

INTRODUCTION

ZAYIM DIASPORA — THE FIRST DAYTRIPPER

MARCH 21, 2097

Savant microfusion technologist and open-source homefab guru Zayim Diaspora completes construction on his unique vision for a "Temporal Resistance Amplification Pod" at his home workshop in Sacramento, California. The inner workings of the vehicle, a matter of highly contested debate in certain circles, are an application of Diaspora's radically new theories on the nature of reality. If it works as Diaspora claims, an onboard pilot will effectively direct the vehicle in "slipping" relative to the fourth dimension while shielding the vehicle from all other dimensional vectors of force. Few people in the world, even among his followers, claim to fully understand his work or its implications.

Over the last three years Diaspora has been working in an almost sleepless frenzy. His auto-broadcasted efforts have been unceasingly observed, recorded and archived, then meticulously annotated and endlessly debated by a global audience of several thousand high-tech home-based tinkerers, many of whom see him as a role model; an exemplary champion of human technology and Promethean progress. The inventor has come under constant scrutiny and occasional threat by energy companies and investigative bodies both governmental and private, a fact which he not only admits but celebrates and lampoons. Unmarked black drones are seen frequently in the area of his 20-acre ranch.

APRIL 3, 2097

First Full-System test of TRA Pod 1, which due to its spindly appearance has been dubbed "Ariadne" by popular vote on *DSource* (the unofficial fancast of Diaspora Labs). The network audience watches astonished as the pod disappears in an explosion of red sparks...

...and then reappears two minutes and thirteen seconds later, facing in the opposite direction, its position displaced by a little more than a meter, the left side of its carbonex casing streaked with deep gashes and burns. The Ariadne lurches momentarily over a bent forestrut and then collapses, rolling onto its side upon the cement floor, billowing smoke. The support crew

rushes in to examine the vehicle. High levels of gamma and exotic spectral signatures radiate from the twisted pile, necessitating emergency security measures.

As the crew dons hazmat suits and the overhead sprinklers shoot into action, Diaspora's arm slowly emerges from the vehicle. His quivering fingers tightly clutch something astonishingly black and highly reflective, roughly the size of an eightball. Upon extraction the eccentric inventor is incoherent and incontinent. He is quickly hospitalized.

Many weeks pass during which no news is heard. Speculation runs wild on all the major tech talknets.

The mainstream media, encouraged by advertisers to dismiss Diaspora's theories, denounce the experiment as a ridiculous stunt, then quickly stop talking about it altogether. Jealous rivals and science pundits lambaste Diaspora on the talknets for failure to adhere to professionally-recommended safety practices and professionally accredited peer reviews. Someone points out that he never went to college. Conspiracy theories begin to circulate regarding the inventor's state of health, the reasons for his continued silence, the parties for whom he is suspected to have been working, and most especially, the nature of the object he brought back from wherever he was for two minutes and thirteen seconds on April third.

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... and then reappears two minutes and thirteen
seconds later, facing the opposite direction.**

JUNE 27, 2097

Shortly before midnight in an unscheduled transmission from his bedroom, surrounded by medical equipment and beeping machines, Diaspora opens up a broadcast talknet and addresses the world. DIY technicians and armchair physicists all over the world flip on their recording software. In the short but historical broadcast Diaspora announces that he will never again pilot a TRA Pod: His body is riddled with cancer, he is not long for this world. He speaks in convoluted sentences, between heavily-drawn breaths.

His fondest wish, he pleads of the open-source community, is to see his theories successfully implemented. For this reason, he has decided to release the archive of fragmentary research and pure theory - some symbolic, some speculative - that fueled his mad

dash during the creation of the ill-fated Ariadne. He provides a URL.

Throughout the Summer, headlines on DSource experience record-breaking amounts of traffic; server slices are cloned repeatedly as freeventors and curious intellectuals rush to download the mysterious archive. Many thousands of copies are distributed to who-knows-where; most as digital souvenirs, never to be unpacked. But some are actually put to use. Several hundred crowdsourcing projects, technology corporations, independent labs and lone enthusiasts quickly ramp up to begin unit testing their own variations on the Diaspora Device.

With a renewed sense of vigor the mainstream media, assisted by government mouthpieces and corporate scientists wearing power ties and class rings, publicly discredit the man and his theories. Naysayers disparage his state of mind, calling his sanity into question. Defenders insist that he always talked that way. Conspiracy theorists wonder out loud whether the man in the broadcast was the real Zayim Diaspora at all.

OCTOBER 6, 2007

Diaspora Labs hosts a gathering of microfusion enthusiasts and temporal shift experimenteurs at the California ranch, for what is expected to be the great man's final public appearance. Dozens of well-known independent talknet hosts and a few mainstream news



reporters are present, minicams and backholo projectors at the ready.

The ranch takes on a carnival-like atmosphere of techno-excitement. Diasporans of all types have brought prototypes of their own designs to set up throughout the rambling grassy area, interspersed with food booths and merch vendors. The black drones are noted to be in buzzing attendance, and sunglasses men in groups of two and three walk calmly and observantly around the buzzing grounds, speaking quietly into their lapels.

Shortly before sundown, Diaspora is pushed slowly out onto the main stage in a wheelchair, surrounded by his technical assistants and support crew. He is pale, wan, and speaks with great difficulty. His words are instantaneously transmitted around the world, to be streamed to storage units in geekdorms and tech-filled basements everywhere.

"My fellow Prometheans," he says to the quieting crowd, "in a manner of speaking, precisely although not completely, it shall there-then appear evident that in this arrangement of forces seeming to be a place-time which you call today, the metaphorical I-here-now shall appear to pass from one superstructural set of bounded frequencies into another which is equally stability-generating via the naturally-arisingness of its own heuristic feedback mechanisms as inverted and perceived from the exterior along a selected or determined angle-duration of slip - this is only relative to the dynamic tendencies of the positions to which its elements appear, of course - and yet, never have I not been here-now with you. And so."

He holds his bony hand aloft, gripping the eightball.

"The seeming appearance of what you will discover to have recognized within your own inverted perception after what seems to be the event," he says, "is nothing but the selected or determined proof that it itself cannot be, and yet is, itself as it were providing subjective validation of all tendencies selected or determined by your own stability-generating feedback mechanisms as operating or operated under the imperative of your naturally-arisingness as perceived along a selected or determined angle-duration of slip, which by then-place you will, of course, have unrecognized."

Withdrawing his hand, he fumbles for the walking-stick laying across his lap.

The mysterious black sphere remains where he left it, hovering in mid-air.