

The Improbable Cat of Neverwhen

By Brian Farrey-Latz

(with apologies to Douglas Adams)

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy has this to say about the reverse-oid sub-dimension of temporal influx known collectively as the Neverwhen.

It is almost impossible to arrive at the Neverwhen when that is in fact your intent. Indeed, the harder you seek the Neverwhen, the more impossible it becomes you will get there.

Not entirely impossible, of course. Few things in the universe are entirely impossible. The creation of the Infinite Improbably Drive has proven that beyond most intelligent doubt. It became very clear once the IID went online that impossibilities were strictly for amateurs.

The Guide goes on to list on three completely impossible things which even a meltdown of the IID cannot summon forth into being: it is impossible for Vogons to write poetry that doesn't force all languages on the planet Scarlox to spontaneously combust, it is impossible to feel persnickety at exactly 11:53 am while standing on one foot and clicking your tongue at Galactic Coordinates 65-92-206-224/78-HG-22/Z, and it is impossible for any member of the Trump family on Earth to make sense.

To navigate to the Neverwhen, you must first decisively make up your mind that you wouldn't be caught dead there. You cannot fake this. You must be one hundred percent committed to the idea that the Neverwhen isn't anywhere on your list of fifth dimensional anomalies to see before you die.

Once you have convinced yourself that you'd rather spelunk through the living mucus caves of Remjak Minor with your mouth wide open and wearing nothing but a beret, you must then immediately obtain an Infinite Improbability Drive Mark II. This will initially prove difficult as the

Mark II model has yet to be invented. As the plans were inadvertently destroyed in a nuclear misunderstanding, the manufacturer requires the Mark I so they can reverse engineer and improve upon the new model. However, the Mark I, which is hardwired into the ship Heart of Gold, has been missing for millennia. Despite these seemingly monumental setbacks, this still does not make acquiring an Infinite Improbability Drive Mark II impossible.

Just very, very improbable.

Providing you can navigate this minefield of wildly improbable tasks and the IID Mark II takes you to the Neverwhen completely by mistake (remember, you cannot ask it to take you there; its arrival must be a crazy, random happenstance), you must then contend with the Improbable Cat, the Neverwhen's guardian.

The events leading up to the creation of the Improbable Cat have been subject to some debate by cosmic historians. Some believe the Cat has always existed and spent years as the Zaniri god, Mewdax. Its subsequent stint as the Neverwhen's guardian came about when Mewdax grew weary of prayers that involved winning the Spaceoid Lottery and growing extra genitals with which to have sex. The god created the Neverwhen as a private realm in which it could privately raise a giant middle finger at the parishioners. Others have asserted that the Improbable Cat was disgorged from an omniscient black hole simply as a means to annoy our universe.

However, the most popular theory as to the Cat's origins involve a laboratory mishap by Qaldarian custodian Quoroq Bisdani, a janitor working in the Damogran shipyards where the Infinite Improbability Drive was first tested. It is said that Bisdani often brought his cat, a gray tabby known as Bootsie, with him to clean the labs. One day, as the legend goes, there was a series of comic mishaps on par with a Marx Brothers movie and, long story short, Bootsie was inside the IID when it test fired.

Most scientists agree it is never a good idea to be near an unshielded dynaflux field, such as the kind generated by an Infinite Improbability Drive, because you run the risk of being exposed to all your possible selves (not just the probable and improbably ones) in a single instant. It is, therefore, even worse to be a cat caught in the throes of an unshielded dynaflux field as a cat's every possibility is one of arrogance and superiority over everything in the universe. To have the idea confirmed that you are, in fact, the center of all creation will certainly do a number on one's ego. Which is what happened to Bootsie. Take the ego of your typical house cat, multiply it by infinity to the n th power, and you only start to grasp how Bootsie's expanded arrogance was enough to create a subpocket of existence meant to contain this critical mass of self-importance.

The only other cat that's come close to this sort of uber-hubris was the theoretical one belonging to Schrödinger, who became so vastly famous for both existing and not existing that he was cast out of his theoretical status in the universe and took on corporeal form, where he was taken in by one Mrs. Rose Murray-Callow of Number Sixty-One Abbey Way, Surrey, who dubbed him a bona fide pain the ass.

Bootsie, who henceforth went by the name of Bootsie the All Knowing (having absorbed the sum total of the universe's knowledge when the dynaflux field infused his existence with that of every single point of time and space), at first saw his exile to the Neverwhen as a punishment from which he sought escape. But, after a while, when he saw how incredibly improbably it was that anyone would be arriving any time soon to annoy him with questions, Bootsie the All Knowing began to see the Neverwhen as a blessing. A semi-boundless realm where he could reign supreme and lick his testicles any time he damn well pleased.

The daunting task of arriving at the Neverwhen, however, has yet to deter thrill seekers from getting there. It is, of course, unknown if anyone has accomplished the task, although many have claimed to have done so. King Ajajaxajax of the moon Scrotara has boasted sharing a plate of

kippers with Bootsie the All Knowing. The Great Jelloid Tentacle of Oceaniax Twelve has claimed to have rubbed Bootsie's belly. However, all claims have been dismissed by a psionic shockwave from the future, sent back in time as a telepathic message to all beings in this and all known universes. The debunker of these claims is the Infinite Improbability Drive Mark III, having attained sentience while waiting a nearly infinite number of years to be created, impeded as it was by the not-yet-invented Mark II. The Mark III's sentience came with an iota of demi-omniscience, nearly on par with that of Bootsie the All Knowing, and it refuted all claims that anyone has been to the Neverwhen with a single word projected into every single mind: "Bollocks!"

All things being even (which is a very improbable state to achieve when dealing with infinite improbabilities, your improbable arrival in the Neverwhen and your subsequent encounter with the Improbable Cat will be somewhat uneventful. You will be allowed to wander freely throughout the entirety of the Neverwhen, for which a discernible reason for making it a destination in the first place has yet to be recognized.