

# Take your Time

## Zeit ist Geld

Von abgemeldet

## Take your Time

Fifty years ago shall be the time when our story is to begin. Fifty years ago, when scientists and specialists all over the world tried to find a cure for this very nasty virus which probably had in mind to free our planet of humankind. Obviously it did not succeed.

A cure was found. But it also happened that a young ambitious biologist found something more. We could say he accidentally solved the riddle mankind bothered its head about since the beginning of time.

Trying to find a way to fight a deadly virus, Arthur Bobinsky noticed our blood had one component more than anticipated.

Yet, the proportion was tiny and the substance did not seem to be especially useful to Arthur. Thus he meant to concentrate on other researches, but never got anywhere because of an unfortunate heartstroke hours after his discovery, which he had only shared with his dear friend Diddy Verhoeven, who was in fact even more ambitious than Arthur and presumably a lot more clever than his friend.

Anyway, I do not want to bother you with further details. Just let me tell you that Arthur Bobinsky did find nothing less than the key to eternal life and youth.

The substance he detected phases out during the aging process of the human body and will be called Time further on because Verhoevenistic Immortality Element is just too long.

How Time actually works is terribly difficult to explain and every time I try to it makes my head hurt. Thus I will reduce the explanation to a minimum.

First of all, Time prevents our cells from aging. But its amount is limited. Reproduction is impossible. Neither natural nor artificial.

I think it is needless to say that after this information was spilled, nobody wanted to donate blood anymore, which is quite understandable.

Also, to prolong your life, Time has to be directly injected into your blood circuit. Drinking it will not suffice.

[The cannibalism rate considerably decreased with this knowledge.]

Taking all aspects in consideration, we should either praise Arthur Bobinsky or wish for him having died only a little bit earlier.

A ban on the usage of Time failed because a group of people with a nice amount of money was very fond of the idea to live a little bit longer without losing the good looks and also did not mind a bit of human trafficking.

With the years going by, the usage of Time became common in the upper classes and the society could be easily split into two groups: The ones who used Time and the ones it was eventually made of.

Not wanting to see the aging and dying poor any more, the Time People built their houses higher, leaving the misery on the ground behind and out of sight. Imagine some kind of high-tech future Venice. Just with a sea of slums with a nicely decorated cover over it instead of water.

Of course there was still need for the lower class. Although scientists tried hard to breed a type of humanoid being that came to life with a higher proportion of Time in its blood circuit, it turned out to be a waste of time and money (mostly money, since time did not really matter any more). It was much easier to just pick a suitable lower class worker and extract Time, which led to his or her instant death though. Because killing generally is considered as a rather bad thing, people usually kept quiet about where they got their Time from.

Then there were people like Professor Venverden. Venverden's whole existence was based on owning money. Very much money. I don't know whether he had ever worked for it. Also, I don't know where his title comes from. Then again it really does not matter. Important is, that he was rich enough to afford to have children. Since Time People did not die [of old age at least. Unfortunate accidents still happened.], having children was an expensive business. For every month the newly born human being spent in the world, his or her parents had to pay enormous fines. Fines that hurt even Professor Venverden. But only as much as a midge might hurt you, while you are trying to sleep.

Still, naming the sum Venverden had already spent on his precious daughter Yvette would probably make you faint.

Thinking of how few people could afford to have children you might think Yvette had a lonely childhood, although that had not been the case at all.

Yvette's friends might have been not human, but some mechanical substitutes which were impressively close to real people. They did not grow up in the way she did. After a span of two or three years they were always replaced by a newer model. Yvette knew of this. Still it bugged her that there would never be an adult model of any of them. None of her friends would ever be older than fourteen years. She would never be able to marry Danny-X78 [Although marrying was really out of fashion. Most

people did not enjoy the idea of spending their whole life together with one partner a lot any more. I mean, a whole life was an awfully long time now.]. What a pity.

On the other hand, by the age of fourteen Yvette was able to relate to real people. The ones who didn't grow older. The ones who were forever in their early twenties. Or thirties. Depending on when they started consuming Time.

Thus, Yvette soon forgot about Danny, his large blue eyes and the cute clacking sounds his mechanism used to make everytime she pecked him on the cheek.

However, do not expect a young girl to grow up all smoothly when always surrounded by people who were blessed with a young body, yes, but cursed with minds that had aged.

Because of that Yvette's mind grew old very quickly and there was no time for her to be stupid or to make mistakes. There was never the time to figure herself out, no time to fall in love. Every question she had could be answered by someone else and since there were no answers only for her to find, Yvette stopped thinking by the day she grew up.

Maybe you will now assume Yvette to be stupid, but she was not. Being stupid means having simple thoughts as: "I am hungry. Bad. There is apple. I have mouth. I put apple in mouth. Eat. Yummy. Not hungry any more. Happy." See? Being not too intelligent does work out quite nicely.

Yvette, though, was different. There were no thoughts she could claim to be her own for she did not think at all. It was more like having somebody telling her to be hungry and to eat the apple. It also meant someone telling her to be happy, something that did not work. Yvette was empty, hence a certain feeling of unhappiness kept to linger inside of her. When Professor Venverden noticed the melancholic look that, at times, crept over his daughter's face, he consulted a doctor who prescribed Yvette pills that filled her emptiness with the most beautiful colours. Maybe it were also those colours that had made Yvette forget Danny-X78 because the blue of his eyes had the shadow of the past on it whereas the blue inside her playfully curled and laughed reaching for her heart, singing it to sleep ever so gently with a lullaby that faintly reminded her of clacking noises just much, much sweeter.

At that moment, Yvette forgot how to dream.

There is a second reason why Professor Venverden was special. It was not only having a real child, but also the possibility to be honest about where he got his Time from.

Instead of looking ashamed at his feet as most of his fellow upper class friends did when confronted with the subject, Venverden proudly declared he consumed Time legally, indeed.

You might wonder how that is possible and I have to admit, although his ways might be legal, they were far from morally correct.

Still, people gave their Time voluntarily to Mr Venverden because he could offer them

great sums of money of which they themselves obviously did not benefit. Instead it was given to their families, making a higher living standard possible. Renowned for his charitableness, Venverden was looking forward to his daughter's 21st birthday and her first injection of Time. He was a proud man and liked to display his dominance in front of others. Yvette finally turning into a proper person, seemed to be another great opportunity to remind all of his acquaintances of their inferiority.

One week to go. Yvette had never felt much pleasant anticipation before her birthdays. This time it was different. Turning 21 would not only make her an adult, it would make her a proper member of society. You might think being naturally young would have made Yvette feel at advantage. But it did not. It made her feel alien and left out. Of course she could not quite put her finger on what exactly was bugging her, but even the colourful bliss lulling in her heart and mind could not hide it. Thus, Yvette was unusually excited concerning her birthday.

Feeling a little giddy, she sat up und curled up her blankets. Yawning, she moved her still weary body out of bed. The floor was cold to the touch of her feet. 'What a nice blue', she thought. She liked the contrast of the deep red warmth of her bed and the cool blue of the floor. That is the reason why she had refused underfloor heating.

The door to her bathroom opened automatically without making any sound. The girl liked that door. Sometimes, when she was bored, she would make it open and close for hours just to watch the silvery metal panel slide back and forth. It was terribly relaxing.

However, today Yvette stepped through the opening to examine herself in the lifesized mirror. She looked quite the same as always. Her hair curled around her shoulders while her fringe neatly framed her face. She was proud of her hair. It was naturally of a dark brown, but the tips were dyed a light blue like the cold of her bedroom floor. It really was a nice blue. That was why she had also chosen it as her eye colour and for most of her clothing. Just as the vermillion she now painted her full lips with.

All in all, Yvette was stunningly beautiful and it had to be mentioned that she did not even have undergo that many surgical corrections to get her looks.

While dressing, Yvette's eyes wandered to the other side of the room.

"Hello, there", she said calmly to the goat sitting in her bathtub.

"You have the loveliest face I have seen today", said the goat.

"And you have put on a coat which is of the loveliest green I have ever seen", replied Yvette politely. The goat humbly nodded its thanks. "I strongly believe I will meet you again?", Yvette asked. "As always", was the response.

"As always it was a pleasure to talk to you", said Yvette and popped a tiny yellow pill into her mouth. She swallowed and grimaced. She wished they would only once get the flavour right. Putting a little box filled with colourful pills into one of her pockets Yvette checked her bathtub. No goat there. Satisfied she turned to leave the bathroom.

I expect you are not too eager to hear about the rest of Yvette's daily routine. I can tell you there was idle chitchat with her parents during breakfast including her Professor Venverden cracking the same joke as every day by stating how gorgeous and young they were all looking today. Since two years he was the only one laughing about it, although he did that very passionately, indeed. Yvette felt a little left out since the joke was somewhat lost on her. Only after her birthday she would be able to join her father.

Further, Yvette met with some of her closer friends. For example, there was Anthony, a handsome guy around ..., well, it is difficult to figure out the age, you see. Time People did not talk about such things after the age of 21. They could only tell you, when they were about to get their next dose of Time. Still, Yvette liked to think he might be not too much older than she was. They spent some time together, until Yvette decided that she was very bored indeed and wanted to go home.

By the time she stood in front of the door leading into her rooms, she had swallowed exactly eleven pills including the one for the goat. Six of them had been to keep the colours alive; the others had prevented Anthony from growing multicoloured tentacles and herself from talking continuously to her left hand. Nothing unusual. She felt a little lightheaded, though, when entering her living room. Thus she did not notice the young man occupying her corner sofa, until he stood up. She turned her head. Being used to unexpected visitors, whether human or not, she just blinked once or twice before eyeing him carefully. His clothes were plain, but especially clean. Actually, they looked as if they were worn for the first time. His hair was grass green. "What an unfashionable colour", thought Yvette. If he was a product of her imagination, she would be more than disappointed of herself.

Still, he was quite tall, though very thin. He was pale. Not the way Yvette was. She looked noble, he just sick.  
His lips mouthed her name.

Yvette stayed unimpressed. She knew her name. Why shouldn't he? If he was made of her thoughts it would be only natural.

'And who are you?'

He snickered lowly. 'Would it be presumptuous to call myself your Life?'

Wow, that was a new one. But why the heck did her Life look so ill? 'Yes', Yvette thought. It surely meant she had to take one more of those pills. Maybe one of the red ones? They tasted faintly of cherry. At least they should. She took one.

She blinked. Her Life eyed her quizzical. 'You ill or something?'

'You should be gone by now!', stated Yvette accusingly. "You did not tell me to go", her Life replied, now irritated.

'You are a persistent one, aren't you?' Yvette palmed another pill, but before she could put it into her mouth, her Life began laughing. 'I'm real, you know? Your pills won't make me go away.'

'That's what they're all claiming!', Yvette busted out. Now her Life really looked concerned. 'My name is Val. I wanted to meet the person I'm going to die for.'

'Oh, you're funny!' Yvette cheered. 'Are you going to die for me? That's so sweet! Why do you want to dedicate your death to me? Shall I feel flattered?' She paused. 'How did you get in here, anyway?'

Disgust was clearly visible on Val's face. 'You have either a horrible kind of humour or are the thickest person I have ever met. You're gonna turn 21. They'll take my Time and give it to you. I'm gonna be your very first injection. They told me it was an honour. Now that I see you, I feel offended. I mean, look at you!!' He gesticulated wildly with his hands. 'Look at you! You're a drugged, fucking wreck! And you're gonna live forever.'

Yvette's mouth was a thin line. What an insolent young man.

He was nothing. And by the way he was the one looking like a wreck. She was perfectly fine. If it wasn't for the rainbow twirling delightfully above his head she would have started to scream. Now, she just stared, not believing her ears.

'My sister', Val continued, 'My sister is clever. Awfully clever. And so pretty. Not in the way you are. She is not designed. My sister is ill. She's losing her eyesight. It will mean death for her. I'm doing this for her. They'll cure her.'

At first, Yvette wanted to tell him that at least seventy percent of her face was still her own, thank you very much. Instead she decided to show a little bit empathy for the young man, who was going to die, so that his sister could have some nice new functioning eyes again. Of course he did not know how cheap some new pair of eyes actually was. Sure. For him it was a fortune. For Professor Venverden it was nothing. It would explain her father's especially good mood during the last few weeks. He must have been very proud of himself for ripping young Val off. Oh how clever her father was! Yvette smiled generously. 'Well, that's good, isn't it? Your sister will be able to see again.' 'And then she'll die of some other very nasty illness. And you are calling me thick.' Yvette kept that thought to herself.

'Yes, she will', said Val and gave Yvette a long, thoughtful look. He turned to go, but Yvette could not do otherwise than asking him one last thing that had been bugging her.

'If you're poor. How do you have the money to dye your hair?' Yvette's own hair had been more expensive than his sister's eyes would be. Subconsciously Val touched a streak of his hair. 'I don't dye it. My grandma was one of the unfortunate creatures they experimented on to produce more Time. I guess, I'm a mutant, huh. There are more like me, though.'

'Do you have super-powers or something?' Yvette's eyes gleamed. 'I wish I had. Although I should call myself lucky for not having two heads of which one continuously drools down my back. And I should be glad my Time is alright.'

With this, Val stepped out of the room, leaving Yvette and her thoughts alone. Which did not really matter, since Yvette's attention was already caught by swirls of orange following the traces of Val's footsteps. 'Oh how pretty they are', was what she thought and it was all that was running through her mind until she finally went to bed in the evening.

She slept. And then, she dreamed.

She did not remember it the next morning, though. When she opened her eyes, the only difference she felt was the restlessness of her colours. Somehow they were uneasy, as if they were desperately trying to keep her attention on them. 'Look, how beautiful we are', they whispered. Or: 'No, don't look over there. I'm much more interesting than that. Look, how fast I'm spinning around!'

This was a bit confusing for Yvette. Her colours seemed so afraid. It unsettled her.

During the next night she slept uneasily. And she dreamed again. It was the sound of clacking noises she heard. Faintly, growing stronger.

Waking up, Yvette got out of bed. She knelt down next to it and reached with her arms under it until her hands touched something cool and hard. Yvette pulled strongly, until a metal box came to light. She carefully blew away some dust before she decided to open it. Making surprisingly few sounds, the top of the box slid off, revealing a boy's head. He was smiling stupidly, blue eyes open and looking directly at Yvette. Or so it seemed, since his expression was frozen.

Still, Yvette found more in that box than the head of her childhood friend. She found something, she had not known she had lost.

Her colours furiously cried silently as if in agony and Yvette realized, that their blue was not half as pretty as the blue of Danny-X78's eyes. She closed the box again and pushed it back under her bed where she had forgotten it years ago.

The next day, Yvette thought of Val and his sister. She thought of his sickingly pale face and his vivid lightbrown eyes. He was about to die. For her. For his sister.

Yvette made one of her attendants look for him and his sister. Her attendant was obviously disgusted by the idea of going down, where the sick and the poor lived. She did it, anyway, because Yvette had enough money to pay her. Yvette had also enough money to buy someone a brand new pair of eyes.

While waiting for her attendants return, Yvette asked herself whether Val would forgive her for being so thick not to tell him, that he could get much more than just new eyes for his sister. Actually, somewhere in the back of her mind there was an idea of getting his sister new eyes, saving his life by taking someone else's Time, doing something against his sick looks and finally living together happily.

One hour later Yvette was very sure she would buy his sister new eyes, save his life, do something against his looks, not take time, but live together with Val a happy life as rebels against the system.

As you know, Yvette had never really thought about anything in her life. Thus she did not really understand the flaws in her plan, she would painfully have to notice later on.

Curiously, Yvette eyed the girl sitting on the floor, which in turn carefully observed her as good as possible.

She was maybe fifteen or sixteen. Her hair was short and blonde, while her complexion was as sickly pale as Val's was. Cleaned and newly dressed in plain spare clothes, she still had a patch over her right eye. The other one seemed to be a little bit glazy, but apparently still functioning.

For some minutes they stayed silent, just looking at each other.

'You are Val's sister? What's your name?' Yvette was never good with silences.

'Sky.'

Yvette had to concentrate to understand the quietly muttered word. 'That's no name', she said.

'It is. It's mine!', came the surprisingly energetic reply.

'Well, nevermind. I want to help you. I want to give you ... eyes.' Yvette noticed how strange that must sound to Sky, who was not used to such things as changing eyes.

'Do you?' Sky did not sound irritated, much more mistrustful, suspicious.

Yvette swallowed. 'Um, sure. I'll give you eyes, so Val does not have to sacrifice himself and I'll waive Time, hence nobody else has to die. That's fine, isn't it?'

'You think, they'll let you?' Sky sounded more than doubtful.

'It's my decision, isn't it?'

Actually, at first, Professor Venverden was less than pleased when he heard of his daughter's glorious ideas. Even less, when he noticed, she had not taken her antidepressants for several days now. After thinking everything through, he came to the conclusion, he should let Yvette do as she liked.

'She'll learn', he thought.

Sky opened her eyes. It hurt a bit, but she blinked it away.

It was strange to think the eyes in her head were not really her own. Not even technically human. 'I'm some kind of cyborg now', she thought and smiled. Whatever her eyes made her, she could see clearly now.

Matching her name, Yvette had settled for grey eyes. Sky seemed happy with them.

The House of Time was a huge building complex. It looked very new and shiny. On the inside it happened to be quite dark due to the usage of chemical substances which reacted to light.

Yvette and Sky walked down hallway number 23, just as the nice woman at the reception had told them.

Slowly, they were able to hear muffled voices and sounds. Yvette became nervous, as the voices seemed nearer and nearer. Sky, on the other hand, paced determined next to her, not seeming to be irritated at all. Somehow Yvette had to admire the girl. 'Being poor probably makes you tough', she thought.

Bowing slightly to Yvette, a smiling young man opened helpfully the glass door for them. 'Please don't touch anything', he reminded them.

They were situated in a room reminding them of the bridge in some space ship. One wall consisted of a huge glass panel.

Looking through it, you could see the room beneath, which was filled all sorts of strange machinery Yvette did not recognize. In the center there was some kind of throne covered with transparent foil. It was connected to several wires leading into different directions and surely somewhere connected with the strange machines. A peculiar humming sound was in the air.

Midst all this a group of people already busily connected different wires to a young man, who was stripped to the waist and looked pale and translucent in the dim, cold light of the room.

Val looked up. He saw Yvette. Did she want to mock him by visiting his execution? He saw Sky standing next to her. She did not wear her eyepatch. Instead she had two perfectly fine eyes, which were now focused on his face. He did not want her to see him this way. He wanted her to see nice things with her new eyes. Her mother smiling happily, maybe. Just not him about to die.

'Stop the process?', the man looked at Yvette as if she had told him to undress, dance and sing in front of her father and not even get paid for it. 'Miss Venverden. There is no reason.'

Yvette stared at him imploringly. 'Mister, as I have already told you-' She was brusquely interrupted.

'Don't you understand, Miss Venverden? He signed the papers necessary. We fulfilled our part of the agreement. He was allowed to meet you. His sister got new eyes.' He smiled at that one and gave Yvette, who had difficulties to hide her anger, a meaningful look. 'Now he has to fulfill his part. Even if you don't wish to have his Time. Somebody else will. Time is worth real money. There is nothing you can do.' His words were final.

Yvette looked helplessly around. She had not planned it to go that way. Sky jumped at the window panel, desperately looking down at her brother who now sat in the chair. Their eyes met and he gave her a weak smile while her face twisted into a painful grimace. He could have heard her scream if there had not been the thick glass.

Val did not feel the needles in his body. He did not feel his blood and several chemical substances rushing in and out of his body. He did not feel himself dying. Val just looked at his sister. 'At least I'm dying with the sky above me', he thought. If he had been able to do so, he would have laughed at the lame pun.

As her brother's body began to cripple and to wither, Sky turned her face away. She did not want to remember him that way, although she knew she would never get the picture of his last idiotic smile out of her head.

Tears ran down her face. Shaking uncontrollably, she was ushered out of the room, where she met up with Yvette who had obviously vomited against one of the walls. She looked sick and pale and confused. Sky probably did not look better. She glanced at the older girl. She clenched her teeth. 'I hate you', she hissed. 'It's ... It's not my fault', whispered Yvette, her eyes not daring to look at Sky. 'I did not know ... it's not my fault.' Sky hit her hard in the face. 'Not your fault?! It was his choice to die for me. It is your fault he died for nothing, but you. Take his fucking Time or he died for nothing!' 'Help. I just wanted to ...', Yvette's words were drowned by some serious sobbs. 'I believed so, too. But you naïve little girl didn't even know what you were doing.' Sky gave Yvette a last contemptuous look, then ran off into the darkness of the hallway.

'Now, Yvette, dear, did you change your mind?' Professor Venverden smiled patiently at his daughter. 'Do you still wish not to have your injection?' Yvette remembered Sky's words: 'Take it or he died for nothing.' She looked up at her father's face. He was still smiling.

*['Ah, my dear. Tragic, how things developed. Maybe this world has no place for children anymore. You do everything to shield them from the dangers of the old world. The world Down There. Still, they get those stupid ideas. From one moment to the other, they're not happy with the life they have.'*

*-'I thought she would change her mind with the years. But she didn't. It is horrible to watch your own child age.'*

*'And die. Eventually. We did not even have a place to bury or to properly burn her. I don't even know what the people Down There did to her body.'*

*-'Do you know, what I found yesterday when I cleared out her rooms? The head of that robot boy. You know, the one who did those clacking noises. She still had it. Can you believe that?']\**

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\* Hierbei handelt es sich um die erste Idee für ein Ende.

Ich habe mich allerdings dann doch dazu entschieden, dass das offene Ende besser zur Geschichte passt.