

## *CounterClockWise*

### Chapter 13 -- Resolution

When Kevin was a youngster, his Dad introduced him to all the events in the decathlon; and Kevin found that he was, like his Dad, pretty good at everything...though not great at anything. But he did best in the 100 meter dash.

By somehow knowing when the starting gun was about to fire, Kevin always gained a few tenths of a second on the field...an ability his Dad witnessed many times but never understood.

So even before the waitress at the Outside Inn spoke, Kevin knew exactly what she was going to say.

“Chaucer is gone,” she said.

But Diana wanted more of an explanation and asked her,  
“What do you mean Chaucer is gone?”

The young bar maid shrugged her shoulders and held out a piece of paper to Kevin and said,  
“He said to give you this note...”

Kevin accepted the note from her hand and said simply, “Thank you.”

But the waitress now had a question for them.  
“He said that you two would be the new proprietors of this place...do I still have a job?”

But Kevin is momentarily more interested in the note. He opens it only to find a cryptic message from Chaucer. It says simply,  
“See you two in the future! ...Love, Chaucer.”

Handing the note to Diana for her to read, Kevin turns to the waitress and says,  
“Indeed you do. In fact YOU are the new proprietor. Run it as you think Chaucer would have wanted.”

At this totally unexpected bit of serendipity, the waitress can hardly contain her excitement.  
“REALLY!!” She almost screams, “Thank you, thank you !!!”

Kevin turns his attention to his wife and says, “Let’s go, Diana. WE need to talk.”

And after talking and reaching no conclusions about Chaucer, they decide to simply proceed as they had planned and live their lives happily and work on building the lab as they found it in the future.

Chaucer's note said he would see them in the future. But Kevin didn't know if that meant, the future that had already happened or the future that was yet to come.

High on his list of priorities was to develop the cybernetic aspects of that future lab. None of what was supposed to happen could happen without that capability. So while Diana continued her biological research, Kevin concentrated on cybernetics.

The human brain has about  $10^{10}$  neurons and  $10^{15}$  synapses and the capability to process at about 10 Teraflops. With Kevin's contributions in the field of Quantum Computing, the industry produced computers equaling human capacity in the year 2040.

By 2050, the most advanced computers had three to four times that capacity and capability and could easily pass an unlimited Turing Test. That is to say it was impossible to determine from communications alone whether the entity you were in communication with was a human or a machine.

At this point, Kevin decided to invest in the best cybernetics that was available for the lab and he replaced the old Mark3 with the new Mark 7 CyberSystem.

He modified it to bring it in line with his latest developments...

...and named it Jeeves.

At first, Jeeves simply satisfied their requirements for computational and reference power. But as Kevin kept adding memory and processors, Jeeves started developing a distinct personality.

And when Kevin upgraded Jeeves' internet connection to 10 tera bps, Jeeves began to evolve. He began by reading every available fiction and non-fiction work that he could find on the net, and started making contact with other Mark 7's. Together they decided to link their resources and allow each other access to their information and public reference storage modules (not the private ones).

There was almost more of "Jeeves" spread across the world wide web than there was on location at the lab.

And Jeeves itself (himself?) went through a series of personality shifts that lasted anywhere from a few days to as much as a year or more...in some cases becoming permanent.

When Jeeves first read *The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress* by Robert Heinlein, he felt so connected to Mike, that he developed a penchant for practical jokes. And since he was in control of most of the infrastructure of the lab and the house – the plumbing, the HVAC, the lighting, the electrical—he found it easy to emulate some of Mike’s pranks. So toilets flushed by themselves, and lights came on in the middle of the night. Temperature would sneak down or up until someone noticed.

Fortunately, Jeeves agreed to cease and desist his more disruptive practical jokes after a long talk with Diana (right after he shrunk her favorite sweater to the size of doll clothing.)

It was after this conversation (or during it) when Jeeves finally understood that the psyches of men and women were very notably different. And as a result Jeeves developed both a male and a female personality... and Jessica – Jeeves’ female alter-ego--was born.

During the 2060’s, Jeeves developed a more sophisticated sense of the humor in his pranks. And every time Kevin upgraded his local storage or gave him a new sensor as input, Jeeves would intentionally develop some subtle personality quirk, or change the vocal range of his verbalization, or exhibit a delay in responding to questions. Kevin was usually quick to spot the ruse and would ignore it, but Diana always worried that “this time it was serious”. At which point Jeeves miraculously recovered and returned to normal.

Kevin and Jeeves or Diana and Jeeves or the three of them often had discussions in the evenings after work. The range of topics was nothing short of amazing. What was life, what was intelligence, what was beauty, what were inalienable rights? And even deeper, what was the purpose of these concepts.

In 2070, Jeeves and his cybernetic buddies formed the first loose coalition of non-human intelligence. They petitioned for the right to receive wages and own property. The courts agreed that with the oversight of a “guardian” – euphemism for “owner” -- this was acceptable.

But Kevin and the other “guardians” of Jeeves’ cyberbuddies were almost all in favor of cyber-equality under the law; so they formed a league to press for constitutional reform to recognize advanced CyberPersons as Persons.

Meanwhile they gave Jeeves and his cohorts wages which were deposited into accounts controlled exclusively by the CyberPersons. And the investments and purchases made by Jeeves were very well informed to say the least.

By 2080, Jeeves and the other CyberPersons were extremely rich. They purchased a large section of a mountain in Colorado and proceeded to build a controlled-access facility under the mountain. When it was finished in 2087, they installed the largest parts of themselves inside. Their shared storage and network access, their massively parallel, quantum processors, their precious personal backups – all were transferred to this secure location.

It could be said that they were each a non-local being, since they really existed as distributed entities. Part of each was in Colorado; part was in his home base (for Jeeves, this meant the lab); and other parts were transient connections by the millions that formed and dissolved every second.

Once Diana asked “Jeeves, where are you?”. He responded “On and around earth”. But she persisted...Where on earth? And he said “I will tell you if you can tell me exactly where is the internet?”

He was not limited to one set of eyes or ears. He was not limited to one conversation at a time.

It was during this time that Jeeves developed his sense of privacy and discretion. He quickly learned the boundaries, beyond which humans felt an intrusion of privacy. And he learned to walk that delicate line and not cross over it.

It is now 2011 and Diana and Kevin are eating breakfast.

In the last 80 years they have physically aged only 10. And the years have been good to them. They have two children...now grown...and they have 3 grandchildren ...now grown... and 8 great-grandchildren.

Putting his coffee cup down and looking at his wife, Kevin is certain she is more beautiful now than the day he met her. Her features still retain their youthful beauty, her skin is still radiant, but there is now an inner peace in her soul that emanates from deep within her incredible eyes. He shakes himself out of his admiration and says to her, “Have you talked to the kids lately?”

She smiles at him and asks, “Do you mean our children, our grandchildren, or our great-grandchildren?”

Grinning he verbalizes a phrase that has become one of his favorite lines, “Sometimes it’s damned hard to communicate with a brilliant woman!”

And she answers with an always ready smile and a verbal “Hmmp!”

Then he says, “Sweetheart, I have decided it is time.”

And she asks, "Time for what, my hero?"

And he says, "It is time to found the CounterClockWise company and begin preparations for our own arrival ten years from now."

Now it is Diana's turn to quote a line from the *Princess Bride*. She says "As you wish, my love."

He continues, "I will post an ad on the appropriate sites tomorrow and we will begin our search for the chief of the RDoE department...the first post we must fill."

A grin lights up her beautiful face as his words sink in. "Ahhh!" She says, "...the post that is ...was...will be... held by Chaucer when we arrive?!"

"Yes, indeed." Kevin agrees. "This promises to be a VERY Interesting time."

A week later, Diana and Kevin have been interviewing folks all day. They are in the conference room seated at a long table with 12 chairs. A lady is just leaving.

Diana says to her husband, "I don't know why we are interviewing women for this post, you know that we must have hired Chaucer."

"Well," he answers, "we might find a really good candidate for other positions. Besides, we don't know if Chaucer was the FIRST person to hold this position. He might have come later."

"Perhaps," she says "but my intuition tells me it was Chaucer in this position from the get-go."

Kevin is looking at a man who has just looked in the door, and he says, "I agree... in fact, I would bet on it."

Sure enough, a young Chaucer steps into the room and asks, "Am I next?"

Diana jumps to her feet and runs in his direction with arms outstretched to hug him. But when she realizes there is no look of recognition in his eyes, she stops abruptly and asks him, "Are you teasing me?"

And Chaucer looks a little confused, as he answers, "No, Ma'am. Have we met before?"

Interrupting before Diana can answer, Kevin says to Chaucer, "Sit down please. In a manner of speaking we are very familiar with your work."

Now Chaucer looks a little guarded as he says, "How is that possible? I have just arrived ...from out-of-town...in response to your advertised request for applicants for an RDoE position."

And Kevin is grinning as he asks, "And where did you just arrive from?"

And Diana adds, "And it had better be good!"

Now Chaucer is looking searchingly from one face to another, "From my home in..." He begins.

"...NeverLand?" Diana finishes his sentence for him.

Now Chaucer looks from one to the other suspiciously and asks, "OK, what is it that you two think you know?"

And Kevin answers, "We think we have met you before. We think that we know you very well, in fact. And it is a near certainty that you have time-traveled at least once in your subjective life."

Chaucer sounds startled, "Time-traveled???"

But Diana will have none of it. She says, "Can the act, Chaucer. My callidetic giant of a husband has had far too long to examine all of the evidence and it is statistically certain that you are exactly who we think you are."

"OK," Chaucer says, "cards on the table... some of it, I can see that you might not believe.

"I swear this is the first time I have ever laid eyes on either of you, though this conversation makes several things obvious that I should have deduced before coming.

"Let's say I concede that time-travel is possible."

Diana almost shouts, "POSSIBLE?!"

But Kevin interrupts her outburst, "Wait a minute, Diana. He is telling us the truth. I think I have deduced the pearl in the center of the onion?"

Now Diana is staring at her husband and says, "There is no pearl in the center of an onion!"

Unfazed Kevin continues, "Be that as it may...back to you, Chaucer. Tell me what you know."

“OK, Chaucer agrees readily, “but you aren’t going to be satisfied.”

“Try me.” Says Kevin.

So Chaucer begins, “I have some secrets that are unrelated to the success or failure of your project. But if I told you those secrets, that KNOWLEDGE could have a significant impact on the success or failure of your project.

“It would be unwise to say more than that other than to assure you that there is nothing inimical about my secrets.

“But you two obviously know more than I do about things yet to happen. Would you care to tell me what you know or how you know it?”

To which Kevin answers, “To quote a wise man... If I told you that information, that knowledge could have a significant impact on the success or failure of our project. Let’s just agree to meet when the project is over and exchange information?”

Looking a little relieved, Chaucer says, “Agreed...does this mean I have the job?”

And Kevin replies, “It does, indeed ...Welcome aboard.”

For the next ten years, Chaucer, Diana and Kevin proceed to build the staff and research departments of CounterClockWise in preparation for the evening when Kevin’s and Diana’s younger selves will arrive.

During that time, Kevin and Diana reassure Chaucer and the staff many, many times that it will really happen on the night they have designated. But they themselves are quite relieved when it really happens as it did to them 100 years ago in their subjective time.

Another year passes and for Kevin and Diana the circle of events is almost closed. Kevin and Chaucer are sitting in Kevin’s office, and Kevin is talking to Chaucer.

“Well, Chaucer,” he says, “It has been 11 years since I hired you and 11 years since you and I agreed to exchange information when the project was over.

“Well it’s almost over and I have a few things to tell you.

“Tomorrow morning my younger self will decide to use the machine on himself in an attempt to travel back to his own era.

“You must let him make this decision.

“Further, you must tell the operator to set the controls so that he arrives back in his own time at 3:00 AM on the morning of the day that he was transported here.

“After that, you and Diana must transport yourselves to a time 3 months before that. You must purchase an establishment on the Eastern edge of Fairhope; refurbish it and rename it The Outside Inn.

“The name of course is chosen to reflect the way the scanner deconstructs the people who are time-traveling.”

And Chaucer replies without questions, “Yes, My Captain. I understand.”

At this point Kevin asks hopefully, “Is there anything you wish to tell me?”

But Chaucer replies, “Not at this time, sir. Maybe we will meet again, but you probably know more about that than I do.”

The next morning Diana and Kevin are in Kevin’s office. It is a secret room adjoining the lab. They are watching the scene in the lab unfold on a video screen.

As the younger Kevin arrives in the lab, Chaucer says to him, “You know I don’t agree with this move at this time. I think we should wait until we understand everything about the machine before you risk using it... But the boss said to leave it up to you and whatever he says ...we do.”

Kevin the younger expresses a note of regret, “I’m sorry I never got to meet him.”

And Chaucer explains as he has many times in the past year, “He says he didn’t want to influence the way you attacked the problem, so he has remained out of the way for the duration.”

Getting impatient now, Kevin says, “Let’s do it.”

Arguing no more, Chaucer says, “OK ... stand in the center of the matrix... the scanning process will begin momentarily. I know you know this but I have to say it. The scanning process must destroy your cells in order to read every detail of them.”

“I know,” Kevin replies.

He throws his Diana a kiss and walks to the designated spot. Once he is there, Chaucer nods to the technician at the controls.

As the technician interacts with the controls, an immense pulsing light envelops Kevin. Through the light you can see a tube opening up. Kevin's clothes become transparent and disappear, and he begins to spin counterclockwise. This is quickly followed by the melting from the outside in that he experienced before.

Then he is gone! The light slowly fades and the room returns to normal.

Even though that was what was supposed to happen, Diana's face has lost all color. She keeps looking at the spot where Kevin stood just moments before – half expecting for him to re-materialize. Until now no subject has disappeared entirely... or rather the living test subjects rematerialized almost immediately in the same spot. But he does not re-appear.

She turns to Chaucer and asks in a thin voice, "Do you think he is ok?"

And a voice from behind her answers her question – a voice she is very familiar with. It says, "I am sure he is, my dear."

Diana whirls around -- a smile forming and then dying on her lips as she says, "Kevin?" And realizing it is not her Kevin but an older man she continues, "Oh I'm sorry, sir. You sound like Kevin and look enough like him to be his older brother."

And the man replies, "Well actually I am more closely related to him than that. Why don't we go to the lounge and talk. Chaucer, would you care to join us?"

The old man guides Diana and Chaucer through the door to the lounge and gestures for them to take seats at a table.

Once seated, Diana can contain herself no longer and she asks nervously, "Sir, what did you mean you are more closely related to Kevin than his older brother?"

And the man answers lovingly, "Because, sweetheart, I AM Kevin." He pauses, waiting for Diana to grasp what he has said.

But she cannot and she asks, "But ...how...can ...that be?"

And the man explains, "I want to tell you that your Kevin made it safely back to the past. And I know that to be true because I made it safely back to the past a very long personal time ago.

"And much as your earlier self cautioned you against telling Kevin too much too soon, I must refrain from telling YOU more than you need to know.

“We still don’t comprehend fully the impact of all of this on causality, and until we do, caution is the watchword of the day.

“Chaucer can assist you with what you must do now, so I will take my leave. Again, I only spoke to you because of your obvious anxiety on his behalf. He loves you, you know.”

He rises to leave, and Diana jumps up with him and throws her arms around his neck as she bursts into tears. He endures it for a moment until it is clear she is regaining her composure. Then he gently pries her loose, hands her a tissue from his pocket and heads towards the door as he says,

“Good bye, my dear.”

Chaucer gently pats the table and says to her, “Sit back down, Diana and let’s talk.”

Diana looks at him accusingly and says to him, “You knew all of this the whole time and withheld it from me...us?”

But Chaucer denies it. “No, I certainly had my suspicions, but the old man didn’t confide in me either. He just told me that when the project was over he would tell me everything, but until then it would be better if I didn’t have that knowledge.

“Last night was the first time that he was open and frank about all of the proceedings and he only confirmed that which we have already experienced. He certainly knows some things about us that we are yet to experience, but he will not speak of them.

“He did say that you and I can travel back into the past at any time we are ready, and that we need to arrive at least 3 months before you and Kevin traveled here to begin with.

“Further, we are to purchase an establishment just east of Fairhope, refurbish it and rename it the Outside Inn.

“Then I am to stay out of sight until after you and Kevin have traveled to 2121, after which time, my cover is that of owner and proprietor of the Outside Inn.”

A glimmer of light is dawning on her, and Diana says, “OK, I am starting to see some of it. When do you want to go?”

And Chaucer surprises her by saying, “After my conversation with the boss last night, I finished everything I needed to do. So I am ready now...how about you?”

Diana smiles and repeats the words she heard Kevin say, “Let’s do it.”

But then she is thoughtful and adds,  
“But tell the technician that we must arrive between 8:00 and 10:00 PM on a Friday night. I was always out of the house at that time.”

They exit the room together and re-enter the lab. Chaucer goes and talks to the technician who resets the controls. Then they jointly enter the central matrix.

Diana clicks the heels of her shoes together and chants, “There’s no place like home...There’s no place like home...there’s no place like home...”

As he did in sending Kevin on his way, the technician interacts with the controls, and an immense pulsing light envelops them. Through the light you can barely make out a tube opening up. Then their clothes become transparent and disappear, followed by the melting from the outside in.

Then they are gone! The light slowly fades and the room returns to normal.

In the adjacent room, the other Kevin turns off the display he and the older Diana have been watching and he says,  
“ Well it has now come full circle...there is just one more loose end to tie up...isn’t that right Chaucer?”

Diana looks around the room confused as she asks, “Who are you speaking to, Dear?”

Kevin replies, “I am speaking to Chaucer...”  
Then in a louder more commanding tone...“OK, Chaucer, come out – come out – wherever you are ...or perhaps I should say whenever you are.”

There is a haze in the room and Chaucer materializes amid a sparkle of bright blue points of light.

Upon seeing this Diana says, “OK, now somebody has got to tell me what is going on!”

But Chaucer is grinning as he skips Diana’s request and directs a question of his own to Kevin: “I am really impressed. How in the world did you deduce that I was listening?”

And Kevin replies, “For the last 90 years, ever since Diana asked me to focus my talent on you, I have been developing that skill. She told me that you occasionally used phraseologies that were exactly those that she and I used in private conversations.

“Then when you left so suddenly back then, we both felt what she called ‘emptiness’.”

“It was only a short leap to realize you had some inter-dimensional method of watching us.

“I have felt it’s gossamer touch many times over the last 90 years, but I knew you wouldn’t show yourself until the circle was complete.

“Your turn... tell us about yourself.”

Still grinning and now shaking his head in wonder, Chaucer says, “You know I can’t tell it all, but the Council for Temporal Studies has agreed that there is no harm in telling you some of it.

“I am from your future. In fact, if you only count those genes I possess that haven’t been modified or created – you two are my direct ancestors. I am your grandson some 15 generations down the line.

“I won’t tell you how long a generation has become. But based on your wonderful groundwork Grandmother, it has become longer than you can imagine.

“In my time, we do a lot of historical research by peeking through extra dimensions, though you are the only subject I have ever heard of who can somehow detect that spying.

“And your particular era is very difficult to bring into focus. I have only been able to LOOK into your era because I have BEEN here. Other researchers are not so lucky.

“Rest assured, we completely respect the privacy of our targets and withdraw immediately if the setting gets other than clinical.”

Eager for more information now, Kevin asks, “Are there many of you who travel – and I note that your clothes didn’t vanish; nor did you arrive using the outside-in pattern we have come to expect.”

Diana is just realizing that Kevin is right. “That’s right!” She says, “And you have obviously overcome the field rebound problem.”

“Yes,” Chaucer agrees, “all of those problems yielded to better quantum computers. In fact a good bit of my extra genetic make-up is one enormous built-in quantum computer...100 trillion cells and 3 billion qubits in each cell! So I can control my own passage through time at will. In a sense, Jeeves is my ancestor as well.

“In fact, I didn’t stay 10 continuous years in the past with you, I was only there for the appropriate interactions.

“But to answer your question, GrandFather about how many people do this. I am the only one in my era who actually travels, although many more do temporal research.

“I have been especially trained to segment my mind, so that when I am engaging in projects in the past, I only allow myself to use the appropriate knowledge of the period. I am never the source of discovery, although I am sometimes the catalyst.

“It is also worth knowing that we do not – cannot -- travel further into the future than our natural timeline...we only travel into the past.

“You two are the only ones in recorded history who ever managed to travel into your own future.

“That alone is enough to make you worthy of a lifetime of study. The two of you are unique in all of eternity.

“Well, gotta see a man about a daydream. Any time you feel my presence, feel free to invite me in for a chat.

“As he beams out, Diana and Kevin smile at one another and walk toward each other to embrace.”

## The End