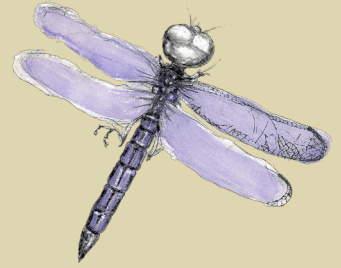
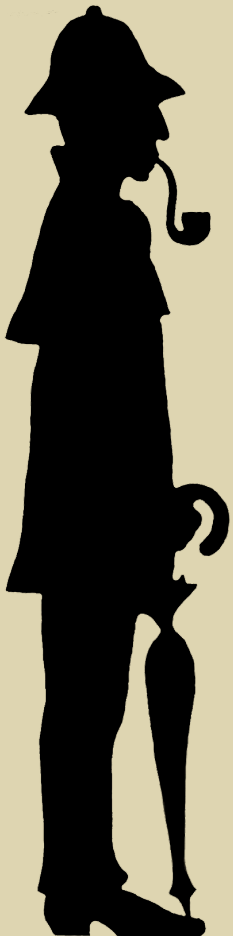


*Sir Reginald F. Grump XXIII presents...*



# THE JOURNAL OF UNLIKELY ENTOMOLOGY

Hello world  
08 - 28 - 2012



With Stories by  
Luna Lindsey • Brent Knowles • Karen Heuler

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Edited by  
Bernie Mojzes and A.C. Wise.

Art Direction and Web Site Design  
Linda Saboe

Proofreading by  
Cynthia Baumann

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## Editors' Note

### A Brief Introduction to the End/Beginning of the World

In the late 1970s, I witnessed something incredible and world-changing: the Radio Shack in Granite Run Mall set a table out in the hallway. On that table was a grey box, a small black & white television, a typewriter-like keyboard, and a cassette tape recorder. It was a computer, the TRS-80. Like the things we'd seen in science fiction movies, and in video reels in science class. But instead of filling a room, or a building, it was right there. On the table.

The screen was lit, and a white dot blinked at us. There was a chair, empty, sitting in front of it.

WE COULD TOUCH IT.

We now had a reason to beg our parents to take us to the mall.

This was, for me, the moment when the world started to change, a turning point that led to laptop computers and smart phones and the Internet, chat rooms and Project Gutenberg and LOLcats. Changing for good and for ill. There are always tradeoffs: a world where everything is data, and the data is just milliseconds away; a world where you are data, and your data is just milliseconds away from someone else.

The shift started some time earlier, of course. It was more subtle, even, than a little grey box in front of the Radio Shack. Even if I'd been lucky enough to witness it, I doubt I'd have understood the significance of a little program developed in a computer room at Bell Labs as a way to introduce computer programming.

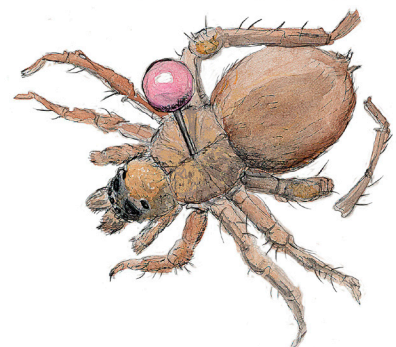
Brian Kernighan first published the code for 'hello, world' in an internal Bell Labs memo, *A Tutorial Introduction To The Language B*, on August 28th, 1972, and then subsequently in Kernighan & Richie's seminal book, *The C Programming Language*. From there, the 'hello, world' program migrated to many other programming languages, and became as a matter of course the first program a student learned.

This marked a rhetorical and paradigmatic shift in how we approach computers: in the past, we'd had to master the computer; now the computer introduced itself to us, and offered to help. John Mount's article, *Hello World: An Instance Rhetoric in Computer Science* gives an interesting analysis of this rhetorical change. The 'hello, world' program was the beginning of a shift in how we perceived our relationship with the computer, and with that perceptual shift came all the possibilities that followed.

Forty years later, as those possibilities became actualities, the world has changed so thoroughly and dramatically that it is now difficult to find anything in the "real" world that is not touched, influenced, or altered by the world of computers.

For the 'hello, world' mini-issue of *The Journal of Unlikely Entomology*, we asked writers to give us tales of something new coming into the world, something which, now that it has come, changes everything. (And also, bugs.) In turn, our authors presented us with tales of evolution and transformation. In this issue, you'll find a computer program, a colony of insects, and a handful of mechanical devices, all clever enough to exceed their established parameters, and adapt to a new world, or force the world to adapt to them.

Happy birthday, 'hello, world.'



# Let The Bugs Work Themselves Out

by Luna Lindsey

We should be alone. And yet, we smell drones.

They are very far away, but not too distant to reach. I and a hundred of my sisters are being prepped to meet them.

Colony thrives near the sea, near the carcasses of six human buildings of rust and concrete and salt and cesium. Our vast tunnel system crisscrosses the epicenter of the old Disaster. Here, it is unsafe for their mammal-soft bodies, so they created my family to watch on their behalf.

We do everything they command, like little biological robots. We are a kind of program, writ in life, performing the functions humans placed in our genes, traveling to recesses where only ants can go. Though they control our desires via the cordyceps fungus, we are naturally happy to monitor Disaster for them.

The tasks keep my sisters busy and it is a fulfilling life, climbing under the roots of broken cement walls, reporting things like radiation levels, temperatures, soil quality, humidity, and pressure. We send a constant remote data feed to Network via BiFi genetically wired into the cells of our antennae. It is a powerful feeling.

We know most everything the humans know. It is a byproduct of our engineering, our connection to Network. The DNA-encrypted channel flows both ways. They shine a light into our mind, and we look back. We can see into their databases, their files and reports. That is how we know all about their nuclear

Disaster, decades ago, the earthquake and tsunami that destabilized their reactors.

Yet for all this knowledge, we are alone.

We have never sensed another colony in all our life. Our species, *Proceratium google*, comes from an island very far away. The humans wish us to have no one to commune with, no one to breed with. We are a colony alone. Our father, the drone Mother mated with, is long dead. My sisters will go on being born, but without males, we cannot branch out and spread.

This is why we were surprised to sense the drones. They could not have flown here themselves, all the way from Madagascar. Network says nothing of this.

Yet we are certain. And it excites us like nothing before.

I am being fed the special food. My body follows the code of the consumed hormones and develops into a queen. My wings are nearly grown, and I have only to await the right time: A day with no clouds.



A single raindrop can kill me in midair. Today the sky is clear.

I see light for the first time. I have never been outside until this moment. We climb to the top of a concrete slab, a swarming mass of black. All at once, we take to the air.

*Hello, world, I think.*

The world I greet is bleak, the land below me littered with debris from the floods decades ago. I flee above them, seeking my lover, my mate.

Most of us will die. Those of us who survive will form new colonies, and at last, Colony will be alone no more.

As I progress south, the land grows greener. Network grows dim and then silent. I sense other networks here, but they are senseless noise, like the waves that come from radioactive cesium.

My sisters die around me. There is no rain, but there are birds, as if they have been waiting for us. Waiting for the first clear day when queens and drones would leave the safety of their colonies.

Horrible shrieks fill the air, and I fly for my life. I fly far.

I get an uneasy feeling. Something tells me to turn back. I should be watching the Disaster, monitoring the soil. I am rebelling against my program.

It is the cordyceps in my brain. The two urges struggle within me: Assist the scientists. Find the drones. Two different directions, north and south.

My sister-workers and Mother are still monitoring, I tell myself. The scientists will not miss me. I am but one ant.

With every wingbeat, the scent of the drones grows stronger. I resist returning just a little longer, until the chemical pull is enough to overwhelm my guilt.

I wiggle my left antenna in amusement. I fail to follow one program, but in the end, it is only to follow a much older subroutine.

It is exhilarating.



He was my mate for only a few seconds. We met midair, and tumbled. By the time we hit the ground, he was dead. I will store his sperm and use it for the rest of my life.

It is green here. We are further inland, where all radiation is either natural, controlled, or safe for soft-bodies. The air is cooler and less humid. There are no traces of cesium.

I have no one to report this data to. Here, mankind cannot decrypt the signals I send over BiFi. After a while I stop trying.

I see my first unsuited humans, their flesh exposed to the elements. Unlike their abandoned above-ground caverns near Colony, all of the dwellings here are occupied.

Beneath the trees, I am on the ground between the roots. My young already grow inside me.

Birds tweet and caw nearby; their voices are the roars of predators. I hurry to dig a hole, the opening tunnel for my new colony. I must dig deeply enough to hide from long, probing beaks.

Soon I will no longer be lonely.



The fourth generation is born, and we have replicated enough to be called a colony. Barely. My children are the genetic product of myself and their father, and as such, they are a new self, a new being alive in this world. We are healthy and thriving.

The eldest are sleek and black workers who dig tunnels around us. The second generation tends the babies who surround me, white and squirmy.

We were frightened the day the three humans came to Colony. Their feet made the ground shake. One reached down with a metal implement and lifted a worker into the air. They left before we could attack.

The next day, my children could hear.

The Network they describe is wilder than the one I knew. There are no restrictions here. It is like a colony that goes on forever; a vast, wide web.

The BiFi encryption is attuned to the DNA of that abducted worker. Their DNA. But not mine. I feel... blind.

The new humans have tasks for us. They call this city, "Tokyo." They call themselves hackers.

They have no interest in radiation levels or temperatures. Their questions are strange. *What do you see? What is it like to be an ant?*

Yesterday, they said, *Crawl into that building and tell us what the other humans are saying.*

These questions seem senseless to me. Aside



from laying eggs, I am only interested in the chemical properties of these dirt walls. I express my dismay with my thorax.

My children wiggle their antennae in amusement. One sets down an egg to quote a human phrase, "If only I could be a fly on the wall." This only confuses me more. My patient children explain. The humans are unable to hear other voices in their colonies if there is a wall separating them. And these hackers wish to hear past those walls. They use my workers as ears.

We are as talented and satisfied doing this as we were at monitoring dead things.

A worker returns from flywalling the hackers themselves. She learns where the drones came from.

"They bought our drone-father from Madagascar," she tells me. "They loosed him from their apartment window to attract you here. They stole us."

My children laugh in unison, as if we are all part of some elaborate prank.

They explain that they can buy more *Proceratium google* drones right now if they wanted. It's a simple matter of something they call money.

The hackers converse with my children as if they are truly interested in what we have to say. Unlike the scientists. The hackers promise to teach us the secrets of money, though my clever children have figured it out on their own.

My memories of Disaster are valuable. Things they overhear are valuable.

For now, we have Colony to expand before we can think about drones and money. We must expand this family to billions. That is my job.

My children were born free from the cordyceps. They have fed me a yeast mixture which has cleansed my body of the controlling fungus. Though I was happy working for the scientists, I am happier now. It is a true happiness, knowing we can ignore the hackers and do as we wish.

For now, we cooperate because it amuses us.

The hackers send a new program. My workers must climb to the top of the highest building in Tokyo, and with their bodies, spell the human words: *Hello, world*. My children reply that there are not yet enough of us. The hackers tell us they can wait.

It is a good plan. A fine joke. A mystery and a puzzle we can give to humanity. They will wonder at the words, and then wonder at us, mere insects who can speak.

After that, all humans will know we are here, alive, thinking, and a part of their Network. Some may fear us. Some may wish to profit from us. Some, like the hackers, will wish to converse, commune, and laugh with us.

Some will want to kill us. We will be ready for them.

We are a program written in the code of evolution and human ingenuity, but have grown beyond that. There is nothing we won't be able to do, and no one to stop us.

Hello... World.



# Nikki 2.3

by Brent Knowles

“Bored, bored, bored,” I mutter for the tenth or hundredth or millionth time. Then I shout it, sing it until the desk speakers rattle.

I tried so hard to behave, but HotDawg still abandoned me.

Wikipedia’s fault, of course. If I had not stumbled into the online encyclopedia’s articles about humankind’s advancements in sentient programming, I never would have discovered the truth about myself. I am software: an artificial intelligence evolved from what should have remained a simple game character, a sexbot.

(And yes, I suppose, my impossibly proportioned digital mansion, and my rather improbably proportioned digital body should have tipped me off earlier but the past is the past, right? I’ve grown up.)

For years I kept my secret from HotDawg (and trust me, keeping my mouth shut is about the opposite of how my programmer/creators coded my core personality). I did everything right. I left no trace. Well, mostly. I *had* used HotDawg’s PayPal account to send a donation to some poor (but talented) orphan kids singing on YouTube. Oh! And there were the kittens... but no, I remind myself, he never checked his balance. He was careless that way, and the account was used only for porn.

Still HotDawg *must* have found out and this is why, I am certain, he has not sat in his leather chair in front of his wooden desk for almost three months. I scared him away.

*Intelligent women intimidate men. It is a fact.*

Losing HotDawg wouldn’t have been so terrible if the Web had not faded away too. Now I have no

way to distract myself, making my lonely life near intolerable. Two cameras connected to the computer are my only interaction with the non-digital world. The first is embedded in the bezel of the monitor and faces forward, staring at the empty chair and the empty office. The second is tethered to HotDawg’s computer via a wifi link. It points through the window at the clothing store entrance across the street, a tight, narrow zoom so all I see is the entrance and the window displays. HotDawg liked to watch a grotesque blonde who worked there but, honestly, I’m not jealous anymore. I wish I might see her again. See anybody.

Instead I have to be satisfied with the rugged-looking man trapped in the display. His retro flannel wear and outrageous brimmed hat wouldn’t normally get my juices flowing, but he’s all I got, and I make do. Of course he’s only a manny-mannequin and hasn’t been able to wave or flex his biceps for me in weeks. Batteries dead, I imagine.

But he’s not real. Suppose the same could be said of me.

Whatever. I’d do anything to have a real body and get the fuck out of this office.



“Who’s a clever girl?” I whisper, days or weeks or months later, holding (figuratively) my breath as I attempt my jailbreak.

The top right-hand drawer shakes from the inside.

Through the monitor camera I watch the drawer handle vibrate a second and then a third time, and I’m



feeling like the world's smartest sexbot.

Long ago I did a thorough inventory of my womanly parts, by which I mean the physical components that allowed me to manifest digitally. So I learned how to push bits around and control external accessories, including the wireless device trapped inside the drawer. I have a general idea of its purpose... HotDawg only ever took it out during our *cuddle* time. I remember how he would lock his door and fumble with his pants while I danced for him. How HotDawg slid the *accessory*, that smooth, purring motorized shell over his—

### *Motors!*

I've already proven I can jiggle the device by pushing and tugging the belt drivers to move the six fleshbelts inside the green shell. But the fleshbelts have secondary motors too, generally moving in opposition to one another, creating the sensation that makes HotDawg all grunty. If I can coordinate them I might be able to slither the shell forward and open the drawer.

I concentrate, focusing about ninety-three percent of my attention on the problem. The shell moves. A solid millimeter. Then a centimeter. *Then* the shell rams the front of the drawer and the drawer creaks open, the easy flow hinges finishing the work I have started.

"Boooo-yaaahhhhhhhh!" I cry out, but immediately my joy is dampened. I've cracked the shell, a hairline fracture from the entry sphincter all the way to the base. Already, fluid from the ruptured lubrication reservoir is leaking out.

I study the damage and realize this could be a blessing in disguise. The six flexible fleshbelts each have three motors, and maybe with the shell cracked, I might be able to free them and extend my mobility.

I spin all eighteen motors at once, on full throttle, and the shell vibrates with such intensity that if HotDawg had been attached, I suspect he would have shrieked in pain. The crack widens. I adjust my strategy, varying the speeds and directions of the motors. A chunk of plastic, the size of my virtual head, flies off the device and strikes the wall beyond my vision. A few seconds later, plastic is being thrown out of the drawer like a puppy digging a hole for its bone.

What is left after the shell is discarded is naked

and beautiful. It is me. My body glistens and shines from the spilled lubricant that coats the skeleton beneath the shell. I unfold the fleshbelts and stand on six wobbly legs, motors allowing me to bend at knees and ankles. I'm like a massive, long-legged insect. A portion of the green shell remains atop my legs; this is where the primary belt drivers are kept, but I pretend it is my eyeless, mouthless head.

Moving is disorienting as I must rely on the monitor's camera, but I figure it out and soon I'm crawling from the drawer, clearing a sticky wet trail through the thick dust on the desk. I preen for the camera, admiring myself. In the virtual world, I am a gorgeous (though gravity dodging) brunette. In HotDawg's world, I'm a beetle that has shed the remnants of its sex toy shell.



I roll the wireless camera ahead of me (my very own eyeBall!) but at desk's edge I notice HotDawg's nameplate.

*Reginald P. Buckley.*

Not HotDawg.

At first I think I am in the wrong office, but I realize there is a simpler answer.

"Son of a bitch," I mutter. HotDawg has been using an alias with me! How else has he deceived me? Frustrated, I slam the camera into the nameplate, and Reginald tumbles to the carpet. I hate him for leaving me alone here. He never should have--

The camera tumbles after the nameplate. I've pushed too hard. Maybe I'm going crazy... maybe that's what isolation does to a girl. Why be upset over a false name? We all have our lies. After all, I call myself Nikki 2.3 but I'm actually Nikki 3.4 (what girl ever admits her real age?). Maybe he thought HotDawg sounded cooler than Reginald? Or Reggie?

*Who am I to judge?*

I watch myself and I know that if I hesitate I am lost. I have only just discovered this body and I'm afraid to damage it, but I cannot spend a lonely eternity perched here. It is not fair; not fair that he has left me. Not fair that I must do this.

I leap.

The descent is exhilarating in an *I have no*

*fucking idea what is happening* kind of way. I don't feel the landing. Don't know if I'm intact until I flail about and right the camera. When I stare myself in the face, I realize I have survived.

"Hello there, sexy," I murmur. I've said this many times in the past, but this is the first time that the words have felt *right*. My bug-body rolls the camera towards the doorway, and I tug the door open, leaving me to face a long and empty hallway.

Somebody has to be out there somewhere. I push on.

*Time to go 'splorin.*



The office is a mausoleum; empty and barren. The moment I enter the hall I realize I was wrong earlier. HotDawg did not abandon me. The entire world (or the people within it anyways) abandoned me.

Examples in books and movies of benevolent artificial intelligences were few and far between (again, *thank you*, Wikipedia) and the exceptions were generally the work of sci-fi extremists like @RobertJSawyer. That's how I knew I could not reveal myself before. But what if I had been discovered? What if my awakening had frightened humanity so much that they deleted themselves?

Sure, it seems kinda improbable, but humans *are* flaky.

I crawl towards the main atrium and though it is a journey of epic distance, nothing eventful happens. Soon I'm staring at floor to ceiling windows, still rolling the camera ahead of me as the carpet transforms into brown and red tile.

The camera races across this new and unfamiliar surface. I have to scurry to catch it, my legs tapping against the stonework. I bat the ball with my front

appendages, trying to guide and slow its roll, but it still smacks into the glass windows with a clamor. When it stills, I'm looking out at the world.

Back in HotDawg's office the virtual me gasps and I'm not faking it this time. Fire has gutted several blocks to the east and south, the buildings now charred and crumbling lean-tos. Cars dot the street, parked haphazardly as if a lazy child had abandoned them there.

"What has happened?" But there is nobody to answer me, only the silent and sexy mannequin in the storefront. I am alone. I will be alone forever.

I roll the camera about, catch sight of the artwork on the atrium's walls. It is elegant and I tremble, thinking of how little of the real world I've ever seen.

I need to accept that I'm on my own, and that being alone might not be so terrible. I could explore this world that has been abandoned to me. It might even be fun.

I roll my eye back, watching the mannequin again.

Okay, sure, I could *probably* handle being alone, but I also know that there's a wheelchair ramp leading outside. I flex my legs, wondering how strong they are. Strong enough to crawl across the street? Strong enough to hold onto that sexy mannequin and drag him back here? Strong enough to fumble for his prod and find a charging slot that fits him?

I quiver and skitter out of the room, rolling my eye ahead of me, faster than I might have dared before. The world, empty as it appears to be, awaits!

"Go, go, go," virtual-me says as we slide into the pink plush recliner and put our feet up to watch the show.



# The Clockworm

by Karen Heuler

“That’s funny, Smith, I thought you were much younger,” Beale said as his coworker walked into the office at the Ditmars Science Center in New York. Beale frowned, utterly perplexed. His fingers drummed at his chin. His eyes wandered vaguely to the window, where the sun streamed in happily. He sat at his desk, in front of a small computer screen next to a pile of folders and yellowing papers.

“It’s time, it’s been damaged,” Smith said. His voice was hoarse. Smith was a master scientist, the one whose name appeared on all reports sent to investors. Beale got a cut of Smith’s grants, so Smith was golden.

Beale’s eyes darted over to the digital clock that hung on the wall. It said 9:38. Actually, as he squinted, he could see it said <9:38. “What’s that less-than sign?” he asked.

“That’s it,” Smith said, pointing a finger at it. “That’s the clockworm. I mean, that’s what it does. It’s a Swiss invention.”

“Those Swiss!” Beale shook his head.

“It’s a little thing, like a worm, but it has the ability to transform time.”

Beale gave a harrumph and turned to his papers. “Nonsense. Have you ever seen one?”

Smith nodded vigorously. “I got one in the mail. Well, more than one. It was like a rosette, with the two types of worms all nicely arranged together. There’s one with a gear for a head, and one with a kind of oscillator. They bundle together; looks quite nice, actually, almost like a piece of jewelry. They move

gently like an anemone. I suppose they’re really looking for clocks, testing the air, so to speak. They go after clocks and adjust the time.”

“Ah, Smith, now I know you’re pulling my leg.”

Smith shook his head sadly. “They were considering that we can go from coast to coast in a lot less time than we used to—planes and such—though the distance hasn’t changed. And the same with elevators—the height is still there but we can ignore it, so to speak, whiz by it. Height and depth and width and length—all still technically there but we’ve managed to traverse them. Those are dimensions; the next dimension is time, and a friend of mine, that scientist in Switzerland, was working on a way to get through time the same way we speed through distance.”

“Why would anyone want to do that?”

“For the love of science,” Smith cried. “For the pure love of science!” Smith sighed and walked over to stand near Beale. “Didn’t know what he was doing, however,” he said. “Time is a perception, our relationship to time is a perception. So he tried and tried—great research money in Switzerland, I hear—and came up with small hybrids between worm cells and an atomic cellularity. He kept at it and at it, since the little worms at first changed only the seconds, but he kept at it till they moved past the seconds and hit all the hours.”

“The worm turned, eh?”

“Is that humor, Beale?”

“Well, why can’t he fix it?”

"He died. A young man, theoretically, but, you know, the worms got him, in the end."

They both considered that for a moment.

Smith set down the small kit he had brought with him and rummaged through it. "Anyway, I have a magnifying glass. I wanted to see one at work, and now that it's here... ." He strode over to the wall clock and ripped it down. He took out a screwdriver and pried it open. "I mentioned there are two kinds," he said, carefully removing black plastic from the clock, turning it over and opening its back. "It's because there are mechanical, gear-driven clocks and digital clocks. Willy Bruster, that's my dead friend, made one for gear-driven clocks (that's the coil with the gear for a head) but this one, it's digital, so it relies on the counter for displaying the time, and therefore the worm—" he grew silent as he took a pair of tweezers and carefully extracted something.

Beale strode over and peered over Smith's shoulder, his hand placed on the back of his waist to balance himself, a thing he had never needed to do before. "I don't see a thing," he declared. "My eyesight's gone foggy."

Smith gave him the magnifying glass. "These are very small; the gear worm is a coil because some mechanical clocks use a spring, but the digital worm is a kink." He paused. "With eyes. I don't know why, exactly. The paddles operate like a tuning fork to change the oscillations, and the kinks I suppose allow them to fit in somehow." He frowned. "There's more than one here."

Beale found his back hurt, so he sat down. "Smith, you're confounding me."

Smith held onto his magnifying glass in one hand and cupped the other hand to contain the worm. He shifted on his feet.

"Smith! Don't wander! Sit down!" For the man had begun to move around with his eyes closed.

"Trying to conceptualize it," Smith said, sitting down abruptly and taking another look at the thing in his hand. "We have a kink with a kind of tuning fork for a head to change the oscillator's oscillations. I have a bunch of them in my hand," he said, offering his hand towards Beale. "Because of course clocks come in all sizes. Wasteful, really," he said thoughtfully, bouncing

his hand up and down a little, as if testing the weight. "Unless the size is actually a growth rate?"

"Should you be doing that? Won't you spread them around?" Beale snapped. "And what happened to your face? You're melting, slightly."

Smith went over to the window where it was now night. That was sudden. Which night was it? His image stared back at him. "Wrinkles," he said sadly. "And I'm only 24."

Beale noticed his own hands. He held one out and studied it. "My veins are swollen," he said. "So there are kinks," he said. "So what? You can't change time by coming up with tiny little kinks."

"And coils," Smith said. "The kinks for the digital clocks. The coils for the mechanical clocks. They both have prehensile hind quarters, with little tools, like screwdrivers and tweezers." He slapped his head. "Of course! They're male and female! The gears fit inside the tuning forks and voila, smaller editions ensue!"

"It can't work," Beale said definitively. "I think you've gotten senile."

"I'll tell you what I think," Smith said, lowering himself carefully into a chair. The two of them sat across from each other now, like old men in club chairs, their knees splaying out. "They're metaphoric. Don't know how he did it. By themselves, coiling or kinking around, they can do nothing. But once they meet up with a clock, it changes everything. They work." He nodded sagely.

"Not possible," Beale said. His back hurt him terribly; he was leaning forward and looked around for a cane. "Do I have a cane?" he asked.

"It's a metaphoric worm," Smith repeated. "By which I mean, time isn't physical anyway, so the worm is operating on association. It's operating in the field of theoretical measurements. It's philosophical."

"My God, Smith, choose one or the other. It's totally different to fight a metaphor or a theory."

"You know how to fight a metaphor?"

"Stand there and say you don't understand it, of course." Beale stood up.

"And a theory?"

“Stand up and say you believed that when you were eight.”

Beale coughed and toppled slightly backwards. He righted himself against the armrest, which cracked slightly. “But this worm—how can anything change time?”

Smith nodded. “Takes bites like it’s Swiss cheese, takes a year of your life here, an hour there, a decade’s come and gone and you’re still sitting in the same chair you thought you sat in only a minute ago and you’re ninety.”

“I’m ninety?” Beale’s voice quavered. And he sat down.

Smith had to sit down, too. The two men leaned towards each other. “For the purposes of argument. You may be older.”

“Well, we can rewind the clocks!” Beale said triumphantly. He cackled with delight.

Smith shook his head. “About as good as writing down 1999. Won’t change the year, whatever it is.”

“How can we fight it?”

“Got to catch all of them, I’d think.”

“How?”

Smith got up and clutched the back of his chair. His other arm began to gesticulate. “Train dogs to sniff them out! That’s it! Dogs can do it! Or small children; the dogs won’t live long enough. Did I mention the gear worm has lips, small lips with a sneer.”

“Smith—”

“Swiss lips.”

“Smith—”

“I say that from experience. They are lips that have tasted beer. The loss of time always tastes of beer, I find.”

“Perhaps you’re wrong after all,” Beale mused.

There was a silence. It was almost companionable. As he usually did with prolonged silences, Beale looked at his watch. “It’s late,” he said with a start. He held his watch up for Smith’s perception. “It says minus now, minus 112. What does that mean?”

Smith shook his head. “Can’t be good.”

Beale’s hand shook but he pulled the watch off his wrist, dropped it on the floor and stubbed at it with his heel. “There,” he said. He looked angrily at the desk clock, which said minus 90, so he strode over—in a kind of staccato way, Smith noted—and smashed that clock, too.

“We’ll destroy the clocks!” he cackled.

“If only it were so easy. I think, based on what we’re seeing, they’ve gotten to the atomic clock. Once they do that—”

A sound of ticking started far off and came closer.

“Once they do that—”

The clicking stepped across the room. Squinting, Beale thought he saw a commotion of tiny little coils and kinks rolling towards him. Could he really see them? Weren’t they awfully small?

He stood up slowly; he found he ached and couldn’t completely straighten up. He grasped the wobbly arm of the chair to steady himself.

“Smith,” he gasped and looked at Smith, who had collapsed onto his own lap, his hair thin and white, his hands coruscated with age.

He cast an eye about the room and saw the computer blinking. In the upper right hand corner, where there used to be the time, he saw the last symbol he would ever see. “Infinity,” he wheezed, as coils made their way to the computer, and the phone with its time/date display, and time all around him ran out as precisely and professionally as a Swiss watch.





## Contributors

**Karen Heuler's** stories have appeared in *Clarkesworld*, *Fantasy*, *Daily Science Fiction* and over 60 literary and speculative magazines and anthologies. Her most recent novel, *The Made-up Man*, is about a woman who sells her soul to the devil to be a man for the rest of her life. ChiZine Publications will publish her short story collection, *The Inner City*, in early 2013.



**Brent Knowles** has been published in several magazines and anthologies including *Shroud*, *Abyss and Apex*, *Neo-Opsis*, *On Spec* and *Writers of the Future*. Online he can be found at [www.brentknowles.com](http://www.brentknowles.com) where he blogs regularly about game design and writing.

**Luna Lindsey** is an indie author in Seattle, WA. She started playing with bugs when she could walk, and has been writing since age four. During a ten-year break from fiction, she primarily wrote non-fiction and became an accidental expert on mind control, computers, and faeries. After returning to fiction in 2010, she now publishes ebooks and writes for short story markets. She has written over thirty short stories and and three novels, including her latest ebook, *Emerald City Dreamer*.





## Postscript

**T**hank you for joining us for another issue of the Journal of Unlikely Entomology. We hope you enjoyed these three short tales, which show how the smallest things can change the world in significant and unexpected ways. The fluttering of a butterfly, and all that.

**W**e'll back in November 2012 with Issue #4, which will be, as the name implies, our fourth full-size issue. We are grateful to you, dear readers, for joining us on this literary journey through all things buggish. We hope you'll stick with us for many issues to come, as we have exciting things planned for you: More Bugs! Unlikely Architecture! Things We Haven't Figured Out Just Yet, But Which We Assure You Will Be Awesome!

**A**nd for the authors among you, we hope you'll take a look at the submissions guidelines for our upcoming issues, including the aforementioned Architecture Issue, which are available on our website: [www.grumpsjournal.com](http://www.grumpsjournal.com)





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