but the several pieces remained static. I must have been staring because John asked me if I'd like some.

I was flushed with excitement. I picked one, which John later told me was called a dime. It was small enough that I could actually take it back home without causing a ripple in the 3-brane. I placed this dime in my sleeve pocket and thanked him profusely.

His mov-o-matic was not unlike a mov-o-matic one would find at home — in function, if not in form. It had a wheel for a turn-o-tron. It had pedals on the floor conveniently placed for the foot to control. One was the fast-o-gator. The other was a slow-i-ola. There was a third pedal whose function I could not ascertain. There as also a wipe-a-lator pushing the rain drops aside on the front glass in order to see more clearly out the front.

John piloted his mov-o-matic onto the road and we took our place in line among many other mov-o-matics proceeding along at a slow, stately pace. John complained about the heavy traffic. I, however, enjoyed the view as we made our way down the road slowly. I drank in every strangely shaped building of every color and size.

Then I saw the traffic lights! The closest analogy that came to mind were road blink-a-lons. However, these things called traffic lights come in three colors: red, yellow, and green. The various lights turn on and off in a pre-defined rotation. John explained to

me that one is allowed to proceed through an intersection on the green cycle and is required to stop and wait for others during the red. The meaning of the yellow appeared ambiguous to me no matter how hard John tried to explain. I got really excited about this universe when I learned that the entire population obeys these lights of their own volition. In the home universe you'd never get people to stop unless threatened by an enforce-o-nator with a blast-o-tron.

The next thing I learned surprised me even more than the concept of traffic lights. John's mov-o-matic had, as an integral component, a tune-o-lodion. John called it a ray-dee-oh. He turned it on with a dial-a-rotor. The inner compartment was suddenly inundated with the strangest music. No one in the home world had ever thought of combining this "ray-dee-o" in with mov-o-matics. Nor has anyone ever dared transmit anything as trivial as music across one. Tune-o-lodions, for us, are typically reserved for reporting imminent meteor showers, crop yields, and witty jingles that try to persuade one to buy things sanctioned by the crown.

And, what music it was. I'd never heard anything like it in my life. This kind of music was called Led Zeppelin and it hurt my ears. Not one to criticize an indigenous culture's fast-held traditions, I kept quiet and tried to tolerate the screams as best I could.

John piloted me around the city in his mov-o-matic while rain gently fell. As dusk fell, I became tired of all the newness, and lights, and the endless stream of mov-o-matics fighting for position on the roads. Besides, we were getting further and further from that food purveyor that was my entry point to this universe.

"So, this is where I live," John said as he positioned his mov-o-matic between two white demarcation lines painted on the asphalt.

I've been around many universes and I am not naïve about my surroundings. One could clearly see that John had taken me to a less-than-respectable quarter of his city. The buildings were covered with soot; there was refuse on the streets; and nearby puff-a-chimneys belched odious fumes from noisy factori-makers.

“So come on,” he said, beckoning me to follow. I did so but hesitantly as he led me through the door of his building. The front hall was gloomy and smelled of not being hygienically cleaned for some while. John led me to a door. It turned out to be the entrance to a pneumat-o-lift. He pressed a backlighted nub with the number 4 engraved on it and the little compartment started moving upward.

We arrived on the fourth level of the building from where John led me down a short but narrow corridor to his abode. Inside, his living quarters resembled the area outside the building in its messiness. His previously worn clothes were scattered on the sitting furniture. Plates and glasses that were caked with long ago eaten meals lay on every imaginable surface. My impression of John immediately went down. I'd suspected he was a commoner when we'd met, but now it appeared he was only a lower-grum or perhaps even a raff.

I felt most uncomfortable at the moment, not knowing whether John was a danger to me or was just a kindly soul whose own situation was less that fortuitous.

“So, you want a beer?” John asked as he opened his frost-a-chamber and removed two bottles.

“I should be returning to the home universe soon,” I said. “Kindly take me back to where we met. If I pop back from here, who knows where I will end up. I suspect we are on top of the Royal Zoological Garden in my world. It would be embarrassing to appear

there.”

“What’s your rush?” John said as he handed me a bottle which he had removed the top with a strange opening device. I took the bottle but didn’t drink, knowing the intoxicating effects of beer. Yes, there is beer in my home universe, and just about every universe I had had the pleasure of visiting.

“Don’t you drink beer?” he asked. “What do you call it in your universe?”

“We also call it beer,” I said coldly. I smelled it and judged it to be an inferior quality beer compared to what I had imbibed in the past. I placed the bottle on a low table cluttered with dirty dishes.

“So tell me, how do you hop from one universe to another?” he asked.

I explained that we have an organ called a world-wiggler located directly beneath the sternum. I thumped my chest to show him approximately where it is. “Only those with a rare genetic defect don’t have one.”

“So you’re born with it, and it’s a part of you? Cool!” he said. “What do those unlucky people who are born without one do?”

“Well, they can get a transplant from a donor. That would usually be an older relative who no longer desires to hop between worlds. It’s really a simple procedure.”

“Good,” John said. Then he pulled out a long sharp knife and pointed it toward me. “What do you call this in your universe? A cut-o-matic or something?”

“That would be a silly name; we call it a knife.” I answered. “Why are you pointing it at me? I hope you don’t intend to poke me in the flesh with that.”

“I want your wiggler thing,” he demanded. “And, I’m going to cut it out of you!”

“Wait! That would leave me stranded!” I pointed out to him. “Besides, it would

hurt immensely.”

“So hold still! It would be less painful that way. Don’t get me wrong, I like you but I have to get out of this stinkin’ place. Look around! I have nothing here. I’m trapped in this dump. Life is no better than when I was doing jail time.”

“I’m sorry for your circumstances, but that’s no reason to —”

“I always suspected you exist. Oh yes, I’ve been watching for one of you world hoppers to come along for years. I waited where my calculations said you’d be likely to show up. Sorry if I have to cut that world traveling thing out, but it’s either you or me!”

I, myself, do not travel afar without certain resources. I clanked my wrist bangles together activating the hidden wave-o-whack inside. It created a disruptive time-space wave which sent John reeling back across the room. I always carry a hidden wave-o-whack on my person for such eventualities. Unfortunately, the physics in this universe set off only a mild disruption and this John person only flew back far enough to land in his sitting chair.

I ran for the door. Under the circumstances I thought it prudent to disperse with the formalities and not announce my farewell. The only problem was that I did not know how to operate the funny little handle used to open doors. As I struggled with the device, John regained his footing and ran up behind me and grabbed my person. I tried to push him away with my elbow, although I know I was being impolite in doing so.

Then I felt a searing pain in the back of my shoulder. I quickly realized that this John had actually plunged the knife into me with the intention of causing me physical distress! Until now, I had not reconciled myself to the possibility that he would actually carry through on his threat and harm me. Instinctual reactions took over and I stepped out



of this universe. Without much thinking, I took two steps e-right, fifteen steps k-up, eleven steps b-left, and found myself in the comfort of my home world.

I was right in my guesstimate. I did indeed pilot us to where the Royal Zoological Garden in my home universe. Yes, I did say “us”. John, not releasing his hold over me, was carried along. I collapsed to the pavement and the last thought that went through my mind was that I shall be reprimanded for the ripple I'd caused in the 3-branes for transporting an object as large as he.

I woke up in a recoup-a-torium. The nurse told me I had been asleep for two days. She further said that they had sewn up the gash caused by the knife inserted into my personage and that I could leave tomorrow. She turned on the tune-o-lodion for my entertainment and I listened to the interesting stories of the day.

As I was ready to doze off, I caught an announcement to entice patrons to visit the Zoological Garden. They have a new attraction, a human exhibit from the universe eleven b-right, fifteen k-down, two e-left. “This creature is angry and complains a lot,” the voice on the tune-o-lodion said. “He eats something called hamburgers with red and yellow toppings along with fried potatoes. He also drinks a fizzy liquid called cola. His name is a humorous word which cannot be mentioned in polite company.”

The End

Thank you for reading On an Outing to Another Universe. I hope you enjoyed my story.

Don't distribute this pdf. It remains copyrighted material. Instead, refer anyone interested to [www.joenobel.com](http://www.joenobel.com), thanks.

Please consider leaving a donation by either PayPal or Bitcoin.



Send a donation via PayPal at:  
<https://www.paypal.me/JoeNobel>

Learn about creating your Paypal account at:  
<https://www.paypal.com/us/webapps/mpp/account-setup>



Send a donation via Bitcoin.  
Start by scanning this QC code into your phone's bitcoin wallet.



Go to  
[www.joenobel.com/bitcoin.html](http://www.joenobel.com/bitcoin.html)  
to learn about Bitcoins and  
setting up your own wallet.

1HPr8VJy2XidCWqfbKcK9seT9cG6BoHDz8

Be well, Joe

© 2017, [joenobel.com](http://joenobel.com)