

Blue Sky Days

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blue-sky *adjective* \blü-skī\

Definition of BLUE-SKY

1

: having little or no value <*blue-sky* stock>

2

: not grounded in the realities of the present : **visionary** <*blue-sky* thinking>

First Known Use of BLUE-SKY

1906

Introduction

As I begin I have a quote from an Australian scientist,

Bryan Roberts, a professor of engineering at the University of Technology, in Sydney, Australia, has proposed a helicopter-like craft which flies to 15,000 feet (4,600 m) altitude and stays there, held aloft by wings that generate lift from the wind, and held in place by a cable to a ground anchor. According to its designers, while some of the energy in the wind would be 'lost' on lift, the constant and potent winds would allow it to generate constant electricity. Since the winds usually blow horizontally, the turbines would be at an angle from the horizontal, catching winds while still generating lift. Deployment could be done by feeding electricity to the turbines, which would turn them into electric motors, lifting the structure into the sky.

A few Ted talks about high altitude wind and such,

http://www.ted.com/talks/saul_griffith_on_kites_as_the_future_of_renewable_energy.html

http://www.ted.com/talks/paul_maccready_flies_on_solar_wings.html
http://www.ted.com/talks/paul_maccready_flies_on_solar_wings.html

Amazing work from Makani power,

<http://www.makanipower.com/category/flights/>

and not much else.

In fact if you google longest duration kite flying you'll get a record of 180 hours.

It hasn't escaped me that like my first book 'Terra Days', Blue Sky Days is about an energy future foreseen in a Ted Talk. Also the titles end in 'Days'. But after that the similarities end.

It is set in a future that is blue skying. A term that I believe (incorrectly?) was revitalized in cloudy Seattle at Microsoft. To blue sky is to speculate broadly, to brainstorm openly, to dream the dreams that come forth when the sun shines.

In the Northwest the rain can be oppressive.

Blue sky days set you free.

1. Marty and Ava

I can't really make up my mind if this is the future. Probably not, more like A future, but Marty and Ava live in the sky then. Rent is way cheaper up the cables.

Everything is vertical anyways.

Coming home from the clubs in the bright city night to an elevator door on the roof of a Gastown warehouse. A 40 minute commute up the cable to 3000 ft and they're home.

Marty drunkenly cops a feel on Ava, foreplay is OK in the private elevator up, and Ava giggles and thinks about the warm bed they're heading to in their new apartment in the sky. 600 square ft. not 100 like the tiny dive they used to have down in the city.

Her sister lived in a high-rise down there. Poor bitch.

She was up in the sky too, just not hanging from the roof. Tall buildings in 2115 were high tech sculptures, part of a vertical tapestry with many layers.

But living under the kites was like the suburbs. Somewhere you travelled to. A little apart.

There's a platform suspended close to the elevator wire. Hung from the big aluminum industrial Kites far above. Hung from the roof.

It is warehouse space, with workers filling orders. Ava watches out the elevator window as the cargo lifts are filled.

An old Chinese man pedals by on a flying electric helebike, a dozen or so fliers, people in wingsuits, are doing a dive in the distance. Landing without parachutes.

Then she sees a piece of the roof web being hoisted up. The panels are not so much kites as unmanned aircraft, complete with computer pilots and linking ability. They make up the top layer of the world up above, and provide vertical lift for everything.

That and cheap electric rotors, attached by cables to the terra powered world below keep the roof aloft.

Most apartments and businesses are hung below these vertical thrust generators but the kites do 57% of the work.

Buildings like hanging planters in the sky, decorating the horizon with their lights.

The second story.

Just hangers on.

And Ava wore a wing suit like everybody, but somehow it was high fashion on that girl. Accessories darling, and minimal jewelry, even though it was on the unnecessary weight list for the apartment in the sky.

Marty was a bartender at their favourite dance club.

They met dancing.

The apartment is a very retro box shape. At least inside, the airfoils and such outside are a different story. A bedroom, a kitchen, a den. A place for Marty to lift weights although he never does, and they are against the rules. Just another condo in the sky, they are renting not leasing. Pretty cheap for how much space you get.

2. Tamara

That weekend they went to see Ava's sister in a high-rise cluster on the edge of town. There were twelve tall buildings in the complex, all linked together with transparent skyways. Ava's sister lived in the closest one. The skyways between them had multi-story hanging planters tumbling off of them hundreds of meters to the ground below. Robotic spiders serviced the greenery, whirring electrics and hydraulics providing soundscape.

Ava kissed Marty for showing up at all. He kind of hated Tamara, Ava's sister. Tamara had a big maternal chest, she kind of seemed like a version of Ava gone horribly wrong.

Marty tried to keep quiet.

"Are you going to see your sister?" asked the woman standing next to them while they were going up the elevator.

"Ah you're her neighbour aren't you?" asked Ava in reply

"Mrs. Kingsly," she added thinking back. Good memory.

"This elevator has been on the fritz lately," said Mrs. Kingsly.

"Cheap system," said Marty, pounding on the lexan window.

"The view is amazing," said Ava.

"We like it," said Mrs. Kingsly smugly.

"Except it's retarded and awful too," thought Marty as dozens and dozens of floors went by.

"Sister," Tamara shouted when she opened the door, and gave Ava a big hug. The apartment was beautiful. Wrap around window of thick polymer, made Marty feel like he was in a fish tank.

"You live in the same sky that we do," said Ava with mock surprise.

"I'm learning how to jump off the roof," said Tamara.

"Enough height to land a wing suit?" asked Marty.

"Us beginners land in the diving pool," said Tamara.

"You should come up and visit us, we can go flying together," said Ava.

"I always wanted to jump from somewhere high up," said Tamara.

Marty thought how she was too chicken even to come and visit, let alone fly home.

"It'll be great," said Ava emptily and the conversation went hollow.

Across a skyway to a restaurant in building 11 past children playing on a sky slide and old Vietnamese bok choy gardeners reeling long ferris wheel crops from above. Tamara orders something in seaweed and Marty goes for a burger. Ava has some pond grown Tilapia bathed in dark soy. They see Mrs.

Kingsley across the restaurant and wave hello. Marty pays. Ava gives him the money back after they leave but it looks good for a moment, a man who pays, in front of her sister.

"Good impressions," said Marty.

"I guess," said Ava.

To Tamara's rooftop. for the watching of sunset and evening refreshment. Mrs. Kingsly was up there watering some Tomato plants in pots. She smelled cannabis smoke and started reminiscing about her younger days.

"My husband Stanley was with The Second Story, when they first started 40 years ago," she said.

"The same guys blowing stuff up today?" asked Marty.

"They were Pacifict then," said Mrs. Kingsley.

"So were we all," said Ava and a dog barked in the distance.

3.Higher rise

A couple months went by and Tamara made the trek to visit Marty and Ava in their new apartment in the sky.

"Quite an elevator ride," she said as she walked in.

There was the traditional tour of the new space by hostess Ava. Drinks were poured. Marty told jokes. All was well.

Then they went out for dinner. To a brand new restaurant in the sky. Down a steel mesh street suspended below the kites as well.

"I don't think this is all held up by the kites," said Ava.

"There's an electric cable coming up from the ground. Vertical thrust is just a commodity you plug in. You can buy some lift and stay up," said Marty.

"Shopkeepers must pay some wicked taxes, for elevation," said Tamara.

"Only until next year when all the kites link up, then there truly will be a second story." said Marty.

Past a small playground that was surprisingly retro- A couple of swings and a slide, to a steel mesh street where all the buildings were woven in a kind of cloth. Kevlar.

Then they came upon the scene of a bomb blast.

"Terrorists," said Tamara.

"The Second Story." said Marty.

"Mrs. Kingsly had a husband who was one of the founders of that group," said Tamara.

"I wonder if he'd be happy with the direction they've taken," said Ava.

"Probably not," said Marty.

The waiter had an enormous pepper grinder. He was followed by a waitress with parmesan.

"These salads are scrumptious," said Ava.

"The view isn't bad either," said Marty.

"Looks like google earth from up here" said Tamara.

"Except this isn't a picture," said Marty.

Then they heard an explosion in the distance.

"There goes another ATM," said Marty.

"What are they fighting about?" asked Tamara.

"There are two sides the Pattern and the Line," said Ava.

"One of them is in favour of a ring around the world, the other is in favour of a grid or pattern," said Marty.

"I've seen pictures of the soccer ball frame," said Tamara.

"Food for Africa and South America," said Ava.

"Lefty," said Marty.

"Tow the Line," said Ava.

When Tamara was leaving from the apartment she said:

"You two seem to be on different sides of the political spectrum and yet you still get along."

"Opposites attract," said Marty with his arm around Ava.

"So why are The Line and The Pattern killing each other?" asked Tamara.

"The Line is proposing a single ring that goes around the world at 47 degrees latitude, So China and the U.S. get coverage, as well as Western Europe a bit, but everyone else is excluded, " said Ava.

"Some folks in South America and Southern Asia felt left out, " said Marty.

"We shall overcome, " said Ava.

"Feed the world," said Tamara as as she left, and gave her sister a punch in the shoulder.

4. Flying

Then Marty and Ava are flying. Off their apartments porch which is against the rules and into the wide air, tumbling summersaults at first but then standard wing suit avionics. Soaring along mountain ridges and following rivers, they land without parachutes on a beech, long slow glide parallel to the earth a quick turn upwards and then collar chutes to descend, breathless and ecstatic, they walk off into the sunset hand in hand.

In the city they go out dancing. In the flashing lights with a few drinks under his belt Marty thinks Ava has become a sexy alien.

"I like that move,"he says to her, but of course she can't hear him over the music.

"I forgot. Aliens don't speak English," he mumbled.

Grabbing Sushi as they walk the city streets, to a warehouse converted for a party, Ava sheds layers as they move into the summer night, becoming increasingly like a fantasy in a rock video Marty had seen. It's unclear what happened after they got to the warehouse. There are no records.

In the morning they awake on the floor of a stranger's apartment. They exit politely, rubbing crust out of their eyes, and catch a cab to their wire. Hungover they ride the ele home.

5. Work

Marty had a group of regulars where he was a bartender in the city.

"Did you see this?" said Tony Watkins looking at a monitor.

"The Line got thrown out of parliament?" asked Marty.

"A vote of non-confidence, so the house goes back to the Pattern," said Tony.

"Ava will be thrilled," said Marty.

"So will anyone who wants the soccer ball frame in the sky," said Tony.

"Save the rhinos," said Marty

"The rhinos are gone, they're trying to free up habitat for the last few horses," said Tony.

"Horse has got to run free," said Marty.

"Still I kind of wanted The Line to stay in power," said Tony.

"Me too," said Marty.

Ava walked the steel mesh streets by her apartment, looking at clothing.

"Do you have anything without flaps under the arms?" she asked the sales girl.

"They're all wing suits here," replied the sales girl.

"Hope it's good fashion because they're shitty wing suits," she mumbled.

"Only for use in emergencies," said the Sales Girl.

"Dire emergencies," said Ava and left the store.

"Extra extra read all about it," said a paperboy on the street.

"The line fell," said the boy.

Ava bought a paper.

Mrs. Kingsly was going through Stanley's old belongings searching for that confounded beeping. He'd died 14 years ago, those new batteries were amazing, still beeping away. It was probably time to throw some of this stuff away anyways. She found what she thought was a credit card, it seemed to be the source. It responded to her touch and went silent. Then it became a video of Stanley.

"Hello Emily," he said.

"Stanley you always were up to speed with the latest gadgets," she said.

"It's good to see you too, Emily. This isn't an interactive message but it's pretty cool I can save a video on a credit card at all, isn't it?" he said.

"So you can't hear me? What's with all the beeping?" said Mrs. Kingsley.

"The beeping is a conference call from a group I belong to. Geodesica. A bunch of Liberal industrialist who think The Line will hold power for a decade or so but then the Pattern will re-emerge. So we are storing up

materials, and doing nanotech research, and other design, to build the soccer ball frame when the time comes. We all agreed that when the Pattern regains power, we would reunite," said Stanley.

"But you died," said Mrs. Kingsly to the credit card.

"My role in this has mostly been as a facilitator getting all the great men together," Stanley continued. "You simply have to press 'join' on the credit card and you can talk to the others, like it's a phone," said Stanley.

Mrs. Kingsly pressed Join.

"It's finally happening, I turned on the fabricator this morning," The man on the screen had the name Jorge Ganzlas beneath him.

"So the basic material that this thing is made of is more like rope than steel?" said Jason Kidd in Montana.

"It's woven from very tiny nanofibres, up to a metre thick pipe," said Jorge.

"More like fiberglass than steel," said Jason Kidd.

"but stronger than both," said Jorge.

Mrs. Kingsley didn't even introduce herself that first night.

Tamara was talking to her realtor.

"I want to look at places in the sky," she said.

"My sister has the cutest little place up there, I think I want to gamble that the link up is going to work and invest."

"Because you are an expert in tensioning rods," said the realtor.

"Just a feeling," said Tamara.

"You have to play your hunches," said the realtor.

"Ya," said Tamara but she knew she was taking a risk.

6. Link-up

Four months went by, New Years happened, and it was time to start the link up. The contracting company said they had a new kind of tensioning rod that could span 100 kilometers between kites.

So for a few weeks we weren't flying, we were held up by the ring. The reason the ring doesn't fall out of the sky on this side of the earth is that it's cabled to the ground on the OTHER side of the earth. So we had no cable for our kite, just for the elevator. Then the hubs they'd installed between the rods started migrating in and out. Instead of perfect bicycle wheel it became something sloppy and ultimately failed.

The kite wires were put back in place in a hurry.

Tamara lost some money on the short play so she decided to keep her condo in the sky. It was really quite close to Ava's maybe she could move up there.

Marty watched a show on the soccer ball frame. Immense fabricating machines were pumping out a 2 metre pipe, what the whole frame was going to be made of. Not the kind of pipe that could hold water say, more like a woven hollow rope or a braid. The expert said it was capable of increasing the world's cropland by 200 times with high tech hanging planters gathering light over 3000 ft of elevation.

"More room to grow hops for beer," said Marty the bartender.

They showed a crew assembling a few sections of the geodesic with helicopters. Helicopters could lift long sections of the piping and joiners were being designed and practiced with for the ends.

Ava is a fitness instructor in the city. She teaches old school aerobics a bit but mostly she works on flying. Muscles for better flying. Hanging from ropes in the studio, artificial wind, people learn how to stretch out like a bat, how to become narrow like an arrow. Marty meets her for lunch some days and on fridays they go dancing. Ava sings with a blues band called 'Mojo Pepper' once every few months. Tamara her sister is a better singer, but Ava's way better looking. Marty is Ava's biggest fan. So it goes.

Mrs. Kingsley pressed the 'Join' button on the card again. "Hello" said a face on the screen. The name at the bottom was Jorge and Mrs. Kingsley remembered this fellow from last time.

"You're Stanley's wife," said Jorge.

"Yes he left me this card that he used to communicate with Geodesica,"

said Mrs. Kingsley.

"I hope he left you more than that," said Jorge.

"What are you referring to?" asked Mrs. Kingsley.

"The 12 founders of the company all had encrypted keys that together yield some of the most important and sensitive data we have," said Jorge.

"Was Stanley a founding member?" asked Mrs. Kingsley.

"Yes, you need to search through his things for us," said Jorge.
so Mrs. Kingsley had a job to do..

7. Sphere

A year went by and the geodesic frame around the world was completed. For Marty and Ava it meant 15 more minutes added to their commute each time they went home to their apartment.

"Why couldn't they just hang it over the city like before?" asked Ava.

"The soccer ball frame has 64 hexagons, North America only bought the one out over the ocean," said Marty.

"...and China and Europe bought one too." said Ava.

"So nobody owns 61/64ths of the frame and selling just 3 sectors paid for it's construction," said Marty.

"So maybe I'll be able to buy a tie-off for our apartment some day?" said Ava.

"Probably not. People in the cities don't want to live in the shade," said Marty.

"Geodesica the company that built the frame, left the rest of the ball to the whole world by population, so China gets the most because they have the most people," said Marty.

"I don't mind living in China town," said Ava.

"Good thing," said Marty.

"I heard the Australians and Kiwis were going to buy a hexagon too.." said Ava.

"Giving Geodesica a little profit before they shut down," said Marty.

"Fuck, if they increased the planet's cropland by 200 times, they deserve it," said Ava.

"Now we see if more wild lands and parks are created with freed up farmland." said Marty.

"Well if everybody get's rich, they may get nicer too," said Ava.

"Ya, sure, " said Marty and time would tell.

So Marty and Ava had the same apartment just hanging in a new place, and they took the elevator down to the basement to check things out. Yip was a young farmer doing some work at the top of the vines that left from here.

"So you have a little booth to work on each plant on the conveyor belt too, just like farmers on earth," said Marty.

"Mostly the stations on the top are unmanned, but sometimes people up here need something to eat so there's an access point." said Yip.

"And it's just a conveyor belt with thousands of tomato plants growing in canvas bags," said Marty.

"Think about it. We're 3000 feet up, you put a plant every ten ft., that's

only 300 plants," said Yip.

"Ya but they are going up and down." said Ava.

"So 600 plants.It's not infinite," said Yip.

"Good thing there's going to be a lot of vines," said Marty.

"They only let us hang them over the ocean so far," said Yip.

"I'm in favour of shading the deserts," said Ava.

"World needs shade it's too hot," said Yip.

"Wait til people get hungry, or greedy to grow biofuel," said Marty.

"Shade everywhere," laughed Yip.

"For sure" laughed Marty.

Then Marty and Ava finally went down to the ground on a day off. 'Til then it had been a kind of hazy idea that they had about their new place. I mean the first year when construction was still going on it was horrible enough to block out. Drunken late night rides in a retro hovercraft to a just-above-the-sea dock way out in the fuggin ocean, Half built seastead base station and a finished elevator up to the same old apartment in the sky to sleep.Now it was swank, Skytrain station in the sea and a skytrain to the city.Who should they run into but Yip the farmer.

"That's where I work out there,"he said pointing to a different seastead a kilometre away across open ocean.You could see a lot of vines ending out there on a special farming platform.

"Are these your kids?" asked Ava pointing to the two 4 year old's who were with Yip.

"Yes we're taking the train home to the city,"he said.

"Commuter farmer," said Marty.

"So long,"shouted Yip running for a train.

Mrs. Kingsley was digging through Stanley's old things. There were no notebooks, or diaries, he had a smartphone that had stored that kind of stuff. Then she found an old carving that he'd bought on one of his first journeys. On the bottom of it there were a series of carved symbols. She wrote them on a piece of paper and called Jorge.

8. Raise the sphere

"Raise the sphere," said a guy on the street corner handing out leaflets.

"What's wrong with where it is now?" Ava asked Marty as they were walking by.

"It runs right into mountains in lots of places." said Marty.

"I guess three thousand feet doesn't mean much when you live in the mile high city," said Ava.

"Ya Tibetans, Bolivians, they live way too high," said Marty.

"Cold enough as it is at 3000, though," said Ava.

"Exactly," said Marty"

Nidaru Shanka was going to do the holy walk to the sky. Just above his village the 6 foot pipe ran into the mountain and disappeared forever. Some elders had ordered a bamboo walkway to be hung below the pipe going off into the sky. He was going to see where it lead. But first he had to do Puja. He called to his wife Sita for clean towels. His seventh son Vikram was in the room as he washed.

"Daddy the cricket match is this afternoon," he said.

"I'm going to have to miss it, I'm walking to the sky," his father answered.

"I hope we win," said Vikram.

"So do I," answered Nidaru but he was thinking of a different match.

Marty and Ava had dinner at Tamara's complex and Tamara came up to join them.

"So how do you like living over the ocean?" she asked.

"Fine now," answered Ava.

"There was a year of construction that was a little weird," said Marty.

"I heard you had to go out there on a hovercraft," said Tamara.

"New sky train is nice," said Ava.

"Doesn't it go underground sometimes?" asked Tamara.

"Ya fisheries didn't want any trace of it at the river mouth," said Marty.

"Tunnels underwater, this must be the future," said Tamara.

"Must be," agreed Ava, and the waiter showed with a pepper grinder.

"Raise the sphere," the guy with the pamphlets was still on the street corner.

"The Bolivians built a ring 50 years ago with Lithium money, at 15000

ft,"Marty told Ava.

"Sounds cold,"Ava said.

"Brrr," said Marty."It's still there though, our sphere just copies their best ideas,"

Marty took a leaflet.

"They want it to clear Mount Everest," he said reading.

"That's way too cold,"Ava said.

"They think they can genetically engineer plants to grow at high altitude.They are looking at increasing agricultural output by 8 times,"he read.

"Gotta admit since the sphere went up a few years ago, and people started making lots of money,they mostly just talk about doing good things,"

"The pattern charges too much taxes, bring back the line," said Marty.

"They're already hanging a ring at 47 degrees north like you guys want, It's just hanging from the pattern." said Ava.

"I heard the Icelanders are covering their huge hexagon with plastic wrap," said Marty.

"Maybe the line will be fine for a few years, settle things down. I might have had enough change for now," said Ava.

"Now you're talking," said Marty.

9. Sadhu

Marty was a bartender in the city.

"Did you see this?" said Tony Watkins looking at a monitor.

"Olympic soccer?" asked Marty.

"Held in Nepal. Pretty hard to find a flat place to play soccer in those mountains," said Tony.

"Ava's watching the Olympics at home," said Marty.

"Up in the soccer ball frame in the sky," said Tony.

"Nepal, our place. Tough places to do flat," said Marty

"The world loves soccer," said Tony.

"Me too," said Marty.

"It's time to do a soccer field that hangs from the sphere," said Tony.

"I think they're working on it," said Marty.

Nidaru Shanka took his first step along the bamboo walkway. He noticed how the builders had been too poor to use rope, and so the bamboo walkway was attached to the nano fibre frame with woven vines. A few places the bamboo cracked as he walked but mostly it was strong. There was a sadhu sitting at the intersection when he got there. He had white paint on his face and a saffron robe. As part of his ascetic discipline he had small containers of bhang which he offered to travellers as they passed. Nidaru sat down and had a toke.

"Baba, the path only goes to the right but the Nano frame goes in many directions," he said.

"You can walk on the pipe with this," and he produced a long string of old sarees tied together..

"The sādhu is solely dedicated to achieving mokṣa (liberation), the fourth and final āsrama (stage of life), through meditation and contemplation of brahman. Sādhus often wear saffron-colored clothing, symbolizing their sanyāsa (renunciation).

Ava was in the shower after aerobics class when she noticed a strange spider bite on her belly. She'd been hanging out in the greenhouse on the roof of her building and she must have found a bug there. There were starting to be a lot of bugs swarming around the vines too.

"Hope this bite isn't poisonous, she said to Marty later at home, lying on her bed picking at it.

"It's starting to throb, and the light might be acting weird," she said.

"I'll call health," said Marty.

"It's ok, it's starting to fade," said Ava.

Famous last words.

It wasn't Saran Wrap that the icelanders were covering their section of the sphere with, it was photovoltaic polymer. It blocked the rain and a drainage system had to be installed for it. The Scottish liked the idea of less rain and they replicated. Lots of films were created that blocked certain harmful lights, channeled water in certain ways, and provided shade. There were plans to install tinted films over half of the world. Shade to cool the warming earth.

Mrs. Kingsley was glad to talk to Jorge again.

"I did what you asked and searched through Stanley's stuff," she said.

"You might have found that picture with the dog," said Jorge.

"What?" said Mrs. Kingsley.

Jorge made a few symbols with his hands that made it clear it was unwise to talk.

"Yes the dog picture," said Mrs Kingsly absently and hung up the credit card.

10. Bugs

Then they were infested. It was the fourth summer and the cable farms had a lot of foliage. Thousand of vines, grown in perlite so they were light, with nutrient water dripping down on them. Scientists said the world had twice as much foliage now, thanks to the sphere and predicted a great year for Carbon uptake.

Some crops like apple trees and plum trees didn't need to be covered. Everything else had plastic pyramids over it. Those 2 tree crops were a big mistake. That was where the nesting went on for the swarms of insects that bred. Water, had to be turned off, crops left to dry, just to deny mosquitos a place to breed. Malaria began to mutata and spread north.

Mrs Kingsly and the twelve other founders of Geodesica were invited forcibly to a meeting. They knew the man holding the gathering. He was Jason Pilgrim from Tennessee but now living in Sri Lanka. The meeting was in Bombay.

“We are now in an age where the world depends on the geodesic frame,”he said.”After only 5 years we grow 40% of our food up in the sky.”

“And yet the chemist Torban Lee who created the Nano technological fibre the frame is woven out of, has passed,” Jason continued.

“Luckily he left an encryption key with each of his first 12 partners,detailing the chemistry involved, and that’s why I’ve gathered you today,”

“You want us to give you the secret?”

“I work in this field. It would assist me ever so much.”

Marty and Ava had taken up frame walking.

It was the latest fad. Started by a fellow from India who walked to the USA from home using sarees to hold on.

"That guy who started this, he didn't even have a wing suit at first." said Marty.

Ava held out her arms like she was on a tightrope as she walked.

"Insane," she said.

"Do you think we could walk to India?" asked Marty.

"I'd rather go to Thailand," said Ava.

But they were home for dinner.The world would have to wait.

Nidaru Shanka was a celebrity.

Ever since he showed up on youtube after he walked as far as Iraq, people shook his hand and gave him things. The wing suit was first and some lessons on how to use it, but as he walked across the atlantic warm clothes were donated too. Midocean sector populated and south it was noticeably warmer when he got over the condos.

Invited inside by curious Danes he ate black bread and yoghurt and talked about cricket with the man.

"I kind of went to the left to stay warm;" he told the man.

America here we come.

Marty had six bites in a line across his belly.

"I think they're bedbugs," he said.

"Are they swarming too?" asked Ava.

"No, just evil," he responded.

"I had a line of Yangtze swallow bites last week." said Ava.

"Now I'm one of the club," said Marty.

"Party," said Ava.

11. Peter Pan

Then Marty and Ava ,while out frame walking, were scooped up by Peter Pan.

"That isn't really your name is it?"asked Ava.

"It was written on the kite when I bought it," said the fellow.

"This is quite the vehicle," said Marty.

"We've lived at the ring for 50 years,"the fellow said.

"So you're with the Bolivians? Lots of time up there to customize your kite plane" said Marty.

"I'm with the Hooks," said Peter.

"I know their media," said Ava.

"I can only get you to 8000,I'll have to drop you off,"their captor suddenly said.

And they came in for a landing at a station at 8000 ft.

"Hanging from kites," said Marty "How retro,"

"It's hanging 7000 ft from our ring,"the fellow replied.

"Warmer," said Ava.

After food at the canteen Marty got to the point,

"Who the fuck are you Peter Pan? Abducting and taking us so high up in the sky?"

"I need to send a message to the sphere,"

"By taking hostages?"asked Marty?

"I hope to persuade you that there is important work to be done,"Peter Pan said.

"Because that will erase the hostage thing," said Ava

"Of course," said Peter.

"So what's your message?" asked Ava.

"Raise the sphere," said Peter Pan.

"Too cold up further," said Marty.

"There are cracks in the frame." said Peter.

"How do you know?" asked Marty.

"We've been sitting up in the air for fifty years playing with imaging.Trying to compete with satellites in shots from above." said Peter.

"And now you see cracks," said Marty.

"Geodesic frames like symmetry. You can't go ramming them into mountains all over the place in asymmetrical shapes and expect the frame to

handle weight the same way," said Peter Pan

"Uneven fragments can be weaker sometimes?" said Marty.

"Most of the time," said Peter Pan.

"So we took a bunch of uneven fragments and hung a lot of weight on them, what's going to happen?" asked Marty.

"My guess is that that material will fail with only a little more weight. It's already under tension." said Peter Pan.

"That picture is compelling" Marty said, looking at an image of the sphere frame on a monitor

"You can see how it glows red when the beams are under pressure," he said.

"Can I have a copy of that?" asked Marty.

"We'll send you home with one soon," said Peter Pan.

Peter Pan took off in his Kite plane and they watched as he started a series of spectacular dives.

"We almost killed his battery flying 3 people in a one man plane," said Marty.

"So he charges it up by diving and running his propellers backwards as generators," said Ava.

"It's cool watching him come back up," said Marty.

"Like an Eagle floating up on thermals," said Ava.

"He's good," said Marty.

"you're talking about the guy who kidnapped us," said Ava.

"Stockholm syndrome," said Marty.

When Peter was charged a few hours later he came back and got Marty and Ava.

"I like the way you use thermals," said Ava.

"I can see the warmer air like it's a different colour," said Peter.

"Nice," said Ava.

Marty was jealous again.

"Why didn't you guys just jump while I was charging, you're in wing suits and you were free to leave," said Peter.

"Stockholm syndrome," said Ava.

"Sympathy for the devil," said Marty.

Then they were flying again, 3 people in Peter's Kite, and up to 12000 ft where it was cold but Peter had a warm apartment.

"Swank place," said Marty.

"Nice touch, serve your hostages lunch," said Ava sitting at the kitchen island in a borrowed sweater.

"Do you want Swiss or Cheddar in these Sandwiches?" asked Peter.

"Swiss," said Marty, and Ava agreed.

"So who else lives here, the lost Boys?" asked Marty.

"My girlfriend Wendy," said Peter.

"No fucking way," said Ava.

"Ya we thought it was funny too, just like the Peter Pan story, but Wendy is Norwegian not British," said Peter.

"That makes it not weird," said Marty.

"Yes." said Peter,

"Not at all," said Ava.

12. The Hooks

Then they walk the steel mesh streets below Peter's apartment.

"I'm taking us to the Hooks Clubhouse," Peter says.

Past Asian shops selling daffodils and chow sue, a flysuit tailor who makes Kevlar wing suits, a dozen device shops selling cell phones on credit cards, to a structure with "Hooks" spray painted on the front.

"I can do the talking," says Peter as they enter.

"Peter Pan my man," says a fellow called Bruno. They execute a strange greeting ritual involving high fives, fist punches, and a fast but serious arm to the heart.

"I have visitors," says Peter.

"My name is Ava," Ava says shaking Bruno's hand.

"Marty," says Marty shaking hands too.

"Glad to have you aboard," says Bruno

"The hooks were big players back in Tera Days," says Marty.

"Like West Side Story, The Hooks and the Fins," says Ava.

"We got the Job done," says Bruno.

"All wind now," says Bruno.

"The skies are a river," says Peter Pan.

"Ride the River," says Bruno in some kind of club chant.

13. Sphere crack

The chinese did it. The geodesic frame was holding up tons of plants. Perlite is lighter than topsoil but when just watered the plants got too heavy. At least a thousand people heard the crack when it happened. Mass evacuations. Early harvests. In many cases the vines hanging from the frame were diverted to warehouses on the ground.

And all over the world there was a concerned silence.

The new parks that had been created with freed up farm land were in jeopardy. Species that had been brought back from the brink of extinction because there was room for new habitat, were once again endangered. In short, mankind had become dependent on the sphere frame, dependent on the new feeling of space that the vertical farms had brought.

"I didn't tell the truth," said Mrs. Kingsley.

"I changed a number in my Key too," said Jorge.

"So they don't have the formula but neither do we," said Mrs. Kingsley.

"Our information should be assembled" said Robert Cray.

"And there's a failed beam to recreate in China," said Jorge.

"They say the formula for the weave material needs to be tweaked," said George Towns.

"Let's get to work," said Jorge clapping his hands.

"This is about money!" the CEO said loudly.

"If the sphere frame comes down we lose millions of dollars" the Accountant put in.

"Agricultural output was excellent in these last few years. People are wealthy," said the Politician.

"Wealthy people are less pissed off than starving masses," said the CEO.

"Exactly," said the Politician.

Marty and Ava left a note for Peter Pan and flew home.

Jumping off porch rails into an obstacle course of hanging structures, falling vertically, like if you jumped off a skyscraper at first, because of the complex hanging city, slums and mansions, with vertical farms on all sides.

And finally coming to horizontal after 2000 ft they flew away home.

Bruno was eating chocolate covered crickets in the Hook clubhouse.

“You let the hostages go?”he said.

“The crack we were trying to warn about, it happened. We were too late.” said Peter Pan.

“I thought you saw lots of places were about to crack?” Bruno asked.

14. Encryption

Nidaru Shanka felt another burr. As he walked the sphere frame, his string of sarees underneath the pipe as a safety, he came to know the frame intimately.

The burrs were proof of the bending under weight. He would find a burr wherever the beams had undergone abuse with large loads.

The beams would burst and leave tiny scars where, for a fraction of a second, they bent too far.

He was over Africa heading home, when he found the rope ladder. There was a 12 year old boy with a goat there.

"Jambo" said Nidaru, a word a friend had taught him.

The boy stared at him vacantly.

"ete-sen" the boy said.

Then he walked away, a leather cord acting as a safety as he balanced on the beam.

His goat followed him.

Nidaru sat down and ate some beef jerky that he had brought from America.

He watched as the boy faded off into the distance.

He knew he would follow in time, but there was plenty of time. No hurry.

Marty and Ava's building had a landing net like you would find under a trapeze at a circus. They rolled in and were back in their apartment in no time.

"Did someone feed the fish?" asked Marty.

It's automatic," said Ava.

"Water the plants?" asked Marty.

"It's automatic," answered Ava.

"I guess we didn't really need to come back," said Marty.

"To Peter Pan," said Ava holding up a glass of wine.

"If I see him again I'm becoming Captain Hook," said Marty and toasted.

Mrs Kingsly and the other 12 founders of Geodesica finally assembled their encryption keys and opened the files.

There were a number of pdf files outlining their task.

"We need to tweak the formula," said George Towns.

"Send it to the testing labs," said Jorge.

And all over the world researchers received couriered packages outlining

the problem and the goal.

"Hope this works," said Mrs. Kingsley.

"I thought you saw lots of places were about to crack?" Bruno asked.

"Well we need to reassess and formulate our next move," said Peter Pan.

"You just went soft on that girl and let her go home," said Bruno
grinning.

"Perhaps," said Peter Pan.

"Swank rack," said Bruno.

"Must reassess," said Peter walking away.

15. A new stringer.

Mrs. Kingsley thought it had happened too fast. And sure enough the replacement beam failed while being installed. The formula had been altered in an incorrect manner.

"Nobody is as smart as Torben Lee." said Jorge staring off into the distance.

"We can do this we just have to focus," said George Towns.

"The whole world is depending on us," said Mrs. Kingsley.

"Torben Lee we need your help," said Jorge.

Marty and Ava are flying. Summersaults, tumbling dance moves from aerobics, freestyle tai chi, and then down into the wind into the night.

They hadn't been out to the clubs for so long people were glad to see them as they entered. Only a few dances in they are approached by Bruno in full raggalia but still a thug.

"Your down to earth side," said Ava.

"I was keeping an eye out for you two," said Bruno.

"Unfinished business?" asked Marty.

"Perhaps, we need to talk," he said walking off the floor leading procession of minions.

Marty and Ava followed.

Nidaru Shanka came across the little African boy with the goat again on the second day.

"Ete-sen" he said. His smartphone from America had allowed him to google this greeting from Ghana.

"So you speak some English?" Nidaru asked.

"Leetle," said the boy.

"Me too" said Nidaru.

And they would travel east together for many days until just as they'd heard, the frame runs into high ground in East Africa.

Nidaru had done his homework, and had a visa ready for Uganda when they arrived. He would walk to the Kenyan lowlands near the coast across ground.

There the frame started again and he could continue all the way home to his village.

The boy however was disallowed entry. Nidaru thumbed a ride in a truck full of goats and made it to Mombassa in a sleepless night.

"This is in the hands of idiots!" the CEO said loudly.

"The failed beam cost 9.7 million dollars," the Accountant put in.

"People want to know that this vertical future they've invested so much in, can go on," said the Politician.

"Consumer confidence," said the CEO.

"Exactly," said the Politician.

Bruno seemed to have strange access to the side rooms at the night club.

"We want you to return as our hostages," he said.

"Are you paying?" asked Marty.

"We're a little cash poor right now but we have access to some condos hanging from the ring," said Bruno.

"We would finally own," said Ava.

"You just have a crush on Peter Pan," said Marty.

"Deal" said Bruno, and they were once again voluntary hostages.

16. More Cracks

Marty had a group of regulars where he was a bartender in the city.

"Quite an image," said Tony Watkins looking at the printout Marty had got from Peter Pan.

"Where it's going to crack next is highlighted in red," asked Marty.

"Lots of places" said Tony.

China was just the first," said Marty.

"You better get this to the news," said Tony.

"I copied that and sent it out this morning," said Marty

"Good one," said Tony.

They'll still crack it," said Marty.

"Push it til failure," said Tony.

"Hope it's a safe kind of failure," said Marty.

They were over to Tamara's place again for dinner. Mrs. Kingsley showed up as they were leaving the apartment.

"Where have you been lately?" Ava asked her.

"Stanley was involved with Geodesica the company that built the sphere frame" she said.

"Must be some meetings to attend," said Marty.

"If only he hadn't left his encryption key." she said.

"That's why you have to be there," said Tamara.

"I'm an old lady," she said "It's too much,"

"Take a look at this," said Marty fishing Peter Pan's map of the cracked sphere out of his pocket.

Mrs. Kingsley studied the image silently for several minutes.

"This was captured from the Bolivian ring," said Marty.

"I'll need to take this in," said Mrs. Kingsley.

Nidaru Shanka thanked the goat truck driver and gave him a little bit of money

Now he was at the ocean, he could see the green waters of the Indian ocean, but he had to backtrack.

The sphere ran into the East African escarpment about an hour west, he hadn't got the goat truck driver's attention to get out, so he was hitching back towards Nairobi.

He got a ride with a matatu full of schoolchildren and was at the ring quite

quickly.

There was a turbaned Sikh fellow sitting at a small desk at the entrance.

"Walking to India?" he asked.

"Yes I'm going to my home village in Uttar Pradesh.." replied Nidaru.

"\$99" said the Sikh.

Peter Pan is at the hooks clubhouse when Marty and Ava return to be hostages.

"Welcome back,"he says.

"Bruno bribed us with a new condo," said Ava.

"Must fly over and have a look," said Peter.

17. Bugs.

Tamara would buy a new condo right next to Marty and Ava. Selling her high rise and leaving Mrs. Kingsley behind, she bought in the mostly-empty complex hanging from the ring where Marty and Ava lived.

"Down side, we're at 12000 ft hanging from a ring at 15000," said Marty.

"Up side we're close enough to the equator that it's not too cold," said Ava.

"Warmer than my place," said Peter.

"You live too near Russia," said Ava.

"If you connect La pas Bolivia and Madrid Spain with a ring around the world, you get a lot of Siberia and Pacific ocean in the deal," said Marty.

"That's where we are now over the warm pacific off Ecuador," said Tamara.

"Pura vida," said Marty toasting his drink.

"I want to go down to the Galopogas Islands," said Ava.

"Something about turtles and Darwin," said Marty.

"Peter Pan said he would take us. He says he can borrow a van, and we can all go," said Ava.

"I want to meet this guy," said Tamara.

"You won'd like him, he's a 10," said Ava.

"I can handle beauty," said Tamara.

Nidaru Shanka was enraged.

"The sphere frame was built by the Geodesica company. It was finally given to the people of the world as a gift."

"I bought this one square metre of land that you have to cross off of the farmer who owned it," said the Sikh.

"\$99 dollars to cross," said Nidaru.

"Yes," said the Sikh.

"I have a fresh new \$100 bill from America," said Nidaru.

"You can take Coconuts," said the man revealing some produce he had for sale on a burlap bag behind him.

Peter Pan showed up at the empty apartment complex that weekend, driving a sky van he had borrowed from Bruno at the Hooks clubhouse. It was a large low air kite powered by lightweight batteries. Could handle 4 people.

"It's all downhill to the ocean," said Pater.

"Ya but we have to make it back up," said Marty.

Tamara was on the strong flirt with Peter Pan. It eased what had become an awkward attraction between Ava and Peter. This made the trip to the Galapagos very very fun, with Marty all of a sudden being best buddies with Peter, no longer concerned by his attention to Ava, since his attention seemed to be fixed on Tamara.

"Aldabra Tortoises used to be kept on the ships and then harvested for fresh meat several months into the trip," Marty read from a sign.

"They are also found on the seychelles," said Ava reading the same sign.

"They float on their backs across the ocean, can't right themselves. It's weird they only washed up on a few islands," said Tamara.

"This guy looks 150 years old," said Peter Pan singling out a tortoise with a worn shell.

"Old," said Tamara in awe.

And then swarms of pesticide resistant insects destroyed most of the agriculture on the sphere frame. A slime formed on greenhouse enclosures that ate them away.

Marty and Ava's complex at 1200 ft got very trendy. All the apartments that had been empty for 50 years filled up.

A lot of farming was moved to the ring too.

"Hey look at these prices!" said Tamara lying on the couch in her apartment looking at a printout.

"My place is worth twice what I paid for it," she said.

"There isn't even an elevator, and they're selling like hotcakes," said Marty.

"People know how to live in the sky now, it's just another place," said Tamara.

"Couldn't convince anybody for 50 years," said Peter.

"Timing is everything," said Marty.

18. High fall

Marty got a new job at the bar near his new apartment.

Ava was running aerobics classes in the high fall basement. That was the word for these buildings hanging from above. A highfall. Rise and fall. High-rise and highfall. Tamara and Peter Pan shacked up in the highfall across from Marty and Ava. At 12,000 ft there was occasional snow mixed in with alpine fresh sunny days. Nice in the sun but very very cold in the shade. Marty knew Ava wanted to be somewhere warmer as he was trying to figure out a way to keep a place on the sphere frame down below too.

"I think we should get to know the Peruvians down below," he told Ava. "There isn't much action down there, one cross fence to mark it as a used section of the soccer ball. but lots of room to grow."

"Nidaru Shanka walked for many weeks out over the Indian ocean. Then about where he was above the Maldives he came to a large platform suspended to the ring by nylon ropes and tied with fisherman's knots. There were a number of fishnets and some small boats used by fishermen there. Under a tarp at the far end of the platform he came upon the little boy from back in Africa!

"Ete sen" he said in his broken Ghanan.

"Eet is very good to see you," said the Boy in his grade school English. And they would be together all the way to Nidaru's village.

Then Peter pan arrived at the highfall with 4 space suits and a craft suspended from 12 weather balloons.

"Put on a space suit we're going up to 42000 ft," he said.

"You can't even breathe up that high." said Marty.

"That's why we need spacesuits," said Tamara.

And they all piled in and they ascended as much as flew up to the Bolivian research platform at 42000 ft.

"I press this button when I want to talk," said Tamara.

"Yes there is an operations manual for the suit onboard, you just need to trigger it," said Peter

"Working, said Tamara and Marty and Ava looked for it too.

The station had a pressurized shell where the 6 people who lived up there could take off their suits and relax.

"Nice to take a break from that," said Marty taking off his pressurized

helmet.

Mrs.Kinsley made the journey down to visit Tamara and co on her own.
"I took a flight down to La Pas Bolivia where there's the only elevator that attaches to the ring,"she said.

"There's a few more unofficial elevators but that's the only official one," said Marty.

"I always wanted to try that. The city of La Pas is almost as high as the ring itself," said Ava.

"Caught the ring train after that to get out here. Nice elevator to get down to your highfall," said Mrs. Kingsley.

"What did your group think when you showed them the map of cracks?" asked Marty.

"That's why I came down, we have to talk," said Mrs. Kingsley.

Tamara blacked out again.

She was trying to remember how she got this retarded outfit on. Space suit from some retro halloween and she was supposed to take it off ya, that's what Peter had said.

We jumped. ya skidiving in space suits and Marty and Ava got theirs off correctly. Threw them into the nets at 3000 ft and flew down to the ocean below for a swim.

With the suits off you can fly normally.

Me Tamara I fucked up. Got tangled by the wind and there's a cord around my throat.Holy Fuck! There's a cord around my throat! Must have been tight enough to make me pass out. Can breathe fine now kinda sorta shit.When I move I choke myself.

Tamara blacked out again.

19. Easter Island

Flying from 42000 ft to ocean level Marty and Ava travelled way out to sea. GPS told them they were close to Easter Island.

"I wonder what's up with Tamara?" Ava said after they had landed, after they were walking to see the statues.

"Peter's with her she's OK," said Ava.

Tamara blacked out again.

She was trying to remember who the little elf guy was. Landing with ease in the net beside her he has a knife in his pant leg and he quickly frees the cord that is doing the strangling. Breathing with impunity again your mind clears up and you recognize Peter.

"That suit change is an advanced technique," he says.

"Too advanced for me," you agree.

Nidaru Shanka had started to call the boy 'pani' a word that means different things in different countries.

As they got above Bombay they saw how the Indian model of Sphere frame use was a little different. They didn't mind if their cities were shaded. India is so hot it was actually a relief.

So the cities and villages included several vines and elevators, new prosperity and a way out.

The frame above Bombay became an open air market complete with steel mesh streets. Nidaru was followed by hawkers selling samosas and condoms. He tried to shrug them off but pani was buying a red baseball cap.

It would take a few hours to bargain correctly. Tea was served. Negotiations were in English, a language that neither party spoke as their first tongue.

After a long time the vendor finally lowered his price. Pani looked triumphant. He looked dapper in his new red cap.

Finally it was the day to replace the beam in China. A new formula had been created for the weave material, tests showed it as even stronger than the original.

Several helicopter had been made ready to install the new piece, and the world watched in awe as the work was done.

"What if it fails again?" asked Mrs. Kingsley watching a monitor.

"I think it's OK this time," said Jorge.

"We hope," said Mrs. Kingsley.

Peter arrived at Easter island to pick up Marty and Ava in his one-man kite-plane.

"Three people in a one man, just like old times," said Marty.

"At least I got fully charged on the way down," Peter said.

"Use the thermals," said Ava.

And that's how they'd make it all the way home.

20. The Deal

Then Bruno came down the steel mesh walkway with a few of his lackeys in tow.

"Marty and Ava my favourite hostages," he said.

"At your hostage service," said Marty.

"I trust you're faring well in the new accommodation," said Bruno.

"Very well thank you," answered Ava a bit stiffly.

"We've come to a new chapter in our arrangement," said Bruno.

"I was thinking you'd show up one of these days," said Marty.

Nidaru Shanka changed his last \$100 bill from America into rupees so he could buy samosas for himself and pani.

"Nimbu pani," he said to the boy, the hindi words for 'lemonade'.

"Thank you Mzee" said Pani.

And they set off across the sub continent.

Tamil Nadu would yield to their march and onward.

Above Varanassi they performed a special puja dropping petals from a dried flower into the Ganges.

And finally they could see the Himalayas.

"Those mountains are much higher than this ring," said Nidaru.

"My village," he pointed smiling.

And in a few days they would arrive at Nidaru's home.

The beam in china failed again.

"Frankly we're just starting to learn what a genius Torben Lee was," said the CEO.

The macro level is affected by the nano level, in ways we don't fully understand," he added.

"It's like the entire sphere frame is a big particle he designed."

Bruno got down to it.

"We have to make a new deal," he said.

"We've been up here looking at our pretty picture of the cracked frame for long enough," he went on.

"So what are you thinking?" asked Marty.

"Publicity stunt," said Bruno.

Mrs Kingsley was staying in the spare bedroom at Marty and Ava's place. "Spacious," she said, and Ava wondered what she was doing to pay for it.

21 The New Chapter

Bruno got right to the point.

"We want to make it look like we captured you and we're torturing you," he said.

"Because you have a history of being evil?" Marty asked.

"We're outsiders, nobody knows what we've been up to," said Bruno.

"Long distance thermal imaging," said Mrs. Kingsley.

"Well that's why we're trying to get people's attention," said Bruno.

"Why don't you just ask Ava to get naked with your map?" said Marty.

"It's a pretty peaceful time, crime rates are low, violence is a better bet," said Bruno.

"Like moths to a flame," said Mrs. Kingsley.

"I still think sex could sell it just as well," said Marty.

"No way, people are way too used to it, although your wife has a magnificent figure," said Bruno.

"And I hate violence," said Marty.

Nidaru and Pani finally reached the mountains above Nidaru's village.

After weeks of walking carefully on the pipe, they were glad to be back on solid ground.

Vikram Nidaru's son was there. He gave his father a glossy colour article from one of India's weekly's: "The man who walked to America."

"Pani," said Nidaru showing the boy his picture.

"I am a celebrity, but only sometimes," said Nidaru to Vikram wagging his head from side to side.

"Just happy to see you daddy," said Vikram, giving his father a pat on the back.

Mrs. Kingsley lied on her bed in Marty and Ava's guest room and pressed 'join' on her credit card.

"How serious are they?" she started talking from a previous conversation.

"They are going to stage a violent hostage taking to draw attention to their image of the cracked sphere," she said.

"Get them to hold off," said Jorge.

"Our image guys are finally starting to admit they may be right."

"Jesus," said Mrs. Kingsley.

Tamara and Peter Pan were having dinner in the city.

"I stay here for a few days to work, then i go down to the apartment," she said.

"They've got me before a panel, answering questions on the Cracked Sphere Frame image," said Peter.

"We're both hostages of the city," said Tamara.

"Marty and Ava are the real hostages," said Peter.

"I guess they have to pay the rent someday," said Ava.

And around the world there was a calm silence. The chinese beam had failed, the crops from the sky were in danger but the message to all people was clear:"Persevere."

22. Stall

Mrs. Kingsley made her point clearly:

"I think a violent hostage taking is fine but next month.

There are several reasons why it's no good now."

"The seeds are almost ready to plant," said Bruno.

"No hurry," said Marty and Mrs. Kingsley agreed.

Nidaru and Pani were stars of Bollywood, telling their story in a new feature film entitled:

"Walking to America." Nidaru's wife Sita was at the grand opening, posing for photos, meeting the press. Vikram his 7th son was there too, answering questions.

"The Americans gave me enough money to make it home," said Nidaru.

"I'm very glad that Africa was on the way," said Pani.

Sita and Nidaru posed for pictures together and felt like strangers.

Peter Pan was before a Panel of engineers.

"What we need to find is the reason images from the Bolivian ring are so much better than those from satellite," said the chief engineer.

"In truth, I really don't know," said Peter, "it was built by Joergen Lee our engineer."

"No fugging way," whispered the CEO. He was sitting in the crowd at the panel hearing.

"How many Swedish Chinese hybrid names are there? Joergen Lee has got to be brothers with Torban Lee, the guy who designed the sphere. And

this guy seems to have heat sensitive imaging dialled. Two brothers that changed the world," he said.

Ava and Marty were fighting.

"You told them what?" she screamed.

"I told them that you would get naked with the image of the cracked sphere frame," said Marty.

"I will do no such thing," said Ava.

"They don't want you anyways. They say nobody cares with nudity on tv," said Marty.

"So it's violence to get the world's attention," said Ava.

"Guess so," said Marty.
"I'd rather show my tits," said Ava.
"I'd rather you did too," said Marty.

23. Seppuku

Bruno left a note when he did it.

"Everything else seemed cheap and fake.

It was between seppuku and asking Ava to get naked.

I lost the coin toss."

The video was graphic.

They say he was fairly drugged when he did it, but the 'stomach cutting' while looking at an enlarged graphic of the cracked sphere frame, was compelling.

"Nothing fake." said Ava.

"His intestines are all over the floor," said Marty.

"Got their attention," said Ava.

"Gross," said Marty.

Nidaru Shanka had a remote control for his television that was very big and 1970s.

The TV itself glowed in a strange light and ran very hot.

"A stunning suicide in Ecuador this morning," and a graphic self immolation ensued.

Nidaru looked at the map in the background.

"Where the burrs are." he said and only he understood.

Ava was shaving her legs in the bathtub talking to Marty.

"Mrs. Kingsley says we should stall," she said.

"I voted to delay action til next month," said Marty.

"I guess Bruno didn't get the memo," said Ava.

"Guess not," said Marty.

The cracked sphere map was on the front page of every paper.

The internet was ablaze with discussion on the seppuku and the cracks in the sphere.

Bruno left orders for chaos to be allowed to reign for 2 full days, until at the eleventh hour Peter Pan should speak.

Offer reason and solutions designed by the hooks.

Nidaru Shanka had one reporter who followed him who was very very smart and insightful.

"There are burrs on the sphere frame, wherever the cracks occur, I felt them with my sarees," he told him.

"So you can confirm the information in the new image?" asked the reporter.

"Yes," said Nidaru.

25. Sunshine.

Nidaru and Pani were taping a show at the American sector.

"So if you look at a soccer ball(he holds one up), you'll see black and white patches in the shape of hexagons. This sector is one hexagon on the big soccer ball frame around the world. Roughly 1000 kilometres across.

The first thing you'll notice is the Americans have added lots and lots of cross beams across the sector.

It's pretty well solid. And then you'll see a wall of foliage.

Ambitious farmers, they are the leaders in experimenting with tighter spacing on the wire, tighter spacing between rows.

I asked Thelma Hanes what the limits are.

"We are trying to see when the plants shade each other." she said.

"Cause problems if you move them?" asked Nidaru.

"They are good at adapting to new conditions, but it's hard work for them and it takes time," said Thelma.

"Is this delicious apple pie made with fruit that you grew?" asked Nidaru.

"It sure is and a variety that we created especially for growing in bags up the conveyor belts," said Thelma.

"Very good," said Pani, but he wasn't supposed to be in the shot.

Peter Pan continued his lecture.

"So we need to raise the sphere but how high?" he started.

"Mount Everest is 26,000 feet, the Rockies are only about 12000" he said.

"Some mountains like Kilimanjoro at 20,000 ft. fit nicely through the hexagon holes in the soccer ball."

"The Tibetan plateau and the Andes need some special attention," he went on.

"If we rotate the entire grid," (He changed the graphic) "we can solve 3 of our problems. McKinley in Alaska fits in, everything in most of the world is fine. My proposal is that we build into the Himalayas and nowhere else," said Peter.

"I'm suggesting 12,000 ft, 4,000 metres. Apartments and gardens can hang below."

Cheap black and White graphic:

"Exploring the sphere, with Niduru Shanka and Pani Ngwee."

"We were faced with a problem," Angus Treed was Nidaru's interview.

"We thought it was going to be cheaper to process our crops on land, but it's not land, it's the ocean below us. Seasteads are expensive we did the minimum

to anchor our crops, and we got busy processing up here on the sphere, Live high and live happy."

Mrs. Kingsley pressed "Join" on the credit card phone.

"Robin Hood is talking the world into a higher sphere," said Jorge.

"Still not above Tibet though," said Mrs.Kingsley.

"We were wondering if you could go through Stanley's stuff. He was writing a book on Torben Lee," said Jorge.

"Still haven't solved how to make sphere frame," said Mrs. Kingsley.

"Not yet," said Jorge.

26. Peter's Plan.

"The Hooks are delusional. They think because they fluked out on the sphere cracks, they have something to say on sphere height and installation," said the CEO.

"If you'll sit down I'll begin the talk. When Bruno killed himself he left a note.

Let chaos reign for 2 days and then give them answers.
Well the chaos for the last two days hasn't been that bad, as people have groked that there are structural flaws in the sphere frame, and since Bruno's passing we have learned that the Hooks have no real imaging advantage, so we're probably not all that clever anyways. That said I'm going to attempt to 'give them answers'" said Peter Pan.

"I don't see why his answers are any better than anybody else," whispered the CEO.

"I said in a talk yesterday that I'm in favour of a sphere at a little over 4000 metres, a height that clears the rockies and most mountains in the world but can't make it over the Himalayas.

So we're building fragments again," said Peter.

"How high would we have to go for a perfect bell that rings?" someone asks.

"It all depends on the himalayas. We could leave out some beams and let those montains through,"answered Peter.

"Better than building into the earth again.." said the CEO.

"Would the bell still ring?"asked someone.

"Perhaps" said Pater and everyone left with a new idea.

Ava and Marty were lying spread eagle on their kitchen floor staring up at the ceiling.

"Ya, we're a little fucked," said Marty.

"Hanging from a cracked dream," said Ava.

"A crack dream," said Marty.

"The Bolivian ring isn't made out of the same stuff. We're hanging from good old aluminum metal," said Ava.

"Recycled coke cans and drip cap," said Marty.

"Seems strong," said Ava.

"Been up here for 50 years;" said Marty.

"Yikes," said Ava.

"Yikes," agreed Marty.

Mrs. Kingsley pressed 'Join' on the credit card phone.

"Did you get a chance to look through Stanley's stuff?" asked Jorge.

"Yes and I found quite the jackpot" said Mrs. Kingsley.

"We know he was writing a book on Torban Lee," said Jorge.

"Interviews, equations," said Mrs. Kingsley.

"I can fly over and have a look," said Jorge.

"Exploring the sphere, with Niduru Shanka and Pani Ngwee."

"And what do we have here?" asked Nidaru.

"It's a 10 metre by 10 metre research platform, the vines can be dragged around and positioned quite freely because the top is held by magnets," said a red haired guy.

"So you can figure out the optimal spacings for the vines," said Nidaru.

"We're also breeding plants that work best in certain light conditions," said the red haired guy.

Ava was lounging on their white leather couch.

"I love our apartment" she said.

"So do I," said Marty from the other couch.

"I didn't feel the love in LA." said Ava..

"I don't think they want us to be spokespeople for the Hooks," said Marty.

"Kinda puts us out of a job," said Ava.

Only too true.

27. The Axe

Dear Marty and Ava:

We are writing to inform you that we no longer require your service as hostages.

Additionally please vacate your apartment in the Buena Vista High fall by Sept 1st.

Sincerely

The Hooks.

"We'll move in with Tamara and Peter Pan," said Ava.

"She's lost a lot of weight, your sister," said Marty.

"Be nice to her now that you need a place to stay," said Ava.

"I thought Mrs. Kingsley was in that room?" said Marty,

"She went home last week," said Ava.

"Stanley's stuff is in that closet," Mrs. Kingsley told Jorge.

I'm specifically looking for his notes on Torban Lee." said Jorge.

"Right here, " she said opening the closet door and going to a box on the right hand side.

"That's it!"shouted Jorge only a few minutes later,looking through a sheaf of papers.

A few weeks later the new beam went up in China.

The formula had been tweaked based on the notes discovered in Mrs. Kingsley's closet.

Marty and Ava were watching tv in Tamara's spare room when they saw Mrs Kingsley on the news.She was cutting the ribbon at the grand re-opening for the Chinese Sphere...

"Rebeamed," said Marty.

"Beam me up," said Ava.

And all the world slept a little easier that night knowing that the ceiling was sound.

Nidaru Shanka was watching his ancient television when the new beam went up in China.

"One for each place with burrs," he said to the television.

And that was what the future had in store.

28. Tamara's Spare Room

Marty was lying on the bed looking at the apartment-for-rent ads on a pad, trying to find a new place to live.

"One bedroom with all the frills high in the sky,"

"How much?" asked Ava.

"Too much for us," said Marty.

"Everything is," said Ava.

"It would seem," agreed Marty.

"Exploring the sphere, with Niduru Shanka and Pani Ngwee."

"What is the debate between single bags and trays? Nidaru asked the red haired farmer.

"When we started we grew only rooted crops with leaves that could adjust to the sun.

Like tomato plants and fruit trees. Then the demands for traditional grains,

like rice and wheat grew. Those crops didn't need much root space but sometimes liked to be flooded in water.

A technology of trays grew. long, like hundreds of meters, and people even started growing other crops in them.

Strawberries for example.

"But carrots or potatoes, those need root space," said Nidaru.

"That's the debate." answered the red haired farmer.

In Vancouver there was a beam of the sphere running into the earth, three quarters of the way up Grouse mountain. This was raised to 12,000 ft.

Balloons and industrial kites were used in the construction. As well as dozens and dozens of helicopters.

In Scotland the sphere frame entered the mountain at Aviemore, but no longer, it was raised.

In South America, the sphere frame that didn't reach the Andes, finally reached.

In Asia, the frame so high above the rice paddies at sea level got even higher,

But on the Tibetan Plateau it was finally there. Just overhead.

The sphere frame was raised to Peter Pan's specifications. There would no longer be stresses causing cracks in the structure.

It was complete. The bell would ring.

"How about this: 'Pioneers wanted to research a new lifestyle at 42000 ft'," said Marty.

"You have to live in a spacesuit," said Ava.
"You have to live in a jet plane like structure," said Marty.
"Would get a little cramped," Ava said.
"Put on the spacesuit and go skydiving," said Marty.
"And there are gardens to grow right inside the capsule?" asked Ava.
"I guess," said Marty.
"You will be self sufficient farmers creating your own hydrogen to keep your balloons afloat"he added.
"Hindenburg," said Ava.
"Boom," said Marty.

Mrs. Kingsley was on a holiday in hawaii, with her friend Myrna.
They were lying by the pool in Waikiki talking about the new beams.
"24 in all. They found failure signs in all of them," she said.
"So they're all getting replaced?" asked Myrna.
"That's right, using the formula from Stanley's notes," said Mrs. Kingsley.
"Exciting," said Myrna.
"Too much so," said Mrs. Kingsley and she spread a little more suntan lotion on her arms.

29. Living at 42000

"This isn't so bad," said Marty lying on their new leather couch.
"If you want fresh air, don't open a window. You may die," said Ava.
"Instead of wearing spacesuits we live inside a spacesuit the size of a condo," said Marty.
"I guess the windows don't open anyways," said Ava.
"It's just like a jet. If you want fresh air you turn the little knob," said Marty.
"A stewardess should show up in a moment with warm moist towels," said Ava.
"But jets don't have bedrooms for hanky panky," said Marty.
"You wish," said Ava.
"I do." said Marty. "even at 42000 ft."

A day before they raised the sphere, Pani's goat from Africa showed up at Nidaru's village.
"Coffee," said Pani, "how did you find me?"
"Baaa," answered the goat.
"Coffee is wearing the green and black collar," said Pani.
"I made that collar with my sister," he continued then paused.
"Something must be wrong," he concluded.
The next morning he announced that he was walking back to Africa.
Nidaru walked up to the sphere frame carrying Pani's bag.
"Pretty cold walk at 12000 ft," he said.
"I'll make it," said Pani.
There was a cable ladder at the point where there used to be a walkway onto the sphere. It went up to 12000 ft.
Pani and the goat in his backpack made their farewells and climbed the ladder.
"Ete sen" said Nidaru and waved goodbye.

Ava had an aerobics class she was teaching over the web.
Marty did bartending on Saturday nights when everybody would get together at the clubhouse.
There were 8 teams doing the same try-out as Marty and Ava.
"We're kind of practicing to live in outer space," said Alice Smear.
"At least when I drop a pen there's gravity to make it fall," said Ava.

But that was all. Marty was starting to feel a bit cooped up in their place, working one day a week. Growing vegetables the rest of the time.

"We gotta jump," said Ava.

"To go dancing, or to go to Easter Island?" asked Marty.

"Just to fly," said Ava. And so it would be.

30. Tamara and Peter Pan are in trouble in the South Pacific

"Easter Island is not the South Pacific," said Ava. She was talking to Tamara on Skype.

"They say it's part of Polynesia," said Tamara.

"We got a message that said you were in trouble in the South Pacific," said Ava

"No Polynesia," said Ava.

"What's the trouble?" asked Ava.

"Peter and I have been thrown in jail," said Tamara.

"You know Marty and I are living at 42000. it may be hard to get there," said Ava.

"Do you have to wear space suits?" asked Ava.

"Only when we go outside," said Ava. "What did you guys do wrong?"

"Long story. I think you better get here and make bail," Tamara answered

"On it," said Ava and it was clear they were jumping again.

The Armstrong limit, often called Armstrong's line, is the altitude that produces an atmospheric pressure so low (0.0618 atmosphere or 6.3 kPa (1.9 inHg)) that water boils at the normal temperature of the human body: 37 °C (98.6 °F). It is named after Harry George Armstrong, who founded the U.S. Air Force's Department of Space Medicine in 1947 at Randolph Field, Texas.[Note 1] Armstrong was the first to recognize this phenomenon, which occurs at an altitude beyond which humans absolutely cannot survive in an unpressurized environment.[1] The altitude is variously reported as being between 18,900–19,350 meters (62-63,500 feet, or about 12 miles

"So at 42000 ft we're well below the Armstrong limit where your blood boils." said Marty.

"Still fucking freezing," said Ava.

"We just have to fill our lungs with pure oxygen before we jump, lose the nitrogen," said Marty.

"Worked last time," said Ava putting on her oxygen mask.

And they were away.

Pani went to his father's funeral and he helped carry the coffin.

His sister sat silently beside him at the ceremony, a single tear running down her cheek.

"Our father has followed our grandfather," said his sister.

"Our brother has passed too, I'm the only male left," said Pani.

"Don't worry about us. Sisters are doin it for themselves," said his sister.

And then Marty and Ava are flying again, old hands, making bail for a sister in jail, they tumble in the wind, shouting silently, swimming in the air, seeking bearings.

"I'll bet they didn't do anything too bad," says Marty when they pause at 12000.

"Shoplifting," says Ava and flies away.

31. What happened in Easter Island that ended up with Tamara and Peter Pan in jail?

"Things changed a lot in the six months since they raised the sphere to 12000,"said Peter.

"Those are the 6 months since we've been living at 42000 on a research grant,"said Marty.

"A kind of bacchanalian attitude overtook the world in the last half year,"said Tamara.

"I guess if you were making good money with 3000 feet of crops before, at 12000, you were making 4 times more,"said Peter Pan.

"Reason to celebrate,"said Marty.

"We got caught up in it, going to some pretty wild parties on weekends, and back to work on weekdays," said Tamara.

"Then we started jet setting,down to the Galopogas or even up to California," said Peter.

"Raves in Antarctica,or in Easter island," said Tamara.

"So you were at a rave?"asked Ava.

"Rapanui rap, it was lame,"said Tamara.

"And it got busted,"said Peter.

The thing about the trip between Ghana and India, is that it's a very hot route. Of course at 12000 it

can be a different story.

A few months after being home, his sister in charge of the family shoemaking business, Pani was on the road again.

Mostly the walk was sweaty hot,and pleasant, but when the winds blew and snow and rain fell, it was terrible. Trying to stay balanced on the beam became impossible, and all that could be done was to hunker down under a blanket and wait.

Ava and Marty burst into the police office on Easter Island expecting to take great action, but found a lineup.

"Doing brisk business," said Marty.

After an hour waiting they made it to the front of the line.

"Next," the lady at the desk shouted right at them.

"We'd like to post bail for our sister," said Ava quietly. She handed their names over on a piece of paper.

"Part of the rave?" said the lady.

Yes," said Ava meekly.

"She has a star beside her name," the lady said.

"What does that mean?" asked Marty.

"She has to stay for further questioning," said the lady.

The immunosuppressant drug sirolimus was first discovered in the bacterium *Streptomyces hygroscopicus* in a soil sample from Easter Island

Starting in August 2010, members of the indigenous Hitorangi clan occupied the Hangaroa Eco Village and Spa.[43] The occupiers allege that the hotel was bought from the Pinochet government, in violation of a Chilean agreement with the indigenous Rapa Nui, in the 1990s.[44] The occupiers say their ancestors had been cheated into giving up the land.[45] According to a BBC report, on December 3, 2010, at least 25 people were injured when Chilean police using pellet guns attempted to evict from these buildings a group of Rapa Nui who had claimed that the land the buildings stood on had been illegally taken from their ancestors.[46]

"We think you have local ties," the sergeant said.

"We know no one here," said Peter.

"Only a moment to prove it," said the sergeant.

"I found us a great place to stay. it's called the Hangaroa Eco Village and Spa," said Marty.

"Looks expensive," said Ava.

"Where we live we have free food and housing. We have no use for cash," said Marty.

"Gotta live sometime," said Ava.

gotta die sometime too.

32.A Cascade of Errors

Pani crossed the Indian ocean again looking south at Zanzibar and the Seychelle islands, and then North/East to Mauritius, Reunion, and the Maldives.

"This is where I met Niduru last time," he said to the tiny African goat Coffee, who was folded into his pack.

In general the walk was many times more populated than the last time he'd done it.

The new subcontinental sector over the Indian ocean was a bizarre of East African and Indian fabrics, jewellery and carvings,

but mostly a farm with John Deer pulley tops sliding along on i-beams doing industrial work.

Trays were big with the Indians with rice and wheat growing in large ferris wheel patties, water pumped in from above.

"Young man can I interest you in a fortune telling?" said an old lady to Pani.

"I am walking to India to see a friend," Pani said.

"Beware the red cap," said the old lady.

Pani had a red cap in his backpack, was that what she was talking about?

The Sergeant was angry.

"We know that your accomplices are at the Hangarua Eco Village," he said.

Peter Pan was incredulous.

"Who?" he asked.

"They signed in as Marty and Ava," said the Sergeant.

"Yes we know them, that's my sister and her guy," said Tamara.

"That hotel is a big dispute on Rappanui, between the Chilaen Colonial powers and the locals" said the Sergeant.

"We didn't know they were going to stay there," said Marty

"They just flew in to pick us up," said Ava.

"There will be a small delay," said the sergeant.

And there was.

Mrs. Kingsley showed up 2 weeks later.

"Things start happening when the person with money arrives," she said quietly.

"Quatro personas that you have in jail. I've come to pay their bail," she

said to the sergeant.

"And your name?" he said writing on a form.

"I think I need to pay a fine," she said. "In my experience the payment of fines relieves tension in these situations."

"Pay somebody, it's gotta help," said Marty.

Pani put the red cap on when he reached Bombay.

It was a trick Niduru had taught him to make himself available for happy coincidences.

"Nimbu pani," shouted a hawker selling lemonade out of a bucket.

"Lemon water" she shouted in English.

"I would like one cup," said Pani.

The old lady wiped a mug with her dirty towel and poured a clean fresh drink.

"Delicious" said Pani smiling.

This old lady only spoke a tribal dialect. Her Hindi wasn't even very good.

She reached out a hand and stroked the red cap on Pani's head, making clucking noises.

Pani took his leave and wondered about the strange new power of his red cap.

They didn't stay at the eco lodge that night. When they finally got free they bought the last three rooms at the other main hotel.

"Here's to new freedom," said Mrs. Kingsley when they met in the restaurant for dinner.

"Two weeks later," said Peter Pan toasting.

33. Trading lives

Maybe they drank a little too much wine at that dinner with Mrs. Kingsley,

because Tamara and Ava traded lives.

That is, Peter Pan and Tamara would take over the research project at 42000 ft, and Marty and Ava would come down lower and pursue other paths.

Marty and Ava were in the city at Tamara's old highrise complex.

They were staying in Mrs. Kingsley's spare room.

"I can't believe it's available," said Marty reading the want ads on his pad.

"What," answered Ava.

"Our old apartment, under the kite, except now it's hung from the sphere at 12000 ft," said Marty.

"Hung low I hope," said Ava.

"Ad says it's at 3000 ft just like the old days," said Marty.

"Let's check it out," said Ava grabbing her coat.

Coming home from the clubs in the bright city night to an elevator door on the roof of a warehouse.

A 40 minute commute up the cable to 3000 ft. Marty drunkenly cops a feel on Ava, like the old days.

Ava thinks about the warm bed in their new apartment in the sky.

600 square ft. not 2000 like the place they had at 42000, ah well baby steps.

Tamara and Peter were kind of amusing scurrying around the Condo at 42000 cleaning up

for Marty and Ava's visit.

"Did you wash the windows?" asked Peter.

"There's a spray," said Tamara looking through the cupboard.

"Super Windex," and she found it and gave things a quick wipe down.

"I guess we leave the exterior to maintenance," said Peter.

"Not a lot of dust build up when the winds are howling," said Tamara.

"Sita I am leaving, the business is in good hands with Vikram, the world is in my heart," said Nidaru Shanka.

"Follow your heart," said Sita, romantic like a Hindi Movie.

And he walked up the mountain to the cable ladder. The bamboo walkway had been upgraded and was hanging from cables at 3000 ft.

He met the sadhu sitting at the intersection and asked him a question.

"Master do you not blow in the wind hanging so far on a cable so long?"

"Yes," he answered, and he made a swinging motion with his arm.

"Seems fine today," said Nidaru

"Yes," answered the Sadhu.

34. Bed and Breakfast

Marty and Ava made it up to 42000 to see Peter and Tamara a few weeks later.

"I like what you've done with the furniture," said Ava.

"Just rearranged, it's not like we could get new stuff way up here," said Tamara.

"But those throws and blankets remind me of all your places for the last few decades." said Ava.

"Home is where you hang your hat," said Peter.

"Hang your throws," said Ava.

And Marty and Peter headed off to the greenhouse to discuss the automated agriculture.

"Kind of weird how there's nothing for humans to do" said Peter.

"What do you mean, You've got to eat the produce," said Marty.

"After the robot grows it, harvests it, and puts it in the fridge," said Peter.

"It's yummy," said Marty.

"Filling the hydrogen balloons and capturing the energy with solar panels to make hydrogen, that's all automatic too." said Peter.

"Nice isn't it," said Marty.

"So machines are in charge of feeding us and keeping us aloft, what if they break?" asked Peter.

"Understudy robots," said Marty.

"Backup life," said Peter Pan.

"Exactly," said Marty.

Pani and Nidaru had "Hot Curry" network cell phones in their pockets.

As they approached New Delhi from the east and west, the phones started working and they gave each other a call.

"Ete sen" said Nidaru.

"Hello," said Pani from the west coast.

Pani was one of those people that shout making long distance calls hoping their voice will travel further.

"I see you are wearing that red cap," said Nidaru.

"It has omens around it," said Pani.

"Beware the red cap," said Nidaru kidding.

"Exactly," answered Pani amazed.

"What's this?" Marty was looking at some papers on a desk outside the greenhouse.

"A business plan, I want to start a bed and breakfast," said Peter.

"I guess people might come up for the weekend," said Marty.

"I hope a lot of people," said Peter.

"I think you need somebody on the ground, marketing," said Marty.

"Funny you should mention that," said Peter.

And Marty had talked himself into a new job.

"This is where we need to go," said Nidaru showing Pani a picture of the space elevator down in Bolivia.

"Walking to outer space," said Pani.

"The next installment after 'Walking to America'," said Nidaru.

35. Onwards and Upwards

"This isn't really working," said Marty.

"What?" said Ava.

"This lifestyle. I mean, retreating from the sky with our tails between our legs," said Marty.

"It was too lonely up there, we're social people," said Ava.

"Have you noticed you're spending your days amongst shallow trivial fools obsessed with tiny details and missing the big picture?" asked Marty.

"There is some uh, readjustment," said Ava.

"Going back to shallow and pretending you never did important work in the sky isn't going to do it," said Marty.

"It's hard to make a physical impact on people when you meet them on the web," said Ava.

"And you do make a physical impact," said Marty a bit creepily.

"I guess coming down from the sky so a few shallow dudes can get impressed by my body isn't enough," said Ava.

"Kind of 20-something stuff and now you're over 30," said Marty.

"Ya," agreed Ava and the topic went on the back burner to simmer a while.

The travel agent wasn't impressed.

"We're promoting a weekend trip to 42000," Marty said.

"A balloon ride up?" asked the agent.

"We've made all the arrangements," said Marty.

"My wife and I might try," said the agent.

"It's a comfortable, interesting trip," said Marty.

"In a spacesuit," said the Agent.

"Only from 12000, we stop to get changed at the sphere frame," said Marty.

"My last jet flight was at 37000, why can't we just wear normal clothes?" the agent asked.

"You can, once you get there," said Marty.

"So the apartment is like a jet," said the Agent.

"But bigger, and with bedrooms," said Marty.

Nidaru and Pani crossed the Indian Ocean and Africa quickly. They were

going to make a quick stop over Europe, but they headed for the Carribean instead.

"Kind of surprising how close it is,"said Pani.

"We'll be there in no time,"said Niduru marching onward.

All they had to do was turn south and they'd be over Bolivia in no time.

Peter Pan had found a new vocation.

"All booked up for this year,"Marty told him.

"We're starting a new fad,"said Peter.

"I like all the guests,"Tamara said.

"We should have done this too,"said Marty.

Mrs Kingsley was having dinner again with Jorge.

"I haven't been in touch with anyone from Geodesica for months" she said.

"It's been a heady time, we really changed the world,"said Jorge.

"That's what they all say,"said Mrs. kingsley.

"Average incomes have doubled,"countered Jorge.

"Currencies have devalued!"corrected Mrs. Kingsley.

"So your Zambian Kwachas don't buy too many chinese gadgets,they just buy plenty of inexpensive nutritious food,"said Jorge.

"And housing,"agreed Mrs. Kingsley.

36. Altiplano

"So we kind of agree that coming down from the sky was a bad idea, what's next?" asked Ava.

"Outer space," said Marty.

"I just saw something on TV about that," said Ava calling up her Tivo.

"'Walking to America' stars Nidaru Shanka and Pani Ngwee are at it again, only this time they're 'walking to outer space'," said the TV.

"Don't even let the third worlders come down anymore," said Ava.

"Walk to America and find out we're assholes who won't let you in," said Marty.

"So we fly to Bolivia?" asked Ava.

"Everything between 30 and 40 thousand feet is still reserved for Jets," said Marty.

"Better than walking," said Ava.

Nidaru and Pani were freezing.

"12,000 ft is only OK when it's hot out," said Pani.

"We made it from Africa to the Caribbean OK but this walk south to Bolivia is proving to be a challenge," said Nidaru.

"There are icicles on the sphere ring," said Pani.

"Bad luck really," said Nidaru. "We're over Ecuador, that means equator."

"So what you're saying is this shit could have happened to us all along," said Pani.

"Good luck really," said Nidaru.

Marty and Ava gave notice, and a month later caught a flight to Bolivia.

"This flight is 5000 ft below where Peter and Tamara live," said Ava looking at the in-flight screen.

"The space elevator will take us way higher," said Marty.

And they landed in La Pas where bowler hatted campesino ladies in multi layered hooped skirts sold 'Bolsa Plasticos' on the street outside the airport.

"They're selling plastic bags," said Ava.

"It is the third world, even with billions in Lithium money," said Marty.

"Ah South America, where 2% of the people have 98% of the wealth," said Ava.

"Lefty," said Marty.

"Nazi," replied Ava quietly.

Pani and Nidaru were rescued from the cold when a warm front came in at the Peruvian border.

"Finally," said Pani.

"We'll have to thank that film crew that interviewed us in the Caribbean for the down ski jackets," said Nidaru stuffing his coat into his backpack.

"We thought we'd never need them," said Pani using his stuff bag too.

"Boy were we wrong," said Nidaru.

And all around the world people watched the indian TV feed as Pani and Nidaru crossed lake Titikaka and entered Bolivia.

"That border town is called Copa Cabana," said Pani.

"Isn't that a song by Barry Manilow?" asked Nidaru.

"Who?" asked Pani.

"Never mind," answered Nidaru.

37. Space elevator

Marty and Ava spent the night at a Holiday inn in La Pas, then caught a cab up to the altiplano above town.

"So fifty years later, this is still the only elevator to space?" asked Ava as they entered the large complex at the bottom of the tower.

"There's 3 more now," answered Marty. "it's just that they aren't for public use."

"It's just a thread," said Ava.

"A nanotech thread, from the top of a really big tower that starts 13000 feet up," said Marty.

"Yikes," said Ava.

"Yikes," agreed Marty.

El Alto International Airport (IATA: LPB) (ICAO: SLLP), El Alto. This is the world's highest international airport; at 13,313

"So what happened to the sphere?" asked Ava.

"Just a few beams left out for the Andes," said Marty.

Then in the centre of the shopping mall at the bottom of the elevator, Marty and Ava ran into Nidaru Shanka and Pani!

"The 'Walking to Outer Space' guys!" Ava said to Marty far too loudly.

Nidaru did the Indian head waggle side to side, nodding yes and no.

"Are you here to use the elevator too?" asked Pani, mostly because he loved talking to beautiful women.

"Ya we're going up tomorrow," said Marty.

"So are we," said Nidaru.

An awkward pause.

"Fellow space travellers," said Marty, shaking their hands.

"Yes," said Pani suddenly feeling self conscious about being a poor boy from Africa.

"See you then," said Ava leaning over to stroke the tiny goat in the boy's backpack.

"Yes," said Pani turning away to hide an embarrassing erection. Too much stroking the goat, lady.

"You gave that poor kid a hard on," said Marty as they walked away.

"They don't have the white man's absurd personal bubble around them." Ava said. "To get on a bus in Africa

is to be touched and jostled a hundred times.

"Those are just people. White women are magic," said Marty.

"Globally seen as whores, cute kid though," said Ava.

"Better torture him then," said Marty sarcastically. "Probably hasn't seen a woman in months. Let alone a white woman"

"He'll live," said Ava.

And he would.

Peter Pan and Tamara came to a turning point with their Bed and Breakfast.

"I thought we were going to get shut down by the powers that be first,"

said Peter.

"It's our business model that failed,' said Tamara. "Nobody wants to wear a spacesuit."

"These guys have the answer," said Peter showing Tamara an ad on his pad.

"So rather than wearing a suit you come up in street clothes in a capsule under balloons," said Tamara.

"Bolts right on to our airlocks," said Peter.

"We'll have to have kids to be around when that thing finally gets paid off," said Tamara.

"Let's get started," said Peter Pan with a gleam in his eye.

"Onwards and upwards," said Tamara heading for the bedroom.

Up the brick and mortar building's glass elevator to something like a radio tower on the roof.

"So now we go up this metal thing?" asked Ava.

"Just another old school elevator for a couple thousand feet," said Marty.

Nidaru and Pani were ascending too.

"So our sponsors paid for the ride up?" Pani asked Nidaru.

"If we have our pictures taken, make sure you have their logos in the shot," Nidaru said.

Ava was petting Pani's goat again, but he seemed to be handling it fine now.

"Goats in space!" said Marty.

"Unless we make a curry," said Nidaru joking.

"He wants to go up," said Pani.

'And so he shall," said Marty pressing the button on the elevator.

[QUOTE] A space elevator is a proposed type of space transportation system.[1] Its main component is a ribbon-like cable (also called a tether) anchored to the surface and extending into space. It is designed to permit vehicle transport along the cable from a planetary surface, such as the Earth's, directly into space or orbit, without the use of large rockets. An Earth-based space elevator would consist of a cable with one end attached to the surface near the equator and the other end in space beyond geostationary orbit (35,800 km altitude). The competing forces of gravity, which is stronger at the lower end, and the outward/upward centrifugal force, which is stronger at the upper end, would result in the cable being held up, under tension, and stationary over a single position on Earth. Once deployed, the tether would be ascended repeatedly by mechanical means to orbit, and descended to return to the

surface from orbit.[2]

The concept for a space elevator was first published in 1895 by Konstantin Tsiolkovsky.[3] His proposal was for a free-standing tower reaching from the surface of Earth to the height of geostationary orbit. Like all buildings, Tsiolkovsky's structure would be under compression, supporting its weight from below. Since 1959, most ideas for space elevators have focused on purely tensile structures, with the weight of the system held up from above. In the tensile concepts, a space tether reaches from a large mass (the counterweight) beyond geostationary orbit to the ground. This structure is held in tension between Earth and the counterweight like an upside-down plumb bob. Space elevators have also sometimes been referred to as beanstalks, space bridges, space lifts, space ladders, skyhooks, orbital towers, or orbital elevators.

On Earth, with its relatively strong gravity, current technology is not capable of manufacturing tether materials that are sufficiently strong and light to build a space elevator. However, recent concepts for a space elevator are notable for their plans to use carbon nanotube or boron nitride nanotube based materials as the tensile element in the tether design. The measured strength of these molecules is high compared to their densities and they hold promise as materials to make an Earth-based space elevator possible.[4] [/QUOTE]

Wikipedia 2013

38. Black sky days

The first visitor to Peter and Tamara's bed and breakfast in the sky without spacesuits was Mrs. Kingsley.

"Just like taking a taxi downtown," she said.

"As long as downtown is at 42000," Tamara greeted her with a hug.

"Jorge says we saved the world," said Mrs. Kingsley after she had settled and been served a cup of tea.

"I thought that was 50 years ago, when Terra finally made sure everyone had enough to eat," said Tamara.

"The world needed a lot of saving I guess," said Mrs. Kingsley.

"So everyone is rich and partying, is any good work getting done?" asked Peter.

"I like how they're bringing back so many animals from extinction," said Mrs. Kingsley.

"They used to need cryogenically frozen DNA, now they just need a hair or some skin to get a bit of DNA. Make up some of it too." said Peter.

"Room for some habitat, thanks to your sphere," said Tamara.

"It's not my sphere, but I do kind of think of it as Stanley's work," said Mrs. Kingsley.

"Your man set us all up, going forward," said Peter.

"I didn't even know what he was up to," said Mrs. Kingsley.

"Great work, getting down the details on sphere frame manufacture from Torban Lee," said Peter.

"That guy's brother Joergen is in outer space, I wonder if Marty and Ava are going to run into him," said Peter.

Marty, Ava, Nidaru and Pani were bored on a long, slow, elevator ride to space.

"Is there a story behind your name?" Ava asked Nidaru.

"My parents found it on Lolking," answered Mr. Shanka.

"This thing is slow," interrupted Marty rudely talking about the space elevator.

"Used to advertise it as speedy," said Ava.

"It'll take a couple days at this rate," said Marty.

"We have naan," said Pani handing out some flatbread.

"At least someone thought ahead," said Ava taking a bite.

"The older the line gets, the slower the elevator runs up it, I guess" said Marty.

"Inch by inch anything's a cinch," said Nidaru reciting a rhyme in english he had learned as a child.

"Space zen," said Marty, and they all fell silent for a while and looked down at the earth below.

Joergan Lee was one of 50 settlers hanging in the sky in geostationary orbit near the elevator top.

"What are you reading?" asked Lynn the female he lived with.

"Just another text from that old lady," he answered.

"Mrs. Kingsley, did she ever tell anyone that she knew how to contact you?" asked Lynn.

"Still our little secret," answered Joergan.

"She says she has four friends coming up though."

He began preparing for the journey to the station to meet them.

"I guess that's the end of the secret," said Lynn.

"I guess." answered Joergan, and he was out the door.

"We're all ice miners," Joergan told Marty. After they'd met up, after he'd invited them to his place for a visit.

"I heard that," said Marty.

"Need H₂O for everything. Hydrogen for power, oxygen to breathe. Outer space is just a mad scramble for water," said Joergan.

"India's Chandrayaan-1" said Nidaru proudly.

"Ya, you guys found water first on the moon," said Joergan.

"Population on the moon is way down..." said Ava.

"Well 100 million people during Terra, was way too many. 20 million now," said Joergan.

"Hydroxyl," said Pani, because an average African kid knows a little about a lot. Speaks five languages but can only afford one bottle of coke every five years.

"That was the big hope. Use the hydroxyl to solve the problem. There's lots of it all over, with Hydrogen and Oxygen, mixed in with the topsoil," said Joergan.

"Even with a terra generator up here, it's pretty expensive water," said Marty.

"24 Themis" said Pani, naming an asteroid famous for being covered in ice.

"Ya that's the game, catching icy rocks as they fly by," said Joergan.

Then they were at Joergen's place.

"It's a Boeing, just like the apartment we used to live in at 42000," said Ava.

Lynn smiled. "So you'll feel right at home," she said.

"It's a little different without gravity," said Marty.

"Same airlock," said Ava. Her and Lynn were hitting it off just fine.

"Plants grow weird up here," said Marty when the 4 men separated for a tour of the greenhouse.

"Use too much water," said Joergan grumpily.

"I would like to become a farmer in space," said Nidaru.

"Me also," said Pani. And that's the way things would work out.

39. Drinking in space.

"The Russian cosmonauts have always done a little drinking in space," said Nidaru with a slightly drunken slur.

"This bottle of Glenfiddich was sent up by an old lady you know," slurred Joergen, a trifle tipsy himself.

"I'm a bartender, I don't partake," said Marty, but clearly this wasn't true this evening.

"Wishky," said Pani, off his rocker after just one cup.

"These cups are cool," said Marty, examining the narrow capillary vessel they were all drinking from.

"We learned to handle fluids in weightless conditions designing fuel tanks," said Joergen.

"Miniscus," said Pani, remembering missionary science class.

"Exactly, surface tension," said Joergen demoing how the liquid stayed in the cup without flying away.

"I've seen the future of bar tending," said Marty.

And he had, because Marty was the future of bartending. The man who brought squished space cups to everyone's kitchen.

Ava and Lynn were having a glass of wine by themselves too.

"Marty will love these cups," said Ava, examining how her wine stayed in the special narrow vessel, even in zero gravity.

"It's how a tree gets water to it's highest branches, capillary action," said Lynn.

"How a paper towel pulls water uphill," she added.

"But in this case the liquid is held down by surface tension."

"Magic," said Ava.

"Here's to magic," said Lynn, making a toast.

Mrs. Kingsley called using Skype from Peter Pan and Tamara's place.

Everyone was hungover and sagging when her cheery face popped up.

"Rise and shine sleepy heads," she called.

"Mrrrr" said Marty trying to respond.

"Looks like you people got my bottle of Glenfiddich," she said.

"Mrrrr", said Marty.

"So Joergen, did they spend the whole night grilling you about the cracks in the sphere frame?" she asked.

"It never came up," said Nidaru in a surreally cheery mood for some

reason.

"I need to ask about the burrs I felt while I was walking with my saree safety belt," he added.

"Old news now," said Joergen in a very deep hangover voice.

"Those beams have all been replaced." he added.

Pause.

"I'll let you people sleep," said Mrs. Kingsley.

The room instantly fell silent.

Tamara tried the Skype again after noon.

"Anyone there?" she whispered.

"They're all still asleep," whispered Lynn as she walked by.

"Drukards," said Tamara.

"I heard that!" said Marty awakening from the dead on the couch.

"At least you can hear something," laughed Tamara.

"Mrrrr," said Marty, falling back to sleep.

And as the days passed it became clear that our four travellers hadn't really planned ahead.

"Walking to outer space without a strategy," said Joergen.

"Well Nidaru and Pani are interested in agriculture," said Marty.

"And Marty wants to be a space bartender," said Nidaru.

"That only leaves Ava," said Joergen.

"Excercise!" said Pani.

"I'll take your aerobics class if you offer it," said Lynn to Ava.

"Aerobics without gravity is a whole new direction," said Ava.

"All settled then," said Joergen, everyone has a job.

And for a moment it was.

Over the city writing in the sky appeared.
"The Second Story is Back," it said.
And it rained down pamphlets dropped from the passing planes.
"People of earth we are speaking to you today to ask you to reboot your imaginations," the pamphlet said.
"Paper that can talk," said Marty.
"Sounds like a goof," said Ava. They were at an aerobics teacher's convention, she was cranky and tired at the end of the day, and pissed at Marty for being so attracted to her colleagues.

Nidaru reached his wife, Sita in his second week in space.
"Still following my heart, " he said.
"Your heart used to lead you to me," said Sita.
Nidaru did the side to side head waggle.
"An arranged marriage, not a love match," he said.
"I love you, even if my parents chose you," she said.
"I love you too," said Nidaru, but there were no promises about when he would be returning home.

Mrs. Kingsley was leaving Peter Pan and Tamara's place at 42000.
"An excellent stay in an excellent place," she said.
"You'll have to come up and visit again," said Tamara.
"Now that I don't have to wear a spacesuit, it's easy," she said.
"Ava and Marty make us look not so high in the sky, when they're up in space" said Tamara.
"I'd like to visit them too," said Mrs. Kingsley.
"Go for it," said Peter Pan.

"In Terra Days we achieved a minimum for everyone," said the pamphlet.
"In Blue sky days we achieved some wealth for everyone.
We're all rich thanks to the sphere frame and the new dimensionality.
We're happy in skyscrapers buried under the earth. We don't mind living under the sea.
Now it's black sky days. What if outer space could offer unlimited wealth?
If wealth involves the ownership of the land, the means of production, if

landowners around the world create the wealth,

what if that became unlimited? We certainly have unlimited amounts of outer space.

All bathed in sunlight if we stay an appropriate distance from that star.

What we are proposing today is a cost and engineering breakthrough that could elevate humanity for ever more.

We think we can farm and make money in outer space."

"Do plants even grow in space," Ava asked Marty when she found the pause button on the pamphlet.

"It cost a fortune right now, gotta make water, get fertilizer," said Marty.

"I guess they figured out water." she said, hitting play again.

41. Home to Space

After the conference, Marty and Ava flew back down to La Pas in a jet, and took the elevator up to Joergen's.

"We got you an apartment," he said when they arrived, and he showed them to another Boeing just down the steel mesh cage street, like they had lived in at 42000.

"A few things are different, it has grab bars on the roof," said Marty.

"Just like your place," said Ava to Joergen,

"You and Lynn have shown us the way."

The pamphlet went on.

"Our founder Stanley Kingsley, talked about the Second story as a religion.

"We will live in the skies. Where the dreams can be big, and mankind can fly."

We follow his dreams, into the future."

Mrs. Kingsley threw the pamphlet in the air in outrage.

"Stanley you won't like what these boys are up to. They're proposing a ring around the sun," she said out loud to her dead husband.

"A ring around the sun "said Marty when he got to that part of the presentation in the pamphlet he'd brought back up from the city.

He was lying on the couch, in their new apartment in space.

"Big thinking," said Ava.

"Too fuggin big," said Marty doing a summersault in the weightlessness.

Nidaru and Pani were in the dorm at the Geostational Agricultural Institute.

"Osteoporosis, that's what everyone gets from being in Space," said Nidaru.

"Ava's got our backs," said Pani from the bottom bunk.

"Hope so," said Nidaru and for the first time he was homesick for Sita.

42. The answer to life, the universe and everything

"Jokes, these people tell jokes" said Nidarnu.

"Not as serious since they went from 100 million to 20 up here," said Pani.

"25 with our new home town of geosynhopolis," said Nidaru.

"Space slum," said Pani.

"This place illustrates what can happen when there are no rules, no design to work from," said Nidaru.

"Chaos emerges," said Pani.

"Structures emerge, it's really very wonderful how bottom up organization was allowed to work," said Nidaru.

"Allowed to make a mess." said Pani.

"Come on lift those knees," Ava shouted to her class, teaching aerobics without gravity.

"Osteoperosis is a loss of bone mass!" she said like it was a new routine.

"We are strengthening the muscles that surround the bones now, I'm still working on a way to strengthen the bones themselves," she said.

"Boning," said Marty exercising in the front row.

"Big help," said Ava and moved on to the core.

The pamphlet went on:

"The earth flies around the sun every year. What if we learned to leave objects in our path, and retrieve them one year later?"

"What if every month we came up to a vegetable station, filled their water tanks and took their produce. What if each station had very large fields to farm.

"Sounds good," said Ava.

"Can opener to my brain," said Marty

"Probably bullshit," said Ava.

"There is that," said Marty.

And all over the world the people talked about the pamphlet that fell from the sky and talked.

The kids used soccer balls and tennis balls to mimic the motion of the planetary bodies involved.

Economists punched the numbers, did the math. Saw \$.

Ava and Marty started an aerobics studio and a bar.

They were super broke.

43. Re Birth.

A renaissance happened.

The Asians were talking about 12 human settlements, one at each month-stop, 10 billion each, so 10 times the population of earth at that time.

Big breeders the Asians, 70% of the human race, a people with ambition.

"12 space cities," said Marty.

"Hope they have g-force like my Nautilus-X," said Ava.
Everything would.

Tamara and Peter Pan learned to fly on the wind. Peter's kite could fly pilotlessly and it followed them as they grew roots in the sky and started a family.

"We'll call him Barrie," said Tamara holding the bump in her stomach.

"The creator of Peter Pan," said Peter.

"That guy JM Barrie, Tamara wants to name her kid after, wasn't he a pedophile?" said Marty.

"That old movie called 'Finding Neverland,'" said Ava.

"Whatever, he created Peter Pan," said Marty.

"The child creates the father. Heavy load to carry," said Ava.

"Tamara's weird," said Marty.

"You said that," said Ava.

"We only can stay up here for 6 months." Nidaru told Sita when they talked on Skype.

"Such a long time," said Sita.

Nidaru wagged his head.

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder," he said.

"Follow your heart," Sita said unenthusiastically.

"It's a Nautilus-X," Ava told Marty.

"Hundred grand," she said.

"I hear there's a lot of artificial gravity on the moon these days, just not

up here in the space slums,"said Marty.

"State of the art in 2010,"she said.

"Nasa did the design right?" said Marty looking around in a virtual tour on the screen.

"It was decommissioned and a guy bought it and mass produced them in china,said Ava.

"100 years old but nice quality,"said Marty.

"Good enough for my Aerobics Studio,"said Ava.

"Small classes,"said Marty.

"Very,"said Ava, with a worried look on her brow.

44. Plans evolve

"Boy that mega project in outer space is morphing," said Marty.

"Good thing they have'nt built anything yet," said Ava.

"The Earth-Sun Lagrangian Point is filling up," said Marty.

"Buy now," said Ava.

"These people are going to steal investment out to deeper space when clearly geosynchronous orbit has not been exploited enough," said Nidaru.

"If we spend a few hours a day at Ava's studio it will make our stay up here longer," said Pani.

"Because you want to harvest this crop," said Nidaru.

"We will make local mean something new," said Pani.

Marty's bar had a grand opening.

It was just down the steel cage street from their apartment, and his idea was to put a tunnel between them so he didn't have to wear a space suit to get to work.

During the day he hung at Ava's new aerobics studio and took in some gravity.

Tonight was the party though, and he was filling up new space cups with 'Marty's emblazoned on them, handing them out.

"Cup is cool," said Ava over the loud music. She was looking hot, there's no other way to describe it.

"Cheap plastic shaped like a jet wing," said Marty.

"You had to squeeze my beer out of a bag," she said.

"Udder nonsense," said Marty.

"Fun bags," said Ava with a smile moving on to mingle, because tonight was about Marty and his stupid sexist jokes were what was on tap.

"Welcome!" shouted Marty raising a space cup to the crowd.

The nautilus x was creaky.

"Down side to it being 100 years old, a few creaks," said Marty.

"This is a cheap knock-off from China," said Ava. "It's only 50."

"Creaks like an amusement park ride," said Marty.

"Tilt a hurl," said Ava remembering her younger days.

"Nice gravity, though" said Marty dropping a pen.

"Nice enough for me," said Ava, and her aerobics in g's would be a hit.

Mrs. Kingsley went into 'The Second Story' headquarters.

"May I help you?" the women behind the desk asked.

"My husband was Stanley Kingsley," was all she replied with.

"Just a moment," the woman said, and Mrs. Kingsley was lead to an office down a hallway.

45. Lagrange

"We're talking 1725, old guys like Euler," said Marty.

"And Lagrange was a contemporary of his?" asked Ava.

"I heard this all from Sherman at the bar," said Marty nodding.

"It's cool that they even thought about such abstract shit in those days," said Ava.

"Pretty abstract to me right now," said Marty.

"Minister, our tribal elders have suggested I contact you," said Pani.

"I've been briefed on the great work you're doing in outer space," said the Minister.

"Now it's time for Ghana to invest," said Pani.

"Agriculture in space?" asked the Minister.

"Time to free up the land for nature," said Pani.

"The rhinos will thank you," said the minister.

"I think we can make money," said Pani.

"We can try," said the Minister.

Marty and Ava were the talk of the space town and their new son Neo was pioneering skateboards in space.

Business was good at the array of Nautilus and other kinds of g-force devices that Ava assembled to work out in.

Marty's bar was fake gravity too now, and their apartment, so the whole osteoporosis issue faded and they could live up there for years.

Ava got her first grey hair.

Marty's paunch got a little out of control.

Neo was growing up in space which was only recommended for those living in artificial gravity.

There's no gravity when you skateboard in space. Neo was a stupid kid.

"Lakhs of income" Nidaru had told Sita but his joints started to hurt and he headed home in a jet plane from the bottom of the space elevator, to see Sita, Vikram, and his 7 other children.

Pani was still up there living in a walmart fake gravity rotor, pulling together investment. Living the dream.

Nidaru had to help.

He went and saw Vikram.

"I know I haven't been active in the family shoemaking business," said

Nidaru.

"You did 40 years of excellent service," said Vikram.

"I wasn't the founder," said Nidaru, "That was my grandfather, but now I want to start the space farming division."

"You want to send Pani money?" asked Vikram.

"Lakhs," said Nidaru, and it would be so.

"Eudora!" said the handsome older gentleman in the office.

"I haven't seen you since Stanley brought you home for dinner," said Mrs. Kingsley.

"Robert Palmer," he said.

"You and Stanley started 'The Second Story,'" she said shaking hands.

She was too old to get a shiver down her spine from the touch of a man but strange things happened.

"I hope you like our direction," he said.

"That's what I came in to talk about," said Mrs. Kingsley.

Neo got osteoporosis from his skateboarding-in-space habit and the family of 3 had to move back down to gravity for good treatment.

"Blue sky days again," said Marty trying to be cheerful.

"We both are going to have to sell our businesses in space," said Ava.

"Sorry for the disruption, this treatment should only take a year or two," said Neo.

"Fugging spaceboards," said Marty.

"Thanks for letting me try it," said Neo.

"The older you get, the more you have the right to do self destructive things," said Ava.

"I'll try not to abuse that right," said Neo.

Nidaru sent Pani 20 lakhs of rupees. India is a country with 90% poor people but 30 million wealthy upper class people.

The population of Canada. There are almost a billion lower caste people seeking employment so Nidaru grew up with 3 or 4 people working for the family.

In india it's cheaper to hire a servant to wash your clothes than to buy a clothes washing machine.

Nidaru had created 4 branches of their shoe empire. He had modernized and trimmed and handed it to Vikram in great shape.

Now he was risking everything on vegetables in space.

Marty, Ava, and Neo, found an apartment in the city. In the 12 building high rises that Mrs. Kingsley lived in.

Neo spent his days looking at outdoor magazines.

"They want me to hike. Uphill especially," he said.

"Strengthen your bones, see earth" said Marty.

"Twist an ankle," said Ava.

"I'm not afraid. I'm afraid of not trying," Neo said to his Mom.

"Exactly," said Marty and tossed him his backpack. Grabbed his car keys.

They were driving to Yellowstone.

Tamara, Peter Pan and their son Barrie came for a visit a few weeks later. Marty and Ava's was a bit small so they stayed in Mrs. Kingsley's spare

room.

"Yellowstone is cool," Ava heard Neo telling Barrie.

And a few weeks later the four men: Marty, Peter, and their boys headed down there.

In the four months of that spring and summer, Marty would get in the best shape of his adult life.

Mrs. Kingsley wondered what Robert Palmer's agenda really was.

"We've been at this for 50 years now," said Robert.

"After Tera we dreamed of a life in the skies and 5 decades later well, you're heading to Deep Space." said Mrs. Kingsley.

"Lagrangian summer," said Robert, speaking poetry or nonsense as far as Mrs. Kingsley was concerned.

"I'm against your deep space ideas," said Mrs. Kingsley.

"I wonder what Stanley would think?" said Robert.

"As long as you wonder," said Mrs. Kingsley.

47. A Picture on the Wall

Yellowstone was awesome.

It was early summer so the bugs should have been fearsome, but they scaled the peaks into an alpine that was like fall, forgiving and beautiful.

"Snow is gone early," said Peter Pan sitting on a rock breathing heavily after a difficult ascent.

"Stays a little longer each year," said Neo.

"Global cooling," said Barrie like it was normal.

"Place used to get warmer every year when I was a boy," said Marty.

"Old school." said Neo, because it was.

Ava got a job teaching fitness for over 40's but she didn't really like it. She kind of resented Neo for getting sick and stealing her away from her work in space.

"Get over yourself," Marty told her, but she was having a hard time.

Mrs Kingsley told her that 'time heals everything', and she hoped that was true.

"Neo will heal," she said in bed that night.

"Mrrf," said Marty worn out from hiking.

Neo had a picture on his wall of the 4 guys hiking in Yellowstone.

"I grew up in outer space, I think rocks and moss are really cool," he told Barrie on Skype.

When he went missing they knew where he would be.

After Tamara, Peter Pan and Barrie died in the explosion.

After Neo lost his mind.

"What the fuck?" Marty hoped he hadn't heard right.

"There's been an explosion at 42000," Ava said softly, "Tamara, Peter, and Barrie, are dead."

Papers were only printed in those days when there was important news. The explosions at 42000 were just that, The Second Story was the main suspect.

"Mrs. Kingsley is right in the middle of this," Marty said to Ava.
"She's having dinner tonight with one of their leaders," said Ava.
"I hope he tells her why they're so fugging out of line," said Marty.
"I hope," agreed Ava.

48.Charged

Neo was up visiting Barrie when the explosions happened.

He jumped. Freaked out and falling. Feeling the absence already, the hole in his heart that was left where Barrie and his family once resided.

Without a chute and just wearing a shitty fashion wing suit,he pulled it off,landed and disappeared.

Hitching up to Nelson on the Hope-Princeton, then south to Yellowstone.

Marty found Neo's name in the check-in book at two of the campsites they'd stayed at on their journey together.

"He's re-enacting our trip," Marty told Ava on the phone, driving away from the campsite, eating some food.

"Keep looking, I'm flying to Yellowstone,"Ava said.

She detached the picture in Marty's room and took it with her.

Mrs Kingsley felt the shiver again, when Robert Palmer kissed her on the cheek as they met for dinner.

"Under today's circumstances, I don't really know how to begin,"she said.

"It wan't us. It's some kind of elaborate frame up." said Robert.

"Because The Second Story got out of the terrorist business years ago," said Mrs. Kingsley.

"We're still out of the terrorist business, but people remember us for our violence," said Robert.

"Maybe deep space," said Mrs. Kingsley.

"Have to move now," said Robert, and actions would occur.

Neo was trying to figure out tree species.

"I can't tell between an aspen and a poplar," he said to the forest.

He had only a few raisins for food, but he had a book suggesting ways to live off the land.

Neo was going to get in trouble. He was doing all the stupid things romantic tourists attempt and fail at.

He was from outer space.

What can be expected?

Ava drove away from the airport in her rental car.
She met Marty at the Motel 6 where they had stayed on the camping trip.
They were distracted.
"I brought his spare cell phone," said Ava.
"He'll want that," said Marty.
"You have the same charger," said Ava.
"Better charge him up," said Marty grabbing his cord.
"Better," said Ava.
In the morning they would hike.

49. Over-40's parents

The funeral was tragic. A 12 year old boy and his parents who died without sense.

"Tamara used to piss me off but I loved her," said Marty.

"Peter Pan was just a nickname he got from a sticker on his kite. His real name was Arn," said Ava.

"Barrie was only 12 years old but he touched us all in heartfelt ways," said Arn's nephew from Denmark.

"The best thing about climbing up mountains with you is I get to watch your ass," Marty said to Ava as they hiked through the woods.

"You go in front then, you've got the most improved body," said Ava.

"You always were a pervert, just now I can feed you your fodder," said Marty wiggling his torso with pride.

"Take off your shirt," said Ava loudly.

Marty did what he was told but didn't hike on.

It fell silent

"You take off your shirt," said Marty quietly.

Ava did what she was told.

"We have to remember to get dressed before we get to Neo," she said matter of factly, walking away topless.

Pani was a space vegetable magnet.

Everyone got that the huge deep space initiative was on it's way forward, and for some reason funding geosynchronous, near space ventures, got fashionable.

The plants grew in lattices that looked like huge snowflakes in space.

Pani controlled twenty, soon to be thirty, of these flakes.

The produce went down the elevator to La Pas where it was distributed to Lima, Sao Paulo, even up to Las Angeles.

There were 'space food' franchises where the mutant nature of the plants was emphasized.

Food prices went down as the new supply arrived. Pani weathered it and got into selling moon food, a line of frozen dinners developed 50 years ago on the moon.

"There is no logic to this, people buy it because they want to feel trendy. And the corn chips, vegetable samosas, fruit smoothies, and veggie pizzas got

sold around the world, and Pani grew rich. An African with money.

Ava heard a group of boy scouts on the trail heading towards them.
"So ends our over-40s moment of lust," she said rummaging through Marty's back pack which was still on his back.

Some women look best in rags. In Marty's oversized and sweaty t-shirt Ava was crushin' it.

The boy scouts were impressed as they walked by.

Neo was at the summit, playing with glass

"I've heard you can start a fire using just broken coke bottles."

He was delirious. There wasn't even any wood so high up.

"We'll start a fire and fix this bivy." he said adding rocks to his bivouac.

In the morning there were icicles on his sleeping bag.

50 Camping

"Did you put out the fire?" asked Ava as they were camping in their tent.

"Yeah" answered Marty starting to fall asleep.

"So five more hours tomorrow?" she asked.

"Mrfff" answered Marty, starting to drift

"Good night lover." said Ava.

"Mrff,said Marty.

Neo rubbed the two sticks together like he'd seen in the youtube video up in space.

It was quite a lot wetter here than in that video.

At least I moved down below the tree line.

There'll be a fire tonight if I can just make some sparks.

Warm is the goal, warm and dry.

The summer evenings are arid , thank goodness because my attempts at a shelter are bad.

I'm losing it talking to myself.

Ya.

Ava and Marty had left the trails and were making a rough ascent to the peak of the mountain.

"It was warmer when we first did it," said Marty.

"Earlier in the season," said Ava, out of breath.

"Even though we're all dirty and gross I still think you're a hotty," said Marty.

"Mrrfff," said Ava up ahead starting to climb with her hands.

There was a huge trial at The Hague in Holland.

Robert Palmer took the stand.

"We feel that our group 'The Second Story' has been falsely accused. Of late it has come to light that there are legacy splinter factions of our group however. We don't have control over them."

"Don't tell them that," whispered Mrs.Kingsley under her breath as she watched from the audience.

Then they found Neo.

Pawing through the skree like a bear cub digging for roots, he greeted them with a strange enthusiasm.

"We brought you your spare phone," said Marty.

"No service up here," Neo replied.

"I got a few bars back at our campsite," said Marty.

"For a few minutes," said Ava.

"In a dream," said Neo.

"Back at the hotel. there's service," said Marty.

"Let's go," said Neo, and off they went.

51. Manta Ray In the Sky.

People thought we were kidding when we spread out that first tarp on farmland. Half an acre that learned how to float in the sky, using our first balloons. First 6 months were just practice, then we built our first hard platform out of half inch plywood and 2X4's, mostly held together by screws...,elevated it up a bit. When I met Gretchen Clark it was at 40 ft, and I climbed up a ladder to get to her office, floating in the sky.

"Aerodynamic," said Gretchen as she entered the room and saw me admiring the triangular design of the office.

"I guess it's pretty windy up there," I said.

"We hope so, mostly we're wind power salesmen," said Gretchen.

"I guess I'm applying for the oddball job then, sky farmer," I said.

A guy called Ribald came into the office. He joined the conversation.

"In a weird way the tether is a power source. The first designs floated free but they used as much energy just trying to stay still as they generated. Then it became clear that we were building a kite tied to the ground with a big extension cord and cable. The fact that we stood still against the wind gave us power, let us launch a lot of McKenna Powers kites. That and the sky farmer are gonna pay the bills."

"Intangibles pay the bills on this project," said Gretchen when I sat down at her desk. This was in contradiction to the info Ribald had given me.

"We sell razor blades and vaporizers as advertising tie ins.

We sell movies about us, and books, and we're hoping to produce a vegetarian lasagne when we hire a sky farmer,"

She looked at me expectantly.

Just because people want to believe the dream about the 20 unemployed people who floated off into the sky and found self sufficiency, a lot of the money was earned by the people who sit behind desks, finding sponsors through advertising," she said.

"Desks floating in the sky," I pointed out.

"Wherever," she said. "the guys who set the bar high were in Europe. They were the first balloon raft that caught enough energy to fill their own hydrogen balloons and stay afloat. That raft has been up there for years now and its still there."

"But they import all their food. A balloon comes up the cable each day with groceries." I said.

"And we have delusions we can hire a sky farmer to eat," she said

"Might still need the odd grocery balloon," I said. "but who knows?"

"I think agriculture on sky rafts is going to fail," said Ribald to Gretchen.
"The Chileans have the right idea. Grow the food on the land below you and send it up," she answered.

"I'm not sure if it's even a valid way of looking at the problem. Rafts should earn money and buy food. The self sufficiency is in the revenue stream," said Ribald.

"But if the world ends we can't count on money," said Gretchen.

"If the world ends we have to think fast," said Ribald.

"Still there are lots of things that can go wrong with a cash stream," said Gretchen.

"Better a stream of vegetables I guess," said Ribald.

"It can fail too, but it's one more base to cover," said Gretchen.

"I guess," said Ribald, and my agriculture program remained.

Then the wind died. Only happens at 3000 ft once a year or so, but we were becalmed.

Emergency measures worked perfectly. The Makenna rotors went into hover mode and acted like helicopters holding the manta ray up. The same cable that was used to sell our power became our lifeline as power came up the other way from below, powering the rotors. The tether system changed so the rotors weren't hung off the back any more but flying the ray in balance, from above. Nobody panicked. A chess game continued in the lodge.

After a few minutes balloons started to inflate. When the ray was in hover mode it automatically went into balloon mode to conserve energy.

'The second story' was written on the side of the drone that came and visited us next day. Clearly it was military surplus, the kind of thing that a dedicated amateur could put together. But these drones had hover mode and a web link to the driver. We were going to be able to talk to this thing. A weighted pamphlet with the url was dropped to us from the sky.

"Greetings," said the face on the screen when we brought it up. "my name is Conrad Astoy."

"Hello," said Ribald quizzically.

"We are a group of amateur remote control specialists from Wyoming."

"I see," said Ribald.

"Your drone travelled pretty far," said Ribald.

"It's a world traveller," said Conrad.

A few weeks went by and the drone came back every week or so. Then one day Conrad told the truth.

"The second story is a group all over the world. We want to build a surface for mankind to live in the sky."

"I guess we're honorary members." said Gretchen.

"There are 12 sky rafts around the world. There are also solar planes that stay in the sunlight as it move around the world, they've been up for years. There are skyscrapers and cables across valleys. Of course our goal is the ring."

"The ring around the world like in old science fiction," said Gretchen.

"Exactly, and we've already got a few 100 metre sections built,"

"We will live in the sky," said Ribald.

And it was coming true.

Then we changed the location where we were anchored on earth. Our foundation purchased 20 acres in the Chilcote of British Columbia. Dry escarpment between Williams Lake and Bella Coola for a very cheap price. A classic photograph was framed and hung on the wall of our canvas lodge. It showed a picket fence in the middle of a large lonely landscape. Behind the gate in the fence where a house would normally be were elevator doors. If you came to visit our new place in the country, you would go through the gate in the picket fence to the elevator doors where you could press the button, The elevator had a normal box, but it was powered by a balloon tethered to the cable electric/water/torsion that lead up to the Manta Ray.

The news came that a large company in Bolivia was going to pay for the ring to be built. Lithiumismo were rich now that electric cars were everywhere. They were changing the route though, to go by La Pas in Bolivia and Madrid in Spain. The old route was getting a lot of flak from flight route planners anyways.

A few months went by, before I went to the sky raft again. Now the platform was at 800 ft so I had to ride in a balloon elevator, tied to the cable to get there.

"So you are finally coming up to join us?" said Gretchen Clark.

"I believe in intangibles" I answered.

"Need some better food around here," she said.

Ribald shook my hand and took me on a tour.

"When I first met you you guys had graduated from a tarp in a field with

a bunch of tents to a plywood platform,"

"With a 2 by 4 frame," said Ribald.

"Now it's more like a moth, or a kite," I said.

"With a frame made of aluminum pipes," said Ribald.

"Still that original ragtag campsite look, but now it's on a moth," I said.

"Gretchen has a new streamlined aerodynamic office. It's not a tent, also there's the cockpit in the front. It's made of carbon fibre I think."

"A lot of people still live in tents though," I said.

"Lightest housing behind the wind fences," said Ribald.

"I asked for a cot," I told him.

"Sleeping on the ground isn't so bad when it's not um, the ground," said Ribald.

"I've been asked to say a few words about agriculture," it was a meeting of all the 20 aboard the Ray.

There was a canvas lodge in the centre of the surface where we could talk out of the wind.

"Can we hang planters all the way down to the earth?"

"That's a question of how much weight we can sustainably hold up.

I guess you've noticed that the balloons that brought us up here are gone now, disassembled, and we're flying at 1000 ft. like a kite."

"A kite with a cockpit and a pilot," said somebody.

"The question of how much weight we can hold up, and how much my plants will weigh are still being resolved, but yes I think we can grow a thousand potato plants and put away enough tubers for a year. After that is when it gets interesting," I said.

"In what way?" asked Lisa Peters.

"I have notes from our Dietician John Hall, that detail exactly what this 20 person crew ate last year. Now we try to grow it," I said.

52.

And then Marty, Ava, and Neo are flying. El Capitan with a crowd of base jumpers, they wing suit a little further than the others.

Pull parachutes because there are stringent safety rules and glide to the earth.

"Taxi to get back up is \$20," says Neo.

"I wonder how much the taxi to the hotel will be," says Marty.

"The Perrine Memorial Bridge spans the Snake River Canyon," reads Neo from his phone.

"That's where we jump tomorrow," says Marty.

"I like base jumping," says Ava.

"You just love to fly," says Marty.

Neo just loved to fly along.

Nidaru visited Pani in his swank new artificial gravity apartment in outer space.

"1000 square meters as if floor space matters up here," said Pani.

"If it has artificial gravity it's about walking on the floor. Floorspace," said Nidaru.

"There's lots of space in space," said Pani.

"Swank roomy place," said Nidaru.

Mrs. Kingsley met Robert Palmer on a park bench.

"I brought the information," said Robert.

Mrs. Kingsley accepted the large manila envelope.

"His name is Conrad Astoy," he added.

"I'll look into it," said Mrs. Kingsley and took her leave.

That summer Neo got a job at an amusement park in the sky.

A 3000 ft elevator ride to work each day, to an entire world marked out by a huge safety net,

with waterslides and roller coasters, cotton candy and popcorn.

"I worked at the carnival when I was a teenager," said Ava.

"On the ground," said Neo.

"I like that yellow wizzy thing," said Marty.

"You just like that I have a job," said Neo.

"That too..." said Marty.

"I did it for the future," Conrad Astoy was on his death bed.

"Those 5 installations were untenably weak. We can't become a species of weaklings," he said.

The reporter tried not to be judgemental with this monster of humanity but to just record.

"I needed to point out how vulnerable we are so we will upgrade our defences," said Conrad.

53. Won't miss you.

Ava sold her aerobics studio in outer space and made a profit.

"Finally paid off the nautilus," she told Marty.

Marty sold his bar in outer space and took a beating. Started a new dive on the steel mesh street in the sky near the amusement park where Neo worked.

"You guys can go to work together," said Ava.

"Mrfff" they both replied.

Nidaru went to work with Pani manning the huge snowflakes in space.

"So the snow flakes actually spin very slowly?" he asked.

"Like a chicken baking on a rotisserie," said Pani.

"Does it work with all plants?" asked Nidaru.

"No, some don't like changing angles of light at all, and others seem to thrive on the challenge," answered Pani.

"Thinking plants," said Nidari.

Neo had a girlfriend named Cindy Rivalgo.

"What a nice girl," Marty said to Ava.

"Dangerous," said Ava.

She came over to dinner.

Bread was broken.

After dinner Neo and Cindy took off in the flying car.

"Kids," said Marty.

"That was us," said Ava.

"Now we're old," said Marty.

A little true.

Mrs. Kingsley had her eightieth birthday party that weekend.

Everyone was there.

"What do you think Stanley would think of the bombings?" someone asked her.

"Tamara was a neighbour of mine, she didn't deserve to die," Mrs. Kingsley answered.

Conrad Astoy died before he could stand trial.

Leaving behind the memory of the five installations he destroyed.

Because the weak need to be taught a lesson.

Because sadistic assholes deserve a voice too.

Won't miss you Conrad.

54. Cindy Rifalgo

All of a sudden Neo and Cindy Rifalgo had been going out for two years.

They both worked at the amusement park, and they often went by Marty's Bar on the way home.

"Two years!" said Marty pouring the kids some orange juice.

"I only met you Cindy a few days ago," he went on.

"Time flies when you're having fun," said Neo.

"Course you have the low voice now, and whiskers on your chin," Marty was embarrassing Neo in front of his girlfriend.

"Two wonderful years," said Cindy end of discussion.

Then there were copycat incidents, explosions around the world.

The second story was up to it's old habits again.

"Ok let me get this straight. We had Conrad Astoy but he died. So now we have

other fringe elements of the second story and they're blowing stuff up too,"said the Detective.

"We've identified at least three distinct groups around the world," said his Assistant.

"What are they so pissed about?" asked the Detective.

"They go back to a time in history when there was no sphere frame in the sky. They were ambitious

lobbyists for the frame, even militant. After that frame was built and riches were gathered, they became more mainstream.

Now it seems they have a new mission. To make deep space a reality," said the Assistant.

Ava didn't like her job at workouts r us. She dreamed of her days in outer space where her work was important

and would probably effect the exercise routine of every human in space in the future.This place was lame. Marty and Neo had no

right to be loving their new life at the amusement park in the sky.She wan't loving her life in the city.

Neo was in charge of 'The Fly Line' that summer. It was a zipline at first.

Then users learned to don gliders on their backs and fly above the cable rather than hanging under it.

'The fly line' was popular, with jagged routes stretching from Neo's post all around the park. 'The cage', as people called the enclosure, was criss crossed with wires.

Cindy came and hung around a little while Neo was at work.

"You really don't have much experience with flying," said Neo as he adjusted cindy's backpack and glider so she could try the ride.

"I'm a little freaked," said Cindy.

"Don't worry, I'll teach you," said Neo and he would.

55. Jump

Then Neo and Cindy are flying.
Escaping work through a hole in the cage, they enter the open sky.
Where blimps and seaplanes fly along side, where freedom is everywhere, where Neo and Cindy find each others hearts.
But sadly danger also lurks in the open sky.
They are taken, as Neo's parents were taken many years ago, by the Second Story.
Not the normal Second Story but the new revolutionary arm: 'The Fourth act.'
To a strange encampment at a strange altitude like 29,000 ft. right below the no-fly range where jets traverse.
You can't go outside without oxygen, although if you did you might survive. Men have climbed mount everest (about this high) without oxygen.
Neo and Cindy made a pact to jump if they could.
"Might pass out for the first few thousand feet, but after that we're free," said Neo.

Nidaru and Pani sat in front of a large window in Pani's den and watched the earth.
"Even with the artificial gravity the earth stays still," said Nidaru.
"Africa is far away," said Pani looking at it dreamily.
"India too," said Nidaru.
"Good Salsa," said Pani eating some Nachos and dip on the coffee table in front of him.
"Just sent it up from La Pas," said Nidaru.
"So these are our vegetables," said Pani.
"It's working great selling the mutant vegies from space is spaghetti sauce and salsa," said Nidaru.
"Your shares are worth millions," Pani told Nidaru.
"Salsa kings," said Nidaru laughing.

Cindy Rivalgo was crying.
"It's kind of a torture. They put us in a small room and left us to stew," she said.
"It's working if you let them get to you," said Neo tapping his fingers.
"Can you stop that?" Cindy snapped.

"Sorry," said Neo apologetically.
And it went on.

Mrs Kingsley was going to outer space with Marty and Ava.
They were catching the flight down to La Pas in the morning.
"I don't even have to wear a spacesuit?" she asked as they packed up.
"Not for the last five years," said Marty.
"We show up in a big mall like an airport, and now we walk down a
pressurized street
into town," said Ava.
"We're staying at Pani's," said Marty.
"The little African boy with the goat from TV," said Mrs. Kingsley.
"He's a hot sauce magnet now," said Ava.
"Kids grow up," said Marty.

Neo and Cindy were in trouble.
Running scared from their captors through a labyrinth in the sky.
It was a clever manoeuvre. Tricking the guard with Cindy distraction to
obtain his keys,
old school and funky, to the retro jail cell and find liberty. But now, as
the search parties closed in,
it looked all for naught.
"Jump" said Cindy opening a hatch.
"We may pass out," said Neo thinking of the lack of oxygen so high up.
"Wake me up if I'm snoozing," said Cindy.
And they jumped.

56. Waking up.

They were falling.

Neo's eyes popped open around 15000 ft. He saw Cindy and angled towards her. She was still passed out.

"You told me to wake you up," he yelled over the wind.

She was still dead weight.

"We have to go North," he shouted. They were a thousand metres above the sphere frame below them. Over a covered section with solar polymer like Saran wrap.

He tried to use his wing suit and he was able to move North a little but pulling Cindy was difficult.

"You told me to wake you up," he sobbed.

Mrs' Kingsley arrived at Pani's place in outer space with Marty and Ava.

"I like those streets with grab bars," she said as they entered his spacious artificial gravity apartment.

"No need for grab bars here," said Nidaru.

"In outer space and styling," said Marty flopping down on the leather couch.

"This gravity is nice," said Ava.

"The designs are always getting better," said Pani.

"Already good enough to safely welcome an old girl like me," said Mrs. Kingsley.

They'd achieved a lot.

Cindy Rivalgo is out cold. Scissor clamped between Neo's legs, flying through the sky.

She wakes up.

"I told you to wake me up," she yells, flying next to him.

"You wouldn't listen," he replies.

"We better fly North or we'll break a hole in that Saran wrap down there," says Cindy.

"Exactly," says Neo and they do.

Ava, Marty, and Mrs. Kingsley went and visited Ava's old aerobics studio in space.

"It's a hundred year old Nautilus," Marty said.

"Old things are sometimes valuable," said Mrs. K.

"Like you," said Ava.

They entered through the core and had to wait a half an hour til the next stop to enter the spinning rooms.

"Pani's place makes this look primitive," said Marty.

"it is primitive," said Ava.

"I like it," said Mrs. Kingsley and it was decided.

"Where the fuck are we?" asked Cindy, not really the swearing type.

"No fucking idea," answered Neo not really the swearing type either.