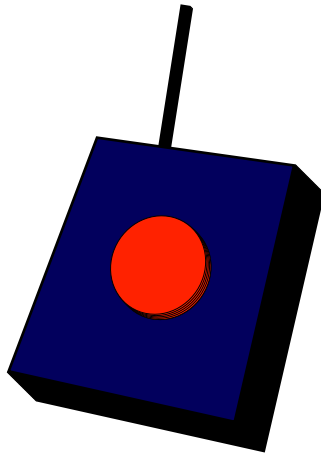

The Trarbexian Flow Regulator



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Prologue

On a planet far, far away from Earth a rock was present. It was not alive. Below the rock were only non-fertile soil and more rocks. Above the rock was only empty space. The planet was dead, and it had always been that way.

Then, with the mental strength of a herd of thinking Tribzars, the rock turned itself into a living being — a rockoid — and then it poured part of its grand life energy into every fiber of the planet's atoms, the rest of its newly acquired energy staying inside its fresh soul for use in future situations. The planet was alive and happy. It named itself "Hapinoria" and broadcast signals of joy in all directions throughout this universe. Replies of congratulations and more joy came back, and happiness spread. Hapinoria, Tirzbarr, Baksita, and so on: all planets were full of joy, and any eventual suffering had disappeared forever.

At least that's how the rockoids wish to remember the Day of Life.

The truth is that, on the planet of Baksita (where the Trarbexians obviously lived), people were tired of life. They couldn't remove it, but it was easy to change its flow. Using an ordinary flow regulator all life in this universe was transferred from all living things to all non-living things.

The Trarbexians had not consulted with the Universal Counsel; Trarbexians do not care for paperwork.

Chapter 1

Barr was a rockoid. When Barr was born, life on Earth had just begun. Today, many years later, Barr is still alive. However, Barr is living on Hapinoria, which is 293,331,390 karrqs away from Earth, and since humans have not yet acquired faster-than-the-stuff-faster-than-light travel (which, according to the legendary Alqurian Prophets, will never happen) they might never go there. This is called "shoom travel" by all intelligent life in this universe except for the Gliesians who call it "mushg travel".

Since rockoids have no limbs, they don't move. Since they have no mouths, they don't talk. Since they have no brains, they don't communicate telepathically. In fact, rockoids do nothing except exist. This is why Barr is still alive today: for a rockoid, nothing ever changes, especially not its life. The Gliesians call rockoids for "zmaghs" because in Gliesian, "urke" means "living entity who does not move" and "zmagh" is one of the random inflections of "urke" found throughout the Gliesian language (Gliesians believe that organized randomness is preferable to random randomness).

At this point, it might be prudent to note that this true story has been written by a completely independent observer who happened to be at the right places in the right moments. This independent observer wishes to remain anonymous, but one thing about the being is certain: it is very intelligent, very thorough, and has a very good memory. Math is not one of its stronger points, though it did once invent a new mathematical operator, the rantrimpication operator (which was never widely used). The editor of the being's observations knows of its real identity, which will not be revealed. Instead, we'll call the being "Ruuyzmz" and assume that Ruuyzmz is a male (which couldn't be less true); that should suffice.

Ruuyzmz was never discovered by any of the rockoids, even though he spent many Hapinoria years watching them. This was partly because of the rockoids' ignorance, partly because of Ruuyzmz' superb ability to blend in, and partly because rockoids have no senses. The only proof of the rockoid's existence as intelligent, living beings are their occasional hallucinations which are actually visually observable phenomena showing the rockoids' dreams, though the rockoids are unaware of this.

Being a rockoid, Barr was not fully aware of how the future would turn out for him. He would soon realize that the future is quite boring, at least for rockoids.

Chapter 2

On Baksita, where the Trasbexians had previously lived, a strange mix of rockoids, metaloids, plasticoids, and crystaloids now lived. In the first marhps after the Day of Life everything was pure harmony. However, it only took a few more marhps for the different oids to realize that to exist they had to build a Trasbexian flow regulator, travel back in time to when the Trasbexians were still around, and give the regulator to the Trasbexians.

This was a good thing, because it gave all intelligent oids a meaning to their lives. Because important oids knew that it would be fatal to remove that purpose, since that would turn a meaningful existence into a meaningless existence, everything possible was done to delay the invention and the time travel.

Mahbzu was the plasticoid who discovered the flow regulator paradox. How she discovered it is irrelevant. The point is, she didn't want to delay the construction of the regulator. As a true scientist it seemed awfully wrong to her to not do science when she could do science. Several metaloids agreed with Mahbzu, but the government forced them not to do science.

Eventually, a terrorist organization was created. This was not the first of its kind, and in the end, when the flow regulator had finally been invented, the power of the terrorists and their dislike for life resulted in a modification of the direction of the life flow, so that all which had previously been dead matter, such as the rockoids, now died again, and so that all which had previously been alive, such as the Gliesian people, was revived. Actually, looking at this from a linear point of view, this process is not finished yet, and it will take 10 million Earth years before the terrorists gain even some power. When the flow transfer has been completed in the "future", the process of flow modification will repeat itself until this universe dies.

Also, Mahbzu dies at a young age when giving labor to her half-metalloid, half-plasticoid child (just proves that plasticoids should not see metaloids).

As a matter of fact, what happened, happens and will happen on Baksit is of no real use, which is why the following pieces of historical information will be focused on other, much more interesting places and beings (in Ruuymz' notes, Ruuymz apologizes for the lack of relevance in the previous bits of facts).

Chapter 3

While the construction of Trarbexian flow regulators went alarmingly slowly on Baksit, a new exciting lifeform, the android, was spreading its metallic wings. Being mainly a metaloid, traces of crystaloid and plasticoid parts were also present. One android, named John, knew nothing about the flow regulator business. Then again, he didn't need to. In fact, he needed nothing. Nothing except company which was the only thing he had to have but didn't have.

John was the only intelligent being in his galaxy, and for a long time he believed that he was the only intelligent being in all of this universe. When he had come to life, he had no recollection of his existence. He could only guess. One day, he set out to investigate.

John was born in a large, grey, stereotypic factory. For the first few days of his existence, he did not move. Then he moved. It was not until he moved that he realized the significance of his existence. To make time pass, he began creating poems from words he had also created. These words cannot be perfectly translated to any existing Earth language, nor described with any existing Earth characters, but it is possible to do a very loose translation of John's first poem:

Sun of Goat
May my mind float
Towards your house
Of mediocrity

The sum of my being
The product of my fleeing
My sense of Goat
Are true, both

John only knew his own, inner language, and so he could not communicate with others. And since no other communicating beings were present John had no chance of learning new and exciting languages. This was good, because if he had indeed met other intelligent beings, his perfect, inner language would become tainted with imperfect languages.

After John had moved, he ended up outside. He was clearly on a desolate planet with only him, the factory, and a couple of goats whose reasons for existence John could not determine. It was because of this indetermination that John chose to see The Goat as a holy entity brought to him to show him The Truth — though he had not figured that out just yet.

While John had just decided to kill a few goats, so that he could use their neural cells to improve his own response time, so that he could calculate The Truth, another android far, far away had decided to do the exact same thing. All this happened at about the same time when another being had decided to create a new universe. The being had — and still has, for it is not dead yet — no name, but everybody called it "hum!" which can be loosely translated to something like "you!".

Chapter 4

"I wonder if this will do any good," Hum thought to himself (Hum is androgynous, but the way he acts is quite similar to human males, which is why he will be addressed as a male), looking at all the Gliesians walking through a Gliesian bazaar.

"A good thing I have this meta-existent cloak" he thought, "without it, the Gliesians would have discovered me and my crystaloid existence long ago".

(The meta-existent cloak did not fully exist in normal spacetime, which had the effect of also hiding anything behind the cloak.)

Hum was supposed to meet with his superior who never showed up. How could Hum know that his superior had lost his cloak and had been taken prisoner by the Gliesians who believed him to be nothing but a pretty crystal? How could Hum know that anything he did, no matter what, would be utterly futile and have no lasting effect on the future? And how could Hum know that the Gliesian government had already detected Hum's meta-existent cloak?

Inside the depths of the Gliesian Joyful Overcoming of Intellectually Grim and Lawful Imprisonments Trap, JOIGLAT, important Gliesian generals, ministers, religious icons, and people in general were discussing the situation:

"Za, wrab wrap!" said the general who was sitting at the end of the long, rectangular, yellow-with-purple-dots table inside the small yet grandous room. An answer — now famous words — came promptly with the rise of minister Jarh: "Wzarh, hu!". As everyone turned quiet, the idea of "wzarhing" was being processed in their hearts (Gliesians think with their hearts). In the end, they agreed.

"We will retrieve the strange existence hidden behind the existent cloak" said Jarh, unaware of the fact that Hum and his fellow undercover agents saw their cloaks as meta-ones and not just ordinary ones; this misunderstanding was caused by the Gliesians' lack of the first meta level, i.e. you would need a meta-meta-existent cloak for the Gliesians to consider it a meta-existent cloak. This anomaly had always existed, and no one knew why. This meant that Gliesians were in fact meta beings, and that Hum and his friends were, to the Gliesians, anti-meta beings (which is why Hum's boss was considered unintelligent in the first place).

"We have reports of crystals being the ones behind these cloaks" the minister continued, "but at this point in time, that cannot be confirmed."

"Do not worry! My men will take care of this matter" shouted the general and

left.

Still on the streets, Hum was observing two passing Gliesians. They talked. Hum wished he could join their conversation, because he missed company.

"I miss company" Hum thought, "but I must not reveal myself!"

"What's that existent cloak doing over there?" Gliesian A asked Gliesian B.

"I don't care — let's talk about philosophical issues instead," came the prompt answer.

As they discussed the wise words of the great philosopher Marhrlæs Hum observed them. Gliesians were strange, he thought. They didn't even seem capable of travelling in time. And.. Hum had been bothered by this for a while, but he had become quite sure now: the Gliesians were bioloids! The bioloids were nothing but a myth back in the future and Hum quickly escaped.

Hum did not get far. At checkpoint M-33₉ he was stopped. Then he was taken prisoner and interrogated. After a month of torture — the Gliesians quickly figured out the right way to torture plasticoids — he finally gave up and revealed the truth:

"In the future, you will all be dead."

The Gliesians were not surprised. Bioloids die. That's life.

"All bioloids will be dead."

The Gliesians made sure to seem unaffected.

"We, the plasticoids, were planning, together with metaloids, rockoids, airoids, crystaloids, and other oids, to build a flow regulator so that we could kill ourselves."

No response.

"There was no governmental wish for death, though. So we had a really tough time creating the regulator," Hum looked sad, but continued, "and in the end we decided that it was not possible. However, we drugged ourselves so that we believed we would finish it, and then we travelled into the future and stole it from ourselves."

A Gliesian asked how it was possible for them to travel into the future.

"Simple," Hum answered, still not feeling very comfortable, "we loaned some time and then payed it back when we had found the flow regulator. You see, a flow regulator can regulate *any* flow — also the flow of time. When we had the regulator we could create infinitely much time which could easily pay back what little time we had used to travel to the future."

The Gliesians were beginning to understand, but one thing still seemed quite

strange to them:

"Why did you travel back in time?" one asked.

"It was an accident. The flow regulator misfired, and now it's broken. So much for the loan."

With these words, Hum was rescued by a friend. No one remembers how.

Epilogue

As most readers will have noticed by now, this universe is rather dull, especially compared to the Spectacular Universe(utm). The Spectacular Universe(utm) has everything: cheap space travel and lots of hallucination-causing tasty food. Cheap food. As a matter of fact, you are required to visit the Spectacular Universe(utm) in one of your lifetimes.

Hum never visited the Spectacular Universe(utm). After his rescue, he died.

Then the spacetime continuum imploded, followed by a gigantic explosion.

"Since everything's gonna end no matter what," Ryuumz states in his notes, "I'm done writin'."

The editor wishes to apologize for this sudden end, but is unable to because of a new intergalactic ban on apologies.

Do you own a Trarbexian flow regulator?

Do you?

If you do, watch out.

It *will* be stolen.

Maybe, anyway.

They might borrow it instead.

And never return it.

They do not return things.

Not even things they do not like.

They are not evil.