Igor Bondar

The Year 2055

Stories

The Year 2055. The Beauty and Cosmetology Medicine Centre.

‘Hello, this is beauty and cosmetology medicine centre *Sirius*. Good day, nice to hear from you, Mr. Thompson! I remember you, of course. You had your live natural teeth inserted two months ago with us. What are you talking about? Well yes, they should be growing by themselves. They have grown too much you say? But, we warned you on potential side effects. We did warn you, for certain we did. Read the Contract, please, the lowest line of the eighth paragraph. In minor type. Marked with asterisk. You need not worry, Mr. Thompson: it is not a complicated issue at all. You will need to shorten them a bit at our centre every three months. As our loyal customer, we’ll present you with special discount prices. We’ll send you our special offer today. All the best!’

‘Hello! This is *Sirius* centre. Good day, Mr. Wan Yung. Right, I remember you perfectly. A couple of weeks ago, you optioned for our new method of tattoo removing: local hair growing. The odour appeared, you say? Well, of course, it is natural goat wool! There is nothing to worry about at all, Mr. Yung. Easy solution for this issue: you pop into a pet shop; there’s plenty of deodorants and shampoos to any taste. Glad that I could help. We’re always ready to help you.’

‘This is centre *Sirius*. Hello, Mrs. Stone. Of course, I remember you. We installed hoofs for you as an alternative to replacement shoes. Have you appreciated some savings on footwear already? No, no. We warned you that they will grind down slightly. Please, read paragraph fourteen at the bottom of

the page, marked with asterisk. How can this issue be solved? Well, there's nothing serious! We've got specially designed horseshoes made of titanium and carbon fibre, and also stylish, decorated with Swarovski Strass. Right, you're welcome here, we'll install them just in fifteen minutes for you. To prevent your neighbours below from complaining about rattling, we'll add rubber pads as a gift. Cheers!'

'Good day, this is centre *Sirius*. Yes, Mr. Hell, I remember you perfectly. You installed our tail six months ago. I hope you have already appreciated all the convenience it offers? Yes, certainly. It is convenient for removing cigarette ash, waving away flies, scratching your back and many more! Do you have any questions? Your trousers wear out quickly at the point the tail comes out? Oh! Why haven't you called us earlier? We've got trousers as well as jeans with a hole for tail and plastic rear part. Five-year guarantee. Glad that I could help, Mr. Hell, you are welcome to our centre again. Bye!'

The Year 2055. The Dinner.

Steve Hastings was dining with his girlfriend in a cozy restaurant. Hardly had they sat at the table when a volume hologram of a waiter appeared in the air in front of them.

'Hi, guys! I'm ElectroJack. I'll be serving you today. Here's the main menu for you. If you'll want anything else in addition, feel free to call me.'

After that, there followed holograms with the menu.

‘What would you like today, darling?’ the young man asked the girl.

‘Oh! I don’t even know,’ Sally wrinkled up her little nose, looking intently at a dish with dessert in the air. ‘I’d want something sweet, but I’ve put on a couple of kilos…’

‘Well then, let’s make it clever,’ the young man smiled. ‘We’ll send oatmeal with cucumber salad via Wi-Fi right to our stomachs and order dessert on a dish to enjoy its taste fully.’

‘You’re my clever!’ the girl smiled. ‘You’re always pleasuring me.’

‘I’m trying to, darling,’ Steve dropped his eyes in a modest manner and looked at his watch. ‘Listen, we’ve got a whole seven minutes ahead of the first course. Will we have to clean our bellies a little via Bluetooth?’

The girl nodded and the two young people pressed red buttons on their personal holograms.

The Year 2055. Tourist.

Keith entered a spacious hall with many armchairs for time travelling. The chap looked around and headed to his place. Above some of the armchairs he passed by, a blue light was glowing, which meant that their owners were travelling somewhere out there.

In an armchair next to that of Keith’s, there was a young man who had just returned from there. Absent-mindedly, he was still blinking his eyes; apparently, he was gradually remembering

what his name was. One could see that his memory was recovering, his look becoming more and more sensible. The young man wore some clothes from times of ancient history; in his hands he was holding a necklace made of big teeth.

‘Well, now I’ve seen how the pyramids of Egypt were built,’ the neighbour spoke out finally.

‘So, how was it?’ Keith looked at him curiously.

‘Huh, would I tell you?’ the young man shut his eyes partly. ‘It’s a precious piece of information and I’ve paid five thousand coins for this travel. But, I can tell you about the gift: it’s a necklace made of crocodile teeth. My girlfriend should like it.’

After that, an electronic receptionist rolled in and took the tourist to the changing room.

Keith sat down in his armchair. The holographic display showed 1972, the year he wanted to travel to. The chap did not know himself why he namely chose that year. Perhaps, some of his grandfather’s stories about those times had influenced him. Although, the grandpa died a long time ago, but the taste of those stories remained with the guy.

And so, now, during his scheduled vacation, Keith decided to visit those very years. He wore clothes that were typical of those times: jeans, t-shirt and sneakers. He bought all the clothes for the travel from *Time Travel Company*, at which he was now to begin his journey.

The young man, for whom it was not the first time-travel, leaned back in the armchair and pressed a green button that says “Start” with his finger on the holographic display. The reality around him immediately began to melt.

* * *

Some time later, the fog before Keith began dissolving: first, there came the sunshine, then silhouettes of some houses and everything else after that. The guy looked around: he was sitting on a wooden bench not far from the city seafront. There were people walking next to him, dressed somewhat like himself. Many of them were smiling, others were chatting away with each other.

At first, Keith moved his hands, then his leg and stood from the bench after that. Having set his shoulder bag right, he walked forward. The place itself with a suitable language of communication Keith had chosen himself, as all other tourists did. Here, his grandpa's stories helped him well.

The guy had looked at the city map beforehand, therefore, he oriented himself quite well in the area. Having walked several hundreds of metres, he saw a cosy café at the street corner. Keith loved coffee very much. He walked faster and, in several minutes, he settled himself at a cosy table on the terrace from where there opened quite good a panorama.

'Good morning,' he heard a pleasant woman's voice almost immediately. 'Something for a drink or breakfast?'

Keith looked up and smiled. Next to him, there stood a pretty, young girl in a simple light-coloured dress looking at him amiably.

'Good morning,' the young man replied, 'I'd like a coffee, please.'

'Which one would you like exactly?' the waitress asked.

‘Any with milk, to your taste,’ the guy replied, not knowing much about names of local drinks.

‘I like two types: *Flatwhite* and *Latte,*’ the girl smiled, ‘which of these do you want?’

‘*Flatwhite* will suit me,’ Keith nodded.

‘Fine! Will be ready in a few minutes,’ said the waitress and went away.

Keith watched her leave with curiosity. In his time, all of the waiters had long been electronic ones and the girls looked very different.

‘She’s nice,’ a voice sounded not far from the guy.

Keith turned his head; a couple of metres away, there sat a fair-haired young man, smiling friendlily.

‘Simply, we used to study in the same class,’ he explained, ‘her name is Sandra. Now, she studies at university, working here at times. Well, I’m Jack.’

‘Keith,’ the time-travelling tourist smiled in response and raised his hand.

‘I haven’t seen you here before,’ Jack said. ‘Have you just come from another place?’

‘I’m from Europe,’ Keith replied, ‘I want to take a rest here and travel around for a month or two.’

All time-travelling agencies prepared some believable documents and versions for tourists’ time visits.

‘A good plan,’ the local guy nodded approvingly.

After that, he continued his breakfast.

* * *

‘Here is your coffee,’ a pleasant woman’s voice sounded again near Keith some time later.

‘Thank you, Sandra,’ he said smiling and looked up at the girl.

The girl gave Jack a reproving glance.

‘Spilt the beans already?’

‘Just a little, San,’ the guy choked, ‘and just good things.’

‘He’s told only good things about you indeed,’ Keith confirmed.

‘Oh, have you? Fine, then,’ Sandra shone a cheery smile and looked at the visitor curiously. ‘Where have you come from, unless it’s top secret? You haven’t got any sun tan, simply.’

‘From Europe. His name’s Keith,’ Jack replied instead of the tourist. ‘It’s rather cold there for sunbathing now.’

‘Well then, it’s clear,’ the girl nodded. ‘I’m also dreaming of travelling to Italy some-day. I’ve read a lot about various places of interest in Rome. Have you been there?’

Keith, who has been to Rome, but only in 2053, shrugged his shoulders in uncertainty.

‘Sandra, me and my friends are going to the island. Remember where those nice bungalows were? Will you go with us?’ Jack said suddenly, saving the tourist from answering Sandra’s awkward question.

The girl thought for a moment.

‘Yeah, I remember, it was a good place. Are any other girls going?’

‘Yeah, my Suzy, Feeby and Mike are going too.’

‘You know, I’ve really got some free time this weekend,’ Sandra said, ‘perhaps, I’ll join you with pleasure.’

‘Perfect! Then, we’re meeting on our pier Friday morning.’

‘Agreed,’ the girl smiled and looked around. ‘Oh, sorry Jack, I’ve got a new client there. I’ll go to take his order.’

Having smiled warmly at her former classmate and to Keith in particular, she headed towards the other end of the terrace. With curiosity, the tourist from the future looked her leave.

‘What island are you going to, Jack?’ he asked a few minutes later.

‘Tango Lima. It’s eight miles off the shore,’ the other man replied. ‘By the way, won’t you go with us? There are plenty of houses and enough place for all. You’ve come to travel here, right?’

‘Well, it’s slightly embarrassing for me: you’ve got your own company already,’ Keith shrugged his shoulders.

‘You don’t say, fellow!’ the local guy waved his hand. ‘Newcomers are always welcome. The more friends we have, the better it will be, isn’t it so?’

After that, Jack looked enigmatically towards the pretty waitress.

‘It seems to me that Sandra won’t mind at all if she knows you’ve joined us,’ he pronounced in a lower voice.

‘You think so?’ Keith asked surprised.

‘I’ve known her for ten years, fellow,’ Jack nodded cheerily, ‘and somehow I’ve never heard she was interested in Rome before.’

The two young men smiled.

‘Well then, if I may, I will go with you,’ Keith said.

‘Fine!’ the local guy nodded in admiration. ‘Get a table napkin, I’ll draw a plan for you to find the pier we’re setting off from.’

* * *

A week later, Keith, Sandra, Jack and his friends were bathing together in a lagoon of the island they came to rest. All the company of the young people proved to be welcoming, approachable and cheerful. The guys knew how to enjoy their lives and, what the time-travelling tourist loved much, they did not ask many questions. Keith quickly made friends with them and had a wonderful time there.

They went fishing and cooked together, walked around the island and swam in the sea. In the evenings, they loved to listen to popular songs of *The Beatles* and danced at times. The young people often talked to each other about something and all these talks were simple and easy. Not rarely, it seemed to Keith that all these guys would not need anything else than their usual lives.

Several times, he asked cautiously about that what was already customary in his time, referring to some plots of fiction stories, which he had read ‘supposedly’. Keith wondered if they would want to know what was going in the whole world, know what other people are thinking and want to communicate with many dozens of different people. However, his new acquaintances only shrugged their shoulders in response, not understanding him.

They had enough of everything in their lives. Only Jack said once that he would not mind knowing his girl's thoughts. For that, Keith replied laughingly that it was beyond the coolest fiction.

All in all, for a guy who was literally intertwined into an overall web of information in his time, such viewpoints were unexpected and interesting. He saw with his own eyes that those people were truly happy, even without many things which were considered just vital in his world.

Keith had special attitudes with Sandra. He felt good with her and he felt that the girl had some interest in him as well. She could be easy when talking or serious, curious or self-sufficient. Often, she and Keith merely amused themselves as little children and at times, they discussed serious things. They loved walking around the island or swimming in the sea. And, with each day, they loved being together more and more.

When alone by himself, Keith often recalled stories he had once heard from his grandfather. Now, he saw it himself that everything in them was true. It was an epoch of some mere romantics indeed which the grandfather called *the times of The Beatles.* The most uncommon was that the guy felt that this time and this world were rather intimate to him.

* * *

One month passed.

Unjoyful Keith sat on the sea shore thinking. He had to return - go back to his time in a few hours. Everything was unsettling in his heart.

He could not imagine how he would live further without Sandra. This loveable and open girl with simple and understandable human desires became unbelievably close to him. She dreamt of having a strong-knit family, many children and a loving husband by her side. It was the most important thing and it provoked a response in the guy. In the time he should have returned to, everything was somewhat different.

Keith felt it unbearable to say farewell to Jack and his admirable friends; they spent so many amazing days together. These guys may not have said some particularly clever words, but their thoughts and feelings were the most true and living. They all became very close to the guy as well.

The young man felt completely sad having to leave this simple but somewhat warm and cosy world.

Keith kept looking at the water for a long time. Then, he pulled from his bag a small glistening console which had a big red button in its centre. Namely this he should have pressed to return to his time. The young man gazed at the thing, which was the only one that reminded him of his other life.

After that, he rose to his feet decisively and, making a long swing, threw the console away into the sea.

* * *

The electronic receptionist of the touristic hall rolled to Keith's armchair above which a blue light had just disappeared. 'One more unreturned,' he spoke with the voice of a popular actor.

After that, the robot rebooted programme and prepared the armchair for a new tourist.

Lie

A human being has been caught in a lie. His reaction in different epochs is:

The year 1800:

‘My honour has been stained! I cannot live on with it…’

The year 1900:

‘Oh, God! Shame, what a shame!’

The year 2000:

‘Damn, I’ve been caught! Such an unlucky day it has been!’

The year 2055:

‘I graduated from university of lie with distinction! But I’ve been caught like as a primitive idiot… My honour has been stained! I cannot live on with it…’

The Year 2055. Unfrozen

‘Hello! Hello!’ Harry heard a very sweet woman’s voice coming from somewhere. ‘Welcome to the year 2055! You have returned after fifty years of being frozen.’

The man lifted his eyelids cautiously. At that moment, he felt a searing heat run through him which he experienced at a sauna only. Having focused his vision in front of him, Harry suddenly saw a translucent woman’s face with no hair, hanging in the air. The face was smiling at him very amiably. The man shuddered from surprise.

‘That’s all, Mr McQueen, everything dangerous you’ve left behind now,’ the face in the air spoke with a smile, ‘we have unfrozen and warmed you up successfully. Now you are absolutely fine.’

The man’s memory was recovering gradually, second after second.

‘Wonderful!’ Harry smiled for the first time in fifty years and immediately asked the main question that was the reason of his freezing, ‘how long do people live on the Earth now?’

The face ahead squinted its eyes at a display on its side and spoke rapidly:

‘At our latitude, an average longevity of the people now is 187 years 4 months and 2 days.’

‘Wow! Terrific!’ Harry exclaimed excitedly and happily, even leaping in his armchair slightly. ‘So, it means my calculations have proved to be totally correct and I can live for a hundred years more?’

‘Everything is right, right,’ the face nodded at him agreeing, ‘you acted very wisely, Mr McQueen.’

‘Great!’ the man smiled cheerily. ‘Although, many of my friends called me a fool.’

‘Those *clever ones* died a long time ago,’ the face giggled pleasingly.

Harry winced a little.

‘So, here I am. I’m wealthy and have a hundred years more to live!’ the man returned to his comfortable thoughts.

‘Mmm…, here, everything is not quite right, Mr McQueen,’ the face opposite smiled slightly guiltily.

‘What do you mean? Harry startled.

‘You know, at the moment you were frozen, you had nearly twenty million in your account indeed.’

‘Well yes, and they were deposited for a good interest rate,’ Harry nodded, ‘so, what’s the matter?’

‘The problem is that, Mr McQueen, for the past fifty years, we’ve changed the rates several times, there occurred two big financial crises on the planet and the currency in which your money was, ceased to exist a few years ago. So, since 2038, you are serviced on credit. Currently, your debt to our company is…,’ the face glanced at the display once more, ‘…7 million 145 thousand 322 globucks and 47 chokits.’

‘How, how much?!’ Harry looked at the transparent face, stunned.

‘7 million 145 thousand 322 globucks and 47 chokits,’ the woman’s voice repeated with patience. ‘You have nothing to worry about: we have selected a job for you which you will be

able to do at ours. Considering your working ability and deduction of 85% from your payment, you will easily pay the debt to us in…'

Then, the face of a woman looked into the display one more time.

'…in 73 years, 4 months and 21 days.'

'Job?' Harry wondered, figuring it all out poorly. 'What the damned job are you talking about?'

'Your future position is a watcher at the Museum of Medieval times,' the face replied, having glanced at the display. 'I am sorry, but we have not got any other job vacancies for the people with your qualification.'

'You have not…' Harry echoed and instantly thought up a new question, 'what if I won't repay the debt to your company?'

'You may act so, Mr McQueen', the face spoke dryly this time, 'but, believe me, this option will not be better for you. For the refusal to repay the amount, you will spend 57 years 2 months and 7 days in prison. Besides, you will have to work there anyway.'

At that instant, the semitransparent womanish face began smiling very warmly again.

'You should not be so upset, Mr McQueen: we've acted extremely humanely with you when you ran out of your money. We did not switch you off for the non-payment in 2038.'

Harry leaned back in his armchair. Suddenly, he recalled his last party before his freezing in 2005. During this evening, his faithful friends many times called him a stupid donkey for some reason…

The Year 2055. Advertising

George Mitchell walked up the beautiful stairs and arrived at the bright door, which displayed the sign "Live Advertising". The sensor on the wall quickly scanned his personal data, then the door in front of the young man vanished into thin air. The guy kept walking on a luminous carpet further into the room. In a few seconds, he saw a pretty green-haired girl.

'Hello, George, my name is Helga,' the girl said with a nice smile. 'How can I help you?'

'Good morning, Helga,' George replied. 'You see, I'm a student and I'd like to earn some extra money without wasting much time. A couple of my friends from university have been working with advertising from your company for over a year. They seem quite happy with it.'

'That's right, George, that's right,' the girl nodded. 'Our "live advertising" is a trove for students. Many young people around the world cooperate with us. As I see, you want to start working with us too?'

'Well, I'd like to look at your prices first.'

'Sure,' Helga smiled. 'Let me take a look at the hologram of your route over the past year and I'll pick up a tariff depending on the crowdedness of the places that you visit.'

The girl touched the hologram of the guy and spoke again in a few seconds.

'Your tariff would be more or less standard. Now, I'll tell you more about your main advertising spaces and their prices. The most expensive space is, of course, a forehead. Black and white

ad placed here would cost 50 globacks a week, a colored one - 65, an illuminated ad would cost 80.'

'Illuminated?' the young man asked with hesitation. 'What about sleep?'

'Oh, don't worry about that,' the girl smiled again. 'We use only harmless technologies by the Jedi-Prestige company in our advertising. Illumination will turn off automatically from 11:00 PM to 07:00 AM.'

At this point, Helga confidentially looked at the guy.

'But between you and me, many students refuse to turn it off. They save on electricity this way.'

'Well, if you say so,' the guy agreed, 'that's fine. 80 globacks a week sounds great. Is there anything else to make money off?'

'Of course,' the girl nodded. 'Ads on your hands would bring you 15% of the cost of the forehead for each hand. If you shave your head completely bald, we can place ads on the back and at the sides of your head. The back of the head costs 70% of the forehead cost and each side costs 50%.'

'Sounds good!' George smiled cheerfully. 'It turns out that a head is, in fact, the most important part of our body?'

Helga laughed cheerfully.

'Looks that way.'

'And what about the top of my head?' the young man asked again.

'The top of the head is not a popular space.' the girl shook her head. 'Ads here are not visible from air-cars and planes and only a few people look at the crowd out the window. Therefore, it costs only 3% of the forehead cost.'

'Not much,' George nodded. 'I'd rather grow hair here.'

The girl gave a thumbs up.

'And what about central body parts?' the guy asked with interest.

'Your lifestyle isn't really suitable for such advertising,' Helga replied with a guilty smile. 'You don't go naked in public quite often and you went to the public bath only four times over the past year. So, you'll get roughly 2% of the price for your forehead for your body.'

'Then it's not worth thinking about,' George nodded and looked at the girl. 'Well, I'm ready. Let's do illuminated ads around the head and on the hands.'

'Great!' the girl nodded. 'The whole procedure takes about 8 minutes. Are you ready to sign the contract?'

'Oh, yes, I almost forgot to ask you one more question,' the guy slapped his forehead. 'The guys told me that sometimes you have promotions and special offers. Please could you advise which of them are in effect today?'

'I can tell you're a competent man,' Helga shook her head with respect. 'Yes, we do have two promotions now. The "Uni-Uni" company offers additional 15% for advertising their plumbing with a 12-year contract. Also, the "Persian Carpets" company adds 20% for advertising their products with a 25-year contract. By the way, we're standing on their carpet right now.'

'What luck!' George rubbed his hands. 'All right, let's advertise carpets.'

'Good choice!' Helga replied enthusiastically. 'Put your fingerprint here on the hologram to confirm our contract.'

The young man quickly placed his finger on the specified place.

'Congratulations on a wonderful choice,' Helga smiled again. 'Well, let's place our ads.'

The guy followed the girl to one of the large silver capsules labelled "Jedi-Prestige".

The Year 2055. Last Romantic

Sebastian looked at his watch, then he gently pulled out the bottom drawer of the cabinet on which the old record player stood. He turned it on and put a needle on a record. In a second, the room was filled with the beautiful sounds of the old song – "Yesterday" by the Beatles.

The man sat back in the chair and poured himself a glass of Cognac. Then, he took a Cuban cigar out of the box and lit it. After that, Sebastian relaxed, leaned back in the chair, and enjoyed the timeless beautiful melody.

He knew that he had exactly 7 minutes and 30 seconds before his idyll would be broken. So until then, Sebastian wholeheartedly enjoyed the music, the aroma of Cognac, and the taste of cigar. He bought a few bottles of this drink and a couple of boxes of Cuban cigars by luck about twenty years ago. Since then, he’s carefully kept them.

In a few minutes, the first song ended with a beautiful chord. Sebastian poured some more Cognac and raised his glass, as if he was not alone in the room. In a few seconds, he heard the sounds of the next song from the album.

The man smiled warmly again. This was giving him great pleasure. However, this pleasure was mixed with some quiet melancholy, which is felt when some of your closest things leave your life.

In three minutes, the second song was over too. Sebastian raised his glass with a smile and said: "Happy birthday to you, Seb."

There were still 15 seconds left. Sebastian quickly finished his Cognac and blew a farewell puff of smoke. Right after that, the wailing of a siren broke into his room and he saw three holograms appear. One of them was the mayor of their neighbourhood, and the other two were local police officers.

'Mister Stone,' the mayor said dryly. 'You've just committed several offenses, namely: used unlicensed sound-reproducing equipment, listened to two songs that were not certified in our city, committed an act of smoking and the act of drinking an alcoholic beverage. Do you acknowledge your guilt?'

Sebastian nodded, trying not to smile.

'Good. Then, according to the law of our city, you are fined 7.200 globacks. The money has already been debited from your account. Mister Stone, we strongly recommend that you comply with the laws from now on,' the mayor said again.

After that, all holograms swiftly disappeared from his home.

The last romantic leaned back in his chair again with a pleased smile. Another birthday was a big success again.

Unfortunately, Sebastian's budget didn't allow for such a holiday more often than once a year.

The Year 2055. The Sandpit

Three children were playing in a sandpit. As usual, they would find glowing pictures with various figures on its sides, then they would press them and, in a few seconds, different sand forms would arise in the pit. The children were happy.

Meanwhile, their three mothers were sitting in cosmetological capsules next to the sandpit. They each followed their child with their eyes while receiving various procedures below their shoulders. One of the women was getting a massage, the second had her pedicure renewed and the third was under a session of weight-loss.

Their three pets were kept in pet-capsules for animals nearby. One dog was biting a bone synthetised from soy protein; the second was watching popular dog dreams. In the third capsule, a red-fur cat was being stroked softly on his belly and behind his ear by a comber.

The cat was purring happily. And, it was the only thing that hasn't changed on the children's playground for hundreds of years.

The Year 2055. Scuba Diving

'Hi, guys! Welcome to our legendary five-star diving centre "Bubbles",' said the diving instructor who was washed with all ocean currents, standing with a smile at the office door. 'I'm Steve, a manager. Let me guess… You most likely want to dive with us? If so, you're welcome in!'

A young couple went into an office room with walls exactly transmitting underwater landscape.

‘Hello, Steve,’ a white-haired chap spoke. ‘My name is Jack, this is Martha, my girl and you aren’t mistaken. We’ve just completed a 15-minute Advanced Diver course and we would like to have our first dive with you. Will you help us?’

‘Certainly! That’s what we’re here for!’ Steve’s face melted, showing a broad smile. ‘Our diving centre has more than 70 years of experience, so we know everything about diving, what can be known about it. You may not doubt you’ll find what you’ve come for and even much more.’

‘Oh, that’s great!’ the girl clapped her hands.

‘Sounds cool,’ the chap repeated, ‘so, what shall we begin with?’

‘Certainly with diving planning, including all your wishes. For that, I’ll ask you several questions, then we’ll immediately get to diving. Do you agree?’

The girl and the pal nodded their heads as one.

‘So, what water temperature would you like to dive in?’

The young people glanced at each other and the girl began.

‘May we dive at 29 centigrade?’

‘It’s a snap!’ Steve nodded. ‘Next question: what water visibility would you like to have underwater?’

‘The maximum, perhaps,’ Jack shrugged his shoulders.

‘So, well, we’ve got 318 diving sites available around the globe with your water temperature and visibility above 25 metres,’ Steve said looking at a virtual screen. ‘Next question: what depth would like to go down to?’

‘And how deep can it be?’ Jack asked.

‘You’ve got certificates for advanced divers, so it’s up to 42.’

‘Well then, we’d like to dive to this depth,’ the visitor said and his girl nodded in agreement.

‘Perfect,’ Steve answered and put one more tick on his virtual screen. ‘Now about underwater inhabitants: which of them would you like to see? In these places we’ve got mantas, turtles, sharks…’

“May it be without the sharks?’ the girl interrupted him.

‘It may, of course, but what’re you afraid of?’ Steve laughed out cheerfully, ‘only your holograms will be swimming in the sea, equipped with sensors for repelling any sea animals, while you’ll be safely sitting in our office.

‘Well, I’d like to not meet sharks anyhow today,’ the girl turned her head down persistently.

‘Good,’ Steve nodded in agreement and put a tick on his screen, ‘one-hundred-metre-range shark repellents included. Let’s go further – underwater photos and video, will you need it?’

The chap and the girl nodded unanimously.

‘Fine! Then, choose the colours of your diving suits, air tanks, flippers and other equipment that you would like to see on your photos and videos.’

A few minutes later, the girl and the young man finished this task and Steve continued his poll.

‘Have you got any special desires?’

‘Special?’ the visitor asked him blankly, ‘what special desires can there be?’

‘They’re very different! We’ve got a huge range to choose from, nearly a hundred options. You can look through them on your virtual screens to your right.’

The chap and the girl immersed into unusual read. At times, their eyes opened widely and they laughed cheerily. At one point, the pal pushed the girl lightly, pointing to an option at which she flushed red immediately.

‘So, have you selected any?’ Steve enquired after several minutes.

‘Oh, yeah! So, we would like to visit a sunken pirate ship, then Martha wants me to rescue her from tentacles of a giant octopus and…’

At that moment, he looked at his female companion emotionally: she sighed and dropped her eyelashes.

‘Also, we’d want option number 27!’ Jack finished joyfully.

‘What a nice choice!’ Steve commented excitedly, ‘worth of the most experienced divers.’

The chap and the girl were smiling happily.

‘Well now, let’s finish with the financial part of the matter and then we may get to the dive,’ Steve looked at his virtual screen. ‘So, this set will cost 18 globacks per person. Do you agree with this price?’

‘Eighteen?’ the girl asked again being somewhat uncertain. ‘Your advertisement said diving was from five globacks.’

‘Well, that’s for a very simple dive, but you’ve optioned for photos, video and the three special desires.’

‘Not to worry, Steve, we’re absolutely contented with everything,’ Jack interrupted the instructor, ‘that’s a good price for such an interesting diving.’

‘Well then, everything’s fine,’ Steve replied, ‘let’s get to the diving now. You get to those two baths by the wall and immerse yourself up to your chin. Water temperature is 29 centigrade precisely. Then you put those colourful helmets on your heads.’

Steve stood up and threw his arms wide apart.

‘So, guys, have a nice diving and unforgettable underwater impressions!’

The Year 2055. Over speed

A traffic police officer slowly approached the window of the aerocar he just stopped.

'Mr. Hortsman, you're driving about 250 kilometers an hour over the airspeed limit. And, this is your second violation this year.'

'Yes, my fault, officer,' the aerocar driver turned pale with fear.

'In accordance with our law, for violating traffic regulations, your mind will be placed into a snail for three days. Learn to drive slow, Mr. Hortsman.'

'Oh, please, not into a snail, officer!' the driver begged for mercy. 'I was in a snail three years ago - this is unbearable! Please, officer, forgive me for this violation and commute the punishment. I swear that I'll never exceed the speed limit again!'

The police officer looked carefully at the frightened violator.

'All right, Mr. Hortsman, I'll try to believe you just once. Let it be, I'll place your mind into a tortoise just for one day. Just remember this promise well.'

'Oh, thank you! Thank you so much, officer!' the driver said happily. 'I'll never break the speed limit again. You won't regret your decision.'

'Well, if I regret my decision, Mr. Hortsman, you'll regret much more,' the police officer responded philosophically.

'Oh yeah?' the driver looked confused.

'Sure,' the police officer grinned mysteriously. 'Deceiving the police is a very serious violation and, uh... also personal.'

Then, the police officer leaned in the window and made a heartwarming speech.

'And if you do deceive me, Mr. Hortsman, next time I will definitely try to put your mind into some really interesting situation.'

The officer smiled nicely.

'Well, for example, into a worm just before fishing...'

Year 2055. Son

Christopher Kent had been thinking a lot before he decided to take this step. He weighed his opportunities and listened to his feelings many times. And finally, he firmly realized that he wanted to become a father indeed.

Having taken this decision, the man headed to the closest office of “ZFamily” company. A cute face of a baby on the advertisement at the entrance smiled at him pleasantly. Chris put his hand on the hologram near the entrance and crossed the threshold.

‘Good afternoon, Mr. Kent,’ a middle-aged good-natured man almost immediately went out to him. ‘My name is Alex. I am a local manager. Welcome to our “ZFamily” office. How can we help you?’

‘Hello, Alex,’ Chris smiled, ‘I have been thinking a lot and finally decided to have my child.’

‘Wonderful decision!’ A smile on Alex’s face became even wider. ‘It is so awesome when people think about children. It is very human.’

‘Thank you,’ Chris answered, a little embarrassed.

‘Well, we will help you to solve this issue as comfortably as possible,’ Alex said. ‘You will get a wonderful baby with the help of our company.’

‘Really?’ the guest was delighted. ‘That is great, what do I need to do for this?’

‘Only tell us your wishes. We will do the rest and be sure, that you will be satisfied,’ Alex answered him. ‘Get settled, Mr. Kent, and fill in all the items in our holographic questionnaire.’

Chris sat in a soft armchair that stood nearby and started to read a text. The first paragraph read: ‘who do you want to have: a son or daughter?’ The man ticked the word ‘son’.

‘Great choice,’ Alex, who was nearby, nodded, ‘now select the parameters of your future son.’

The guest returned his glance to the text. The next part was ‘height’, ‘hair color’, ‘eye color’, ‘degree of similarity to you’. Christopher filled in respectively ‘190 centimeters’, ‘blond’, ‘green’ and ‘70%’.

‘At what age would you like to get your baby from us?’ That was the next question. Then, these answer options followed: ‘immediately’, ‘after 6 months’, ‘after 1 year’, ‘after 2 years’, and ‘after 3 years’.

‘Could you explain this paragraph to me, please?’ Chris looked at Alex questioningly.

‘You see, not all customers like to babysit the child at the initial stage. Baby cries, you know, sleepless nights, a lot of diapers. Therefore, for an additional fee, our company takes on this difficult part of child care,’ answered the office employee.

‘Yes?’ Chris spoke thoughtfully. ‘It is probably a really big help. But, isn’t it bad that during this time, the child doesn’t see the face of his parent?’

‘Oh, no, Mr. Kent, your child will see only your face from the first day. It is very easy to organize something like that in our days.’

‘Well, if so, then it is great,’ the man sighed with relief. ‘Then I have only two questions left for you: how much will it cost me and from what age do most parents usually take their children?’

‘As a rule, a child is taken from us a year or two later,’ Alex answered, ‘and the cost of this service is indicated at the end of each age point.’

Chris looked towards the end of the hologram and clucked his tongue in surprise.

‘Not a cheap service.’

‘Well, it is a difficult time indeed, Mr. Kent. Those who have children are well aware of that. Therefore, believe me, our prices are worth the efforts spent.’

‘Ok, then I absolutely rely on you,’ the guest said and ticked the box that read ‘after a year’.

‘Well, almost all your work is done,’ Alex smiled, ‘now take the scissors from the table and cut off a small strand of hair. This will be enough to identify your DNA and start the process of giving birth to your son.’

‘And how long in total will I wait for my year-old child?’ Chris asked one more question.

‘At present, it takes sixty days for a fetus to completely maturate in our company. Well, and as for a year of earthly life, it remains a year of earthly life,’ Alex shrugged his shoulders. ‘There, nothing can be reduced. So, you will be able to get your son in exactly 14 months.’

‘Nice, that suits me just fine,’ the client smiled, took a scissors from the table and cut off a small curl.

Alex took the hairs from the hand of the guest and placed it in a capsule that stood nearby.

‘Besides, we need to know the name of the future baby,’ he said afterwards, ‘but in this issue, you have time. You have two months before a final decision.’

‘I already have a name but I will think a little bit more about it just in case,’ Kent said.

‘Great,’ Alex responded, ‘So, Mr. Kent, all the package of services for getting a one-year-old son in our company will cost you 78 thousand globacks. If you agree with this price, then place

your finger on the lower right corner of the hologram contract for confirmation and payment.'

Chris smiled and solemnly placed his finger in the indicated place.

After that, the firm's manager inserted a capsule with the client's hair into the jack of a large silver device, and then he pressed the huge green button with a picture of the child.

'Our company congratulates you, Mr. Kent. You will become a father soon, you will have a son,' Alex announced with a solemn smile.

The Year 2055. Medical service

Forty-five-year-old Lucas Foros crossed the threshold of 'Plasma' medical service. Almost immediately, right in front of him, a pretty girl in a yellow robe and a branded hat of the same color appeared.

'Good afternoon, my name is Jessica. How can I help you, Mr. err…,' here, the girl took a peek at the man's hologram, 'Mr. Foros?'

'Yeah, I came because my body is scheduled to be serviced today as you recommended to me. It has been exactly 24 months since my last visit to you.'

'Great, Mr. Foros, you are very punctual,' the girl smiled. 'Our manager, robot Jack, will continue to work with you.'

In several seconds, a glittering robot, who was a little smaller than an ordinary person in height, approached them.

‘Good afternoon, Mr. Foros. My name is Jack and I am responsible for your service,’ said the robot in a pleasant voice.

‘Good afternoon,’ Lucas nodded his head affably.

‘So,’ robot Jack continued, ‘the first question: did you have any problems with your health for the last 24 months?’

‘Well,’ Lucas started to remember, peeping at his hologram, ‘once, I hurt my back a little, I had a temperature a couple of times. Perhaps there were some other trifles but, in general, there was nothing serious.’

‘Ok,’ the robot replied, ‘I'll see all the details on your hologram. After that, we will do a full workup and make a planned service of your body.’

‘How much time will it take?’ Lucas asked

‘Eight days,’ Jack answered rapidly, ‘if you won’t have any additional request concerning the refinements of your body.’

‘And do you have any new offers?’ Lucas asked with interest. ‘Can I see them?’

Instantly, a big hologram emerged in front of the man, consisting of 3-D images and text. Lucas studied it for several minutes.

‘How much time do you need to pump my body to this state?’ He looked at Jack curiously and after that pointed at one of the muscular pictures.

‘It will take 3 months,’ the robot answered fast.

‘That is too much, I don’t have a lot of time,’ the man wrinkled. ‘What can you do for a month?’

Another picture with slightly smaller muscles emerged in front of Lucas.

‘Mm, that does not look bad either,’ Lucas nodded his head affirmatively, having examined it carefully from every angle. ‘I’ll take this option.’

‘Our artificial intelligence will attend the trainings in your body four times a day.’

‘Miserable,’ Lucas sighed sympathetically.

Jack looked at him blankly. The man who knew that robots had a bad sense of humor smiled guiltily and continued.

‘I see, you can also help me to acquire some skills. I've always dreamt about learning to play tennis well.’

‘It is very easy, Mr. Foros,’ Jack answered, ‘Besides, we will just lightly shift some of the workouts to this area. In general, the whole process of servicing you in our company will be longer than expected – only by five days – and you will get the skill of tennis player at level 7A.’

‘Wow! That is great!’ The man nodded cheerfully and continued to look at the big hologram with the promotional offers.

Robot Jack politely stood near him.

‘In addition, I have always dreamt about learning to dance well,’ Lucas said dreamily.

‘A brief course of the main dances of the world of 3B level will take 10 more days.’

‘Well, it is worth trying, I guess,’ the man reacted cheerfully and suddenly smiled mysteriously. ‘Can you increase the level of Latin dance up to 7B?’

‘Plus two days,’ Jack responded calmly, ‘anything else, Mr. Foros?’

‘I guess it is enough for this time,’ Lucas shrugged his shoulders.

‘Then the final cost of medicine service and all the additional services of your body is seventeen thousand, two hundred and fifty globackses. It will take fifty-five days to finish the process,’ Jack summed up.

‘Ok, that is appropriate for me,’ the man nodded affirmatively.

‘Great, then place your finger into this part of the hologram contract in order to confirm and pay for it,’ the robot said. ‘We will get started immediately after that.’

Lukas complied with the request fast and looked at the robot again.

‘What now?’ he asked.

‘Now, as usual, our artificial intelligence will replace you in your body during the service. You can find a substitute body for yourself in our stock for that period of time,’ the robot replied.

‘What bodies are in the greatest demand?’ Lucas asked him curiously.

‘Various,’ Jack answered emotionlessly. ‘A man before you, for instance, took the body of a beautiful blonde. Yeah, and he also said a phrase: ‘I’m tired of chasing them. Now, it’s time for other to run after me, at least for a month.’

Lucas laughed out loud.

‘Well said,’ he commented, and after a minute of thinking his eyes suddenly lit up naughtily. ‘Do you have the bodies of beautiful brunettes in your stock?’

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