

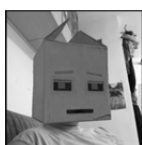
## Space Walk

By Drew T. Noll



Selfie in Space, DTNoll, 2015 © all rights reserved

It was still dark out when I walked through the front door of our suburban home in Southern California. The houses in the area had all been built over the top of orange groves that once covered the land from the Pacific Ocean to coastal mountains that jutted out from the earth in the east. I shuffled down my home's driveway wearing slippers and pajamas, down to the brand new concrete sidewalk. Turning left, I continued to make my way

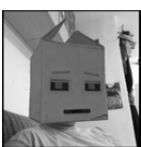


through the darkness that still lingered over our cookie-cutter home lined street.

Excited, with trepidations quivering in the cold morning air, I knew I had a long way to go, but still wasn't sure where my morning spacewalk would take me, or even how long it might be before I could return to my berthing bay. With each step I took on the wee morning-lit sidewalk, I felt more and more exhilarated, and as well frightened. But, fear and excitement do go hand in hand, so I firmly held each as if to announce to the world that I was older than five, which gave me the courage I needed for the mission ahead, as I explored my way into the unknown.

All the houses in the neighborhood looked the same, except mine. I was very proud of my dad. He was a landscape architect and had personally installed garden walks, distinctive wooden fences, and low walls of brick. My dad had planted flowering bushes and trees surrounding our home, where others had established only manicured grass, maybe a hedge, and sometimes one pathetic tree rising from the center of it all. When I was older, I remember driving by the old place with my father, who wanted to reminisce on old designs and see how they had grown. He expressed total disgust at the sight that greeted us both.

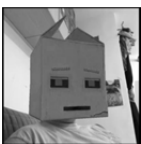
After we sold the early childhood home, the new owner had plowed into oblivion the unique landscaping that my dad had begun to grow. In its place was planted grass from corner to corner, and stuck into its core the new owner had planted one pathetic tree, appearing to attempt an escape up



and out of the boredom of its home: our terraformed front yard. It felt to us both, my dad and I, as if my dad had never even existed, and in his once proud place—a monument to creativity and innovation—stood a greedy sort of gravity well that sold only gluttonous tedium and monotony.

I walked down the street, shuffling my slippers as my pajamas withered in the cold breeze, and watched the early lights turning on inside some of the cookie-cutter homes. The newspapers had already been delivered, one to each concrete driveway I saw. Then I arrived at my best friend Mike's house at the end of the block. His house had an atrium in the middle, surrounded with fake kiln-baked bricks made of concrete. My house didn't have an atrium, so we buried our treasure at his instead to play space pirates there. My dad had an oversize canning jar full of collector pennies, which made a great treasure; so, one day, I secretly captured it from the top shelf of his closet and buried it in Mike's atrium, jar and all. We played with it for a time, until our secret got out and the jar of pennies was recaptured. After that, we each received our lashings and I never saw the treasure again.

I thought of our lost treasure as I walked past Mike's house, and I started to get nervous. It was the farthest I had ever gone by foot away from my home. But, after wondering further down the street I saw the dirt and the trucks off in the distance at a construction site at the end of the road. I could just make it out with my naked eye, as this was the farthest reaches of known space. You see, my parents had shielded me from things. They told me it was for my own safety, as if I wasn't ready to know certain universal bits of knowledge yet. So, in a state of pure defiance to this

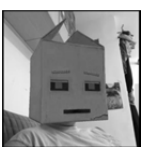


obtuse bureaucracy-of-order, I passed the rest of the cookie-cutter houses without any fear to slow me down at all.

At the end of the street, where future satellites for future families were still being assembled, I passed a few asteroids trying to blend in as piles of dirt, and then I rounded a corner where I spotted an unusual row of roundish, green houses. They were large enough for just one door each and they all sat in a perfect line, in a row of happy bumps. I adjusted my trajectory, slightly, so as to put the anomaly in my path, and, just like that, their colorful shapes and mysterious contents had become my morning mission's destination and port of call.

It was still mostly dark out and the construction site was deserted. The building crews didn't arrive until the sun was up. They would then make earth turning noises while terraforming, which seemingly caused the rest of the neighborhood to spring to life. I wanted to know where those doors led, one in each of the little green bump houses. Every door was potentially its own universe, each a portal leading to other worlds, other beings, other adventures. But, I knew my time was limited and I had to act fast in order to conduct my research.

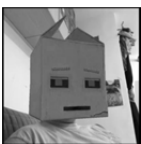
Each green bump house had one step that I needed to get over to get to the door. It was easy. I could reach the handle, no problem, and I pulled open the first door to the first universe ... to reveal a fantastically wondrous place. It was magical. A dark, black hole went down into the earth from an alien throne with a flip-lid that fit perfectly in place as its parts nestled



together in seamless unison. Investigating its depths, with the time I had, I made many journeys back and forth, from the portal's event horizon and back out, testing each newly discovered item's properties by dropping it down, where tiny sound waves emanated back from each isolated impact—I had found a foothold onto another world through a hidden portal in our midst. Imagine what I could have discovered had I had the time to investigate the other little green bump houses...

Eventually, construction workers arrived on the job and found me exploring the unknown reaches of the universe I had discovered. They seemed nice, but were definitely ignorant of what lay beneath their feet. The workers made me sit nearby and wait, but for what I could not imagine. I sat for a long while, wishing I could throw some of the tiny things littering the ground at my feet down into the portal. I wasn't finished with my research, but the system had caught me. I was getting sucked back into our own galaxy's black hole, which consumed everyone and everything around us. Then, thinking about the sorry state of our planetary leadership and its hold upon our entire dimension, I saw my mom drive up.

She stopped the car and yelled out my name from the open window. My mom had been calling my name as her vehicle got closer, I remember now. The construction workers parted when she pulled into the lot's docking bay, as if to avoid getting caught within the event horizon about to occur. To me it was a physical concurrence and a sign of how order was being restored to our galaxy; a disaster averted, in other words—by other people. With relief on all their faces, rage and fear upon my mother's, and a frown



of sheepish regret spread across mine, I climbed into the back seat of our ship and was finally recaptured.

Once I was safe back inside my berthing bay, the intergalactic police force was informed to call off the search; I was safely cloaked and back in my own, albeit modified, cookie-cutter home. My parents were going to be late for work. My little brother and I were going to be late for daycare at Suzie's up the street. Yes, important research had been interrupted, but I knew that I would get another chance, maybe soon, to escape the grip of the gravity well that trapped us all, and to launch another expedition into the unknown. Anyways ... I was satisfied by my morning journey's discovery, and had made many important observations that would, no doubt, increase our collective knowledge about the 'real' universe; also, I was hungry for breakfast.

