

# THE TIME NETWORK

//// INTO THE PAST



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STORYLAND DESIGN CHALLENGE

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## THE CONCEPT

This project is an interactive exploration theme park that brings guests into a mystery that takes place across time. The overall concept came from the big idea of using time as a narrative and design tool to create a dynamic setting for a themed experience land. Theme parks are excellent at transporting guests to all kinds of settings, both varying in location and time, but usually define new lands in a particular park by changing both location and time. In this concept, instead of exploring many different locations of variable time setting, this concept explores many times of one very specific location. I found this a compelling idea to explore in this design challenge because of the unique opportunity to dive into the details of the challenging logistics, the changing visual design, and the story to explain this unusual experience.

This bluesky concept, to play with the passage of time in one setting, led to the development of a time travel storyline that supports a narrative reason for guests to visit multiple times of a fictional downtown city square. The story sets up a main character that guests passively follow through time, seemingly always a couple steps behind them as they move through the experience. It made sense to give this main character some level of authority and significance to explain why, out of literally all available time, we are following them. I also felt that the story needed some level of urgency and excitement to help explain why we jump from time to time and why guests must go to these specific settings instead of a free for all exploration across time. So I ended up deciding to tell the story of the man who invented time travel in the first place, and the day he decided that he needed to change his past to save the future.

This concept fits well into the modern trend of immersive theater and art installations that tell their stories through indirect explorative experiences instead of direct exposition. Letting guests follow but not see the plot-driving main character gives guests more agency to discover the specifics of the story around them in their own way, at their own pace, instead of just watching a story happen before them. It also allows for the unusual possibilities of there being more than just one story, or even there being contradictory stories that are only revealed by deeper layers of investigation. The core experience of just exploring a variety of settings through time would be available to all guests with no required effort while the top level plot would be designed to be available to everyone who visits with only minimal investigation and exploration. The A level story, about the invention of time travel and the man who tried to undo it, would be the driving element behind the experience and the flow through the park. That story would be told through media, character performances, and the attractions. Deeper levels of story would come from more thorough interaction with the characters and investigation into the source documents and media that are available throughout the park. For instance, guests can enter many of the 'backroom offices' of the stores in each pod, where they could access computer terminals or read through documents placed out on desks which reveal new plot elements.

Along with the story, the logistic layout of the project was an early step of the development because the physical space was so crucial to how the story could be told. The layout developed into a series of connected pods, each the same location at a different time and connected by

'portals' that branch between the same locations in adjacent pods. The full floorplan of the park is formed of an outdoor retail area set in 2021, 5 interior pods set in different times, and two main attractions, one at the start of the story and the other at the end. All pods contain the same town square surrounded by facades for businesses that change over time, sometimes drastically. There is some consistency through the decades for the locations of some elements, such as restrooms and food locations, done for ease of the guest experience. The 5 main pods are interior to allow for precise control of the setting, with each at a specific time of day to create a variety of visual experiences. Each pod includes some real retail and some kind of food and beverage location in addition to the various staged storefronts. There are also multiple small scale attractions and entertainment, including short films, a radio play performance, a vaudeville act, and interactive street characters.

The exterior retail area is open to the public and would ideally be a part of some kind of outdoor retail and entertainment district, possibly serving as an anchor experience. The specific city or the location is not important and not specific to the story, because the intent would be for this to be a type of regional experience that could be developed anywhere and then subtly customized to the specifics of the site. The real life location would be incorporated into the interior story in ways that are authentic to the history of the city.

The portal is the most consistent element across every step of the experience, so it is a key part of the concept of the design. The story explanation is that this portal somehow electrifies and separates matter to create a passageway through time. The concept of the design is that the portal is formed of a frame that slices right through the undulating and separating fabric of time. The reality is that these portal tunnels are the means of visual transition to break the time specific immersive worlds and push guests through the story.

The irregularly waved side walls glow and pulse with energy as if they are holding something back. The walls also hide quickly rotating light fixtures that resemble glowing points of matter flowing through the portal. The floor and ceiling reveal holes that look through the time network, as if they are being stretched and pulled apart to the point that they have been weakened. Digital screens above and below these holes show nebulous and unpredictable patterns of light and color. The guide rails deconstruct and wave in the portal as if they are being affected just like the walls. The entire passageway glows with eerie and irregular waves of light and is filled with a gentle electric hum. The directional movement and spatial shaping plus the visual and auditory stimulation act to pressure guests forward into the next pod.

The attractions are also a key part to the concept of the park, in order to add some variety of physical experiences and storytelling modes to the total experience. Building on the main interactive walk through mystery, the attractions are something like the opening and closing chapters of the story, and are both large scale and exciting, but family friendly and accessible to all guests. The first attraction at the start of the experience, the balloon tour simulator, is meant to be a setting focused attraction that introduces the concept of time travel and the wonders of the future on an introductory level. Similarly, the final attraction, the trackless time escape dark

ride, is a plot focused attraction that wraps up the story of the main character and guides guests through the conclusion of the full experience. Additionally, there would be multiple smaller personal entertainment experiences scattered through the pods, such as the shows in the theater of each time period, that both entertain and also share information about the plot and the changing setting.

The result is a theme park experience that encourages guests to dive into the details of the themed space in order to discover the plot, investigate the mystery, and analyze how this imaginary fantastic world changes around them over time. This type of concept for a hyper interactive themed space for exploration is not new, but I think it is the perfect platform to use to tell a large scale single narrative story like this that attempts to manipulate storytelling in an unconventional dimension.

## THE STORY

The ability to travel in time, once thought impossible, is finally unlocked in 2098. Invented by an experimental physicist, Adam Haley, the technology allows for instantaneous travel through portals of electrified and separated matter, permitting users to step into the exact same location at any time in the history of the universe. This technology undoubtedly changed the course of human history, past and future, for good and bad.

But the technology that creates this feat of science almost didn't happen. Adam was always interested in the idea of time travel, ever since reading a book about it as a child, but it was not his main focus when he began his career in physics many years later. Growing up, he wasn't even interested in physics or science, he loved art and movies. But he studied physics in school anyway to fulfill a family tradition, as he would be the 6th generation to follow in the same career path. During college however, he discovered that he was good at it, very good at it, so he excelled and got a great job after graduation. He eventually began to focus his work on renewable energy sources and became a high level experimental physicist at Fortek Unlimited, an energy company. That was where he changed history.

Years into his work on developing experimental forms of energy, he stumbled upon a discovery that suggested that he actually might be able to manipulate time. He didn't seriously pursue it at first since he still believed it would be impossible, but the idea lingered and he eventually began to work on it in his free time. Soon, he made a breakthrough and realized that it just might actually work. Using the resources of his employer, Fortek Unlimited, he constructed the first test prototype time engine in late 2097 to apply his theoretical research to a practical experiment.

Less than a year later on April 7, 2098, after many failures, the first portal was successfully opened and the world changed. All he did was travel forward one week for a brief minute, but that was enough of a proof of concept to get attention on the project in the company. The research was soon shared up the chain of Fortek Unlimited, who had the legal ownership of the revolutionary technology since he was their employee and he used their lab equipment. After many more tests, including one trip 500 years into the past, the technology was deemed a success and the company immediately began plans on how to bring time travel to the public. Consultation with the government soon led to a decision to nationalize it as a public utility, under the complete control of Fortek, which immediately made them one of the most important companies in the world. They, from Adam's accidental discovery, effectively controlled time. He was highly rewarded as well, becoming a high ranking, though symbolic, member of the company and a member of the board of regulators that made decisions regarding the time travel system.

Regulations and rules came next. It was decided to make secret diplomatic contact 100 years to the past but no farther. Any travel to the past had to be regulated and guided to prevent any accidental changing of history, while the future was wide open for exploration. Adoption was

slow at first, to everyone's surprise. But then travel picked up exponentially once the first travelers started coming back from the far future on sightseeing trips to see when time travel began.

Entire industries grew from the creation. Of course, the ability to travel in time was reserved for those that could pay for it, so most of society didn't get to actually take part, but everyone benefited from the changes to the world. Inter-time commerce and trade began to be regulated. That single piece of technology led to the world's quickest technological revolution, as travelers from the future brought back things that wouldn't be actually invented for decades or longer. Medicine improved and the human lifespan grew to 180 years on average. Novel forms of renewable energy were created, to the point that the present had an energy surplus that they could sell back to the past. Time travel guide companies sprung up immediately to legally take travelers back into the past, to nearly any time possible. Some sold trips by the genre, with planned vacations to the Renaissance or the Old West, while others let guests design custom, and expensive, itineraries. Shadier companies took advantage of the technology as well of course, and black market trade and travel flourished behind the scenes. It was a brand new world, all because of Adam Haley and that one unusual idea to experiment with time.

But that's all it was really, an experiment. It had all happened so fast that Adam never truly got a handle on the ramifications of how it worked. The company had been so invested in bringing it to market, that any concerns were blown by. So there were some issues over the years. First, a portal unexpectedly connected travelers to the wrong time. That had never happened before and there was no logical explanation, but it wasn't really a problem. Adam had retired years before, but the incident brought him back to the company and the lab so he could study just what happened. Years later, there was a worse incident. While two travelers were walking through a portal, it suddenly collapsed around them, sending them into a time somewhere between where they started and where they were going. They were able to be found and rescued, but this was a disastrous event for the company and public trust took a hit. Safeguards were developed, but Adam was worried.

After those incidents, he turned his research to analyzing the properties of the space between time, sure that this was where the incidents had originated from. He had no idea what that space was, or when, just that it was a network of connections between time. He studied it for years, and set up systems to monitor it, but it remained a mystery. He feared that the stress of the near constant travel was putting some kind of strain on the network, which caused the occasional mistake or collapse. His worst fear was that it was too late to actually prevent any future disasters. In a moment of stress, he wished aloud for the first time that things would be better off if he just hadn't invented the time engine at all. But all he could do was monitor it's condition and hope any more issues could be avoided.

But that was not to be the case. Fifty seven years after the creation of the technology and the revolution of humanity, something happened that would change it all again. Adam, now 89 and in middle age, was reviewing the systems that tracked the integrity of the time system, like he

did daily, when his alerts began to sound. Warning messages flashed repeatedly on the monitor system as he rushed to the dashboard. The system showed a simple message: Time Network Collapse Imminent. Those words terrified him, but he knew he had to review the data to confirm before giving in to panic. To his greatest fear, the system was right. All the tracking systems he put in place showed the same thing, that there was a rapidly weakening tear in the network between time that just began and it showed no sign of slowing. If the fracture continued, the entire network would collapse in on itself, and he had no idea what that meant. It could be nothing, or it could be the end of time overall and a world ending disaster.

The only idea he had was to shut the system off completely and see if it repaired itself over time, but he couldn't make that decision alone. He immediately reported the alert and his solution to the upper levels of the science department, but no one else was as concerned as he was. When he first retired many years ago, he was replaced by a new team, and they never quite got along. In everyone else's view, Adam's monitoring system was unnecessary and too likely to fail, so the warning was likely to be a false alarm by an overly sensitive system. He was similarly unable to convince the upper management and his peers on the board, because they refused to entertain any option that would shut down the system and stop profits. Adam was alone with the knowledge of the incoming disaster.

After a moment of panic, he knew this was a risk that he couldn't take and settled on an unusual solution. With all revolutionary technologies, there is an inevitability that something will go wrong. The unique thing about this case though is that it just might be possible to go back and fix the problem before it happened. Adam decided that he had to use his machine to go back and prevent its own invention. It was drastic and would change history, but he had already done that once before, why not again to save the world.

After a day of preparation to hide what he was doing, he made the first jump. As he was going to the past, he had to alter the monitoring system so that his unauthorized trip wouldn't be noticed. He arrived in 2078, the year he was given that book that first inspired him. He decided that this was the easiest chance to stop himself. If he didn't love that book, he was sure that he wouldn't even think to experiment with time. He went to the bookstore just an hour before young him would do the same, and bought the book, ensuring that he would never find it. He walked back through the portal that he left open, expecting to arrive back in a time travel-less future and face whatever consequences that meant.

But alas it didn't work. As he stepped back through, he suddenly remembered that actually he didn't get that book that day at the bookstore, a family friend gave it to him the next week. He was so sure before leaving about the bookstore memory, but now he was unsure. Did his memory fail him or did his past change? He would try again. He went back to try to steal the book from himself before he could read it. It didn't work, he still ended up with the book. He went back again and tried to destroy it this time, but apparently he was given a different copy years later.

He decided he needed to go farther back and try something more permanent. So he stepped through the portal in his office into 1975, the year the book that inspired him was written. He needed to keep it from ever existing. It was easy to do. After a little bit of exploration around the 1975 city, he found the author, who was working in a record shop, and struck up a conversation. The book the author was working on came up, and Adam enthusiastically told him that he didn't think that sounded like a very good book, and suggested a completely different topic. The author seemed interested in the new idea and thanked him for the advice. He walked back to the future and hoped it would work this time, but of course his past changed to adapt. His memory immediately told him that it wasn't a book, it was actually a movie he saw as a kid. He looked it up in his office and discovered that the author he just spoke to did in fact write a completely different book, but then followed that up with a screenplay the next year, with the same time travel plot. Time did not want him to change it.

His only choice was to keep trying, so he went back 3 more times to that decade to attempt to keep the book or movie from existing. No luck, so he decided he had to try a different approach. If the book/movie was going to exist and he was going to find it, his best option was to make sure he didn't do anything with that information. If he wasn't a physicist, he'd never even get to the position to invent time travel. He followed this approach for another half dozen jumps to no luck. With everything he tried, he still became a physicist. Sometimes he went to college, sometimes he didn't, sometimes he loved it, sometimes he hated it. He realized that a recurring theme that brought him to physics was the pressure from his parents to follow the family field of study. In his last attempt, he went back to 1922, when his family moved to the city in the first place so that his great-great-great-great-grandfather could go to university to study physics. If his family never moved and they never became a physics family, possibly his future could change. He stole the acceptance letter from the university at the post office, and then for good measure, he arranged for that distant relative to get a great job in a completely different field in a far away city, ensuring that his family wouldn't end up with any connection to that university. But yet again, his past changed to fix his actions. An ancestor two generations later became a physicist, and the family moved to the city in the 1980s, setting him up to have the same future. This direction wasn't going to work.

The next attempt was to go after the company that employed him and allowed him to do his research, Fortek Unlimited. By now he knew the trends and went straight back to its founding to try to keep it from ever happening. He stepped into 1887, just after the founding of the city that he'd spent his life in. That year, a small electricity company was founded to bring power to the city, and that company would one day become Fortek. He snuck into the city records office and altered the paperwork to give the electricity contract for the city to another rival company, ensuring that the first Foretek company would quickly fail. But it turned out that the rival company he gave the contract to evolved identically to form the same company that one day would hire him. Two more attempts along this track also failed, Fortek was inevitable.

With some trepidation, he knew that there really was only one option left. No matter what he tried in his past, time would change around him to ensure continuity. The last option was to go



back to the very day he invented it and convince himself to not do it. Interacting with yourself was highly advised against for fear of accidentally changing your reality and causing a paradox, so he had hoped that he didn't even need to try it. He didn't even know if it would work, but now he saw it as the last possible option.

Adam decided to go to 2098, when he turned on the first test engine in the Fortek Unlimited labs. He felt that was his best chance. He snuck his way into the labs, past security, and found his way to the lab he worked in so many years ago. He had forgotten just how different of a company this was back then, before time travel and Fortek's growth. For a moment, he enjoyed looking back at this time of his life, before remembering his mission.

He entered the lab quietly once he saw himself diligently working by the in-progress portal prototype. As soon as he saw himself, he suddenly remembered this encounter from the other side, but he had no memory of what happened after that. All he knew was that he should just walk up and say hello, so that's exactly what he did. The other Adam was surprised, but quickly understood what was happening and then smiled, realizing that his arrival must mean that his invention works. The time-traveling Adam started before other Adam could speak, telling him that he is there from the future and needs him to stop his work. He continued that there will be a disastrous time collapse in the future if you continue to work on the time engine, so he felt that he had to come back and keep it from ever happening. Other Adam was surprised and disappointed, but understood the concern, evidently because he trusted himself, and after a moment of thought, agreed to stop his research.

Time-traveling Adam was pleasantly surprised that it wasn't going to take more debate and hoped that he had finally accomplished his mission. But just as suddenly, the inactive time engine prototype that they were standing by began to beep and start up, somehow turning itself on. Both Adam's looked at each other and thought the same, that it was impossible for it to start up by itself because it wasn't even fully operational at this point. Other Adam began to mess with the controls while time-traveling Adam stared into the opening portal and contemplated what might be happening. The portal before him looked unlike any others he had walked through before. It was weak and flickered, and the network visible inside was stretching apart and decaying, revealing nebulous light beyond. It also had an attractive strength, minor at first, pulling him towards it with minor pressure. But then the portal flared and he could no longer resist the strength, and suddenly he was pulled into it and out of the world of 2098, suddenly now in the void of time.

He tumbled wildly at first, disorienting him inside the tunnel of collapsing time, and that meant that he lost sight of the portal opening he was pulled through. There were other openings branching in all ways however, looking out into all kinds of settings, but all were just as flickery and unstable, constantly changing their destination and somehow physically repelling him from approaching. His mind raced through ideas of what he could do now, but he was overwhelmed by the fear that this was the time collapse he was afraid of and that he was too late. He also feared that he was stuck inside of it. He began walking down the maybe endless path. After

either 10 minutes or an hour of walking and failing to see any way out, he had another terrifying thought after trying to rationalize what made that portal open in the lab. It was possible that his actions to convince himself to stop created a paradox, and that paradox may have tried to resolve itself the only way it could, by removing him from the situation. And there is a chance that that action could have put a unique stress on the whole time network system that he didn't anticipate. He may have just accidentally caused the collapse that he started out trying to prevent. Could it have worked like that? There was no way for him to be sure while stuck there, but deep down he knew what he had done.

Adam invented time, and then destroyed time.

He wasn't able to dwell on that for long however, because suddenly a portal nearby pulsed and opened up, as if it was working like normal, and some kind of vehicle glided through and towards him. He noticed that it was unmanned when he approached it. But a voice called out to him and he noticed a digital screen on the dashboard with a waving figure. After staring for a split second, he realized who it was on the screen and calling out to him. It was himself again.

His voice told him that the vehicle was there to rescue him and to get in quickly. Adam thoughtlessly did as instructed and immediately the vehicle glided back into a different portal that effortlessly opened up for the vehicle. He was barely able to notice where they emerged, because the vehicle almost immediately jumped into another portal, then back out again over and over more times than he could track. The Adam who sent the vehicle told him that he was being led to a safe point in the future, but the instability of the network right now meant that there was no direct path. The dashboard did have a display that included the current time, and he was surprised to see just how much of a range the vehicle was jumping. The Adam who sent the vehicle told him that the vehicle was specially built to create its own localized portal, so it can travel through the existing weakened network system. That made sense to Adam, it was genius actually. Did he come up with that in the future?

A few minutes later, the vehicle slid out of a portal and stopped in a room that looked like a lab, but totally unfamiliar to him. The dashboard no longer told him a year. The Adam on the dashboard told him that he was now safe, but that this was where he was going to have to leave him to take the next very important step. He needed to complete the time cycle by inventing that very same vehicle that he was just riding, so that he can send it back in time again. It was vital actually. Future Adam said that he couldn't tell him exactly how, but that he had everything he needed. The vehicle then disappeared again, leaving him alone in the far future. But now he knew that he had a chance to actually save things and fix the enormous problem that he just created, so he had hope.

It took him what seemed like weeks to build the prototype, but it was easier than expected. The other Adam was right, he had everything he needed there in that lab to build and to live. He never really found out when he was, and felt for some reason that it may be better to not know, but this future did have even more advanced technology that he had been used to. It also had

an improved version of his system to monitor the time network, and he was able to confirm his theory that the best solution would be to close all time portals at once and allow the system to rest and reconnect. The monitoring system also showed him the chaos that had been caused by the faulty portal system. An undetermined number of portals had started randomly opening and staying open all through history, and thousands of people and items had found their way to times that were not their own. A particularly large group had come from the year 2021 for some reason, and had followed his path through some of the portals he had taken in the weeks before. He would need to get them all back before closing the portals, but that was exactly what this vehicle he built could do, so he constructed a small fleet. Last, he knew that he needed a way to shut down the whole network when the time came, so he created a backdoor in the monitoring system that he would bring back home.

Finally, he knew it was ready and decided it was time to restart the cycle and finally fix time. His first jump was to use the vehicle to head back to 2155, arriving just a few days after he last left that time. Then, from his lab, he sent the vehicle back to save himself in the time collapse, and filled the opposite role in the conversation than he had just weeks before. After successfully completing that step, he automated a system to send that small fleet of vehicles out to take everyone home. They were scattered all over time, but to him in the year 2155, it all just took a moment. And after that moment, when the system told him no one across all of time was out of place, he enacted the backdoor and shut down time travel, taking it offline for the first time since the day he invented it 57 years before.

Fortek management was not happy, but there was nothing they could do about it, since the system was programmed to stay offline until metrics showed that the time network was repaired enough to be safe again. He was removed from his position on the board as a consequence, but that was a small price to pay for him. Of course, no one else had any idea what really happened during that stretch of time, so they didn't see just how close they came to disaster. To everyone in 2155, there was just a day with an unusual number of visitors from all across time, including the past, but they handled it as best they could by welcoming them and offering tours of the city.

Adam was incredibly glad to have found a solution to the problem he discovered, even if he did accidentally cause that problem in the first place while trying to solve it. He took an important lesson from that day, that even with time travel, you can't look to your past to solve your problems, but you always have the future.

Now, while the system was resetting, he decided he needed to work on some way to keep this from ever happening again. And he also needed to look more into that mysterious far future he visited to work on the vehicle prototype. Though he didn't know for sure, he felt that he was involved there in ways he still didn't know. When was that? And who built the first prototype and set up that lab? He would do whatever he needed to do to find out, and make sure that time worked like it was meant to. But that's another story for the future.

## THE GUEST EXPERIENCE

For guests, the story and experience begins outside the project. This would ideally be built as an anchor to some kind of outdoor recreation and retail environment. In the public and outdoor first iteration of the downtown square, guests discover a mysterious glowing portal that has just opened up earlier that day. The storefronts near the portal have all been closed down for the day, but the rest of the area is open and acting just like normal. The stores include multiple retail locations, a bakery, and a fast casual restaurant. The employees of all these shops talk about the portal with guests and the rumor is that it leads to the future. As soon as it appeared, it was barricaded off by the city while they decided what to do about it, but now it has been left unattended and unguarded. However, the local historical society saw this as a chance to make some quick money and started selling tickets to the future out of their tour and information office right across the square from the portal. They are allowing paying guests past the barricade and into the portal, where the trip to the future and the experience of this themed attraction really begins.

On the other side is the year 2155. It is the middle of the afternoon in a bright and hyper modern city. The architecture features green walls, large expanses of glass, energy producing turbines, and other high tech elements that distinguish this from the outside city guests were just in. However, the shape of the town square and the massing of the buildings is consistent, so they can tell that this is meant to be the same location. But it is a wholly different world. Digital signage says “Welcome Visitors to 2155”. News bulletins on a different video wall show a scrolling headline “Unexplained Time Network Instability Reported Today - Unexpected Travelers Arriving from Unserved Times - Awaiting Statement from Fortek Unlimited”. Once through, guests are also informed that they can’t go backwards through the portal due to the malfunction. They will either need to stay there and explore, or find another portal to pass through, but no guarantee that it will take them home.

In this first time period of the experience, the main goal of the experience is to familiarize guests with the concept of time travel and quickly immerse them into a completely different world so that they begin to pick up on the changing details of this environment. Ahead is a big glass rotunda building at the corner, where there just was a normal looking brick retail store, and scrolling digital signage labels it as the headquarters for Fortek Unlimited. Straight ahead beyond that is a cross street that guests just walked on to enter the outdoor retail area, but it is blocked off with some kind of construction barrier. The storefronts to the right are all forms of retail and services, but look completely different and much more modern. To the left is a grand building labeled as the Transit Hub, and past that is a gated off arched passageway that in 2021 led to another area of retail.

In this year, there is one main attraction, two real retail stores, and multiple explorable storefronts and environments that set up the various stories that guests can follow. The attraction is the Balloon Tour, which leaves from the Transit Hub. Announcements, signage, and transit employees outside usher guests in for a free aerial tour of the city. This attraction is also

used to set up a lot of the narrative about time travel and the world guests have just stepped into. The explorable spaces found on this square include an art gallery plus office and stock room, a travel agency office, and the Fortek Unlimited HQ building, which includes the lobby, a museum, a lab, an office, a break room, and the control center.

In the art gallery, guests could learn about the free trade of art and goods across time thanks to time travel, but also could uncover a secret plot line about black market art theft across time, evidenced by records on the office computer station and priceless classic artworks hidden in the stock room. At the travel agency, guests discover the regulations and rules regarding how citizens of the future are able to travel through time and visit the past on organized trips. But they also might be offered a custom unlicensed trip by the sales agent if they ask the right questions. In the Fortek HQ, the many rooms explain the majority of the foundational plot about Adam Haley, the time engine, and what has possibly gone wrong. The lobby would include an info desk plus a series of interactive help kiosks that could give guests info on all different subjects, including history, time network status, maps of the city, their own family lineage in the future, and more. The control center would feature high tech displays and analytic systems that reveal that something is wrong with the time network and no one really knows the problem. The lab, break room, and Adam's office would include explorable documents and digital terminals that fill guests in about the technology of the future and the personality of the inventor. In the museum is the original prototype portal, but also a newly ignited portal that leads to the past, and no one is quite sure why it is there or who opened it. With guests unable to take the portal back to 2021, this seems like the best option, even though it is unlikely to be a direct path home. But guests follow it anyway, and travel to the next pod and the next step in the story.

That portal leads to the year 1975, specifically a summer evening after the sun has gone down. The portal opens up into a bar, where the tables and chairs have all been pushed away and knocked over to clear a path out of the suddenly just open portal. Outside, the square looks similar to how it did in 2021, except for the main building on the corner that was the Fortek HQ. In this time, it is a modern movie theater with an attached arcade, showing the blockbusters of the day. The darkened square is lit with neon from the signage on all the buildings and a moon sits above. The side of the square that was the travel agency and art gallery are now different kinds of retail, including a thrift store, a record store, and a diner. The other side, where the transit hub was, is now a department store and an office building. That cross street is curiously also blocked off for construction in this time, evidently it is a frequently required repair. In fact, this is under construction in every single time guests visit. In this time, the residents and employees have heard that something strange happened in the bar, but have not had the chance to go see yet, so have no idea about what is happening with time travel. This is consistent throughout all the times that guests will visit.

Just like in the last pod, guests can explore all the areas of this square in order to learn about the plot of the experience. There is also one real retail space, the department store, and the diner does serve quick service food and beverages. At the office building lobby, they could read through the office directory and discover that one may be a front for that same time travel

agency and their illegal trips. In the thrift store, they could find items for sale that are clearly from other times but confused to be just junk and discover that the store may be an inconspicuous location to discard unwanted goods from the future. At the records store, guests could meet the author character that Adam just interacted with earlier that day, and if they ask the right questions, may get stories about the time travel book or about the strange man who was just in there asking about it. They could also explore the stock room and find the in-progress manuscript for the book, and discover review comments from someone at Fortek Unlimited that suggest there might be a more complicated backstory to how the author originally got the time travel idea. In the movie theater are two minor attractions. First is the fully playable arcade. Second is the theater itself, where there are 2 theaters that play a short film series, all films about time travel. If guests meet and talk to the theater owner or investigate his notes in the office, they will discover that he programmed that short film series just that day on the spur of the moment after an encounter with an unusual stranger. If they investigate closely however, they will discover that some of the films themselves are from the future, but it is unexplained why they are here. Over at the department store, one room has been taken over by another portal that has just opened up, which takes guests deeper into the story and to the next pod.

Arriving in another department store in the year 1922 on the other side of the portal, guests can see that this same town square now looks a little newer, with predominantly brick buildings and traditional architecture. It is early evening, just at twilight. The main building ahead is also a theater in this time, though grand and ornate and advertising a radio play on its light bulb marquee instead of being a movie theater. Some storefronts have the same function as in the future, some don't. The department store is the same, though much more traditional looking and the diner is a similar restaurant. Here, the record store is actually a general store, the thrift store is a clothing store, the office building is a post office, and what becomes the bar is currently a speakeasy.

As in the last time, the department store and the restaurant serve guests while all other spaces are for exploration. At the clothing store, guests can try on the fashions of the day but also can discover in the back room that this store gets large mysterious orders from buyers who guests may recognize as being from the future. The backroom also may hold discarded future clothes that those buyers accidentally left behind. In the speakeasy, accessed by password gained by asking any of the employees of surrounding stores, guests can talk to the barkeep and hear about the man who stopped by earlier that day for a drink and told stories about the future. The walls also include photos of famous visitors, some of which guests may recognize from different times. In the post office, guests can look through the records book and the outgoing mail stacks to find the discrepancy of a missing letter, which they might be able to find in the nearby trash can. The theater holds the minor attraction of this pod, a live radio play performance demonstration, performed every half hour. The inside of this theater is much grander than the movie theater, and includes a formal staircase to an unseen second level. The radio play happens to be an original thriller story about invaders from the future. In the adjacent theater office, guests could investigate the history of the performance group and the play they just witnessed, and discover that it may have been written as propaganda from the future to make

residents of the past think of time travel as just a fantasy. The next portal of the adventure is located in the general store, which has been wrecked by the large gateway. That portal leads guests on to the next step in the story.

Guests emerge into the same general store, but now in a much earlier time, 1887. Exiting the general store into the square, guests find the most rudimentary version of this town on a bright early afternoon. The buildings are solidly built of stone and brick, and many of these buildings appear to be nearly brand new in the growing small town. Historic plaques on the buildings in previous iterations of the town would confirm this assumption. The businesses are similar to what they looked like in 1922, but one noticeable difference is the lack of electricity. This is before the city had been fully electrified. The change is most noticeable at the brand new theater without its bright illuminated marquees and signage.

Aside from that, the theater is nearly identical and what will become the speakeasy is a high class lounge attached to the theater lobby. Other stores are just as similar. The clothing store here sells shoes, the diner style restaurant is a smaller deli restaurant, and what will be the department store is an office building, including a city records office. The restaurant is the only practical location in this time.

The plot continues to be revealed in the stores here. At the records office, guests can investigate the public documents about the upcoming electrification of the city, and find out about the rivalry between two companies and how someone may have meddled with the application process. The theater again holds an attraction for the pod and this time it is a vaudeville show with two solo acts. The show is being sponsored by one of the electric companies, who are trying to build public support for their proposal. In the theater office, guests could find the payments and instructions from the electrical company to the theater, revealing an unnamed and wealthy benefactor that is supporting the aspirations of the company. At the shoe store, guests can explore the stock room that is actually filled with disguised treasures from across time, evidently being stored here where no one would think to look. The portal to the final new pod of the experience is located in the lounge of the theater, and guests pass through it to reach the penultimate step of the journey.

Emerging into a modern office, guests can immediately tell that they are back in a time that is the future for them. This is 2098, which if guests investigated the history of time travel in past pods, they would know that this is when time travel was invented. The town square is modern, but less modern than it was in 2155, and less green. The theater building has become the Fortek HQ at this point, but most of the other storefronts are completely different, and feature more functional and typical businesses instead of the time travel specific businesses in the future. The square includes a clothing store, a grocery store, an electronics store, and a media store, all modern but not too modern. The clothing store is real retail and the grocery sells snacks and drinks from its high tech juice bar.

The main plot related exploration happens inside the Fortek HQ in this pod, but all the other stores still have elements that build the various plot lines. At the electronics store, guests can play with high tech devices and investigate the sales records in the stockroom to see who exactly is buying what and why. In the media store, guests can look through the catalogue of movies and games, some real and many fake, including works by the prolific author they met in 1975. The Fortek HQ includes multiple explorable rooms, nearly the same as they were in 2155, but less technologically advanced. There is a lot of evidence of Adam and the research he is currently doing, but he is nowhere to be found. In the back lab, which is Adam's lab, guests can find the very first prototype portal, which is currently on but inaccessible. It is flickery and unstable, unlike other portals. Security camera footage can be accessed at some of the terminals, showing Adam from the future arriving and what exactly happened in that lab where he disappeared. Guests hear the conversation about the time collapse and then see Adam pulled into the portal with a flash. The labs also show various pieces of scientific equipment that are showing unusual malfunctions now that the time portals have started to cause issues across time. There is also evidence in the office that Adam's work was being closely supervised by a mysterious group of employees who knew much more about time travel than they should have at that point in time.

Now seeing the culmination of the plot and the start of the time collapse, guests must find their next portal to continue the path and hopefully find their way home. The portal is located in the media store across the town square, but like the prototype portal, it is weaker. Still, it is the only way to go. This portal leads into the second and final major attraction of the experience, where guests are saved by a vehicle from the future and transported back home on an exciting trip through time.

After the completion of that attraction, guests exit out of a different portal and into a retail space back in 2021. Things are all back to normal in this version of the town square, as if the experience guests just had didn't even happen. But through the land, guests could try to notice various details that they may have first spotted in the other times. The retail area would be filled with minor references to the events and people of the past settings that guests just walked through, such as store names, historic plaques, names drawn in concrete, things carved in tree trunks, and more.

Now back in the present and home, the experience is over for guests. There would be a fair level of repeatability if guests began to dive into the deeper levels of the plot and investigate the secret layers beneath the core experience. The two main attractions plus the minor attractions and character interactions would also drive repeatability.



## **BALLOON TOUR ATTRACTION PLOT AND EXPERIENCE**

Because of the influx of new visitors arriving in the year 2155, the transit authority of the city has started using their high capacity aerial transit vehicles to offer aerial tours of the city of the future. This was the most efficient way to welcome all the new travelers and introduce them to the year 2155.

Guests enter through the Transit Hub lobby and pass display boards showing the status of various transit vehicles and lines, all of which are unique and futuristic adaptations of modern transportation techniques. Other screens show highlight videos of the sights that can be enjoyed from the different trips. The queue continues into a room where there is a large digital table display that tracks all the vehicles moving around and through the city. The queue eventually reaches a split, where guests are assigned to separate lines for either Launch A or Launch B. That queue feeds into a pair of pre-boarding instruction rooms for each of the two Launches.

Guests are assigned a seat number and stand on that number in the pre boarding room, where a welcome video shares background information about the year, the existence of time travel, the vehicle they will be boarding, and safety instructions for their trip. A door then opens and guests are sent out onto the launch platform, where the vehicle awaits them.

The vehicle is a high capacity aerial balloon that is a futuristic cross between a helicopter and a balloon. It would be described as a highly efficient and green mode of transportation, reinforcing the themes of a sustainable and idealistic future. It holds 3 tiered circular rows, so that every seat has a prime view of the flight.

After “take off”, the experience flies guests over and around the hyper modern and expansive city, pointing out landmarks and innovations made possible by time travel. It is an impressive and optimistic tour that shows the best of the world of the future. The vehicle then descends and lands again at the transit hub. Guests exit now on a lower level into an exit hallway. That hallway leads to a staircase and elevator back up to the main level of the city and into a transit themed retail space on the main city square.

The ride system that makes this attraction possible is made of 3 separate moving elements: a seating platform, a load platform, and a dome screen. The three elements move in synchronization to create the simulated visual that the balloon is lifting off into the sky. In reality, the dome screen and the load platform slide down around the stationary seating platform to simulate the take off effect. For unloading, the vehicle platform descends down to meet the load platform at the lower unload level, and then the system resets on the load level. The experience is supplemented with wind, smells, and other environment effects to sell the experience.

## **TIME ESCAPE ATTRACTION PLOT AND EXPERIENCE**

The Time Escape trackless dark ride attraction is the culmination to the story and the experience in the park. The concept is that guests have become stuck in the collapsing time network, but a vehicle has been sent from the far future to rescue them and get them back home. Along the trip, they jump from portal to portal through a series of scenes through time, but as always, some things have gone wrong.

When guests enter the portal to leave 2098, they quickly discover that things are not going as expected, because there is no other side to the portal ahead of them and the portal appears to be weaker and flickering. The energized pathway bends and extends beyond, pulsing with occasional waves of light. They continue forward around a narrowing corner, and now neither the beginning or end are in sight. Are they stuck in the space between time? Also strange is that there are visible branches coming off the portal. Above are multiple extended pathways, going in all different ways. The end of the portal is visible in some cases, showing glimpses into other times. The visible settings jump randomly from location to location with no pattern. Every few jumps however, there is a momentary glimpse of Adam Haley trying to get the attention of guests.

Suddenly from around the corner, a time network technician appears and lets guests know that Haley sent them from the future to rescue the guests and get them back home. They usher guests around the corner to the load room, where guests board onto a pair of 8 seat trackless time machine vehicles. A video display on the vehicle dashboard shows a live message from Adam Haley, who is very glad to have found us and tells us that he's going to guide us back to our home time. He also explains that he got stuck in this same time collapse just hours before, but that he was rescued by one of these same vehicles, which he was surprised to find out was his own invention in the future. He lets us know that he thinks he knows how to fix the time network problem, but that we need to get back to our time first.

The pair of vehicles dispatch and begin the fast paced, time jumping attraction. Haley narrates through the full experience while the dashboard screen displays stats about what time we are in. The vehicles first jump to a 1700's farm at night where all looks normal, but then the vehicles pass by a huge hatched dinosaur egg, causing Haley to tell us that we are not the only people or things stuck in the wrong time, but that he is working on getting everything back home as soon as possible. In the darkness above, we can see a huge pterodactyl flying past the full moon.

Passing through another portal, the vehicles then emerge into the age of dinosaurs where a crashed taxi cab is being attacked by raptors. Another pterodactyl is perched above and a large dino lunges at our vehicle as we race towards the portal just feet away. The next jump takes guests right into a 1950's downtown street at night, where there is a traffic jam. The vehicles swerve around the stationary and honking cars. Above the traffic is a large hover car from the future, apparently lost in the foreign city.

The next jump takes guests ahead to the far future, where the vehicles park at a projection dome for a scene that shows dozens of open portals all spilling people and things out into a futuristic plaza in the world of the future. Haley tells us that he thinks it is just one or two more jumps, and the vehicles speedily head into an open portal. The vehicles enter into a back to back pair of projection domes for a fast paced finale that jumps through dozens of portals and worlds colliding at once, all before finally finding the right portal that brings us back to 2021. As we turn the corner, there is a portal branch, where we can see Haley back in the far future, wishing us goodbye and reminding us that we can't change the past, but we can always change the future.

Guests unload inside the portal and walk out the exit back to the outdoor retail area of the present day, ending the main experience of the park.

The attraction features both physical set scenes that are supplemented with projected backgrounds and multiple projection domes for the final series of scenes. The vehicles are trackless not for variable paths, but just so that there is not a visible track that breaks any level of immersion in the time jumping experience.

## **THE ECOLOGICAL IMPACT**

Sustainability is a focus of the project in both active physical ways and passive narrative ways.

Physically, the indoor park would be a prime option for a photovoltaic system on the large flat roof, potentially gathering enough energy to power significant functions of the park. The project would promote recycling and use products to minimize its landfill impact, such as compostable paper products. It could be built to LEED standards and act as a feature example of green building for the entertainment district it would be located in.

Sustainability would also be a part of the story experience in indirect ways. The plot revolves around research into renewable energy, so information about the realities of energy research would feature heavily into plot supporting details and media through the park. The future settings that guests visit would be designed to show a bright and optimistic future and feature references to green energy and green design, such as rapid public transit, renewable energy, recycling, and bio-architecture. The intent is to always represent the future as a sustainable world, so as to put it into the minds of all guests that visit.

## **STORY TIMELINE**

1887 - The company that will one day become Fortek Unlimited is founded as an energy company who first electrified the city.

1922 - The Haley family moves to the city, leaving their farm behind.

1926 - The first member of the Haley family graduates from the University with a degree in physics.

1934 - The second Haley family member begins his study of physics and four more follow in the next decade, establishing the family as legacies at the university.

1975 - The pulp novel that initially inspired Adam's work is written and published, but finds little acclaim.

1999 - The farthest back point of diplomatic contact with the future. Only the very top level clearance holders in government and commerce have any knowledge of the future creation of time travel.

2021 - In our outside present day, an unexplainable portal suddenly opens up in the middle of a town square. It is barricaded, but entrepreneurs start selling tickets and letting people through to experience the wonders of the future.

2066 - Adam Haley, the inventor of the time engine, is born.

2078 - Adam finds the book that inspires his research in a used bookstore. He reads it dozens of times over the next few years.

2088 - Adam graduates with honors from the physics department and begins working in the field of energy.

2093 - Adam is hired at Fortek Unlimited as a senior experiential physicist with a focus on renewable energy research.

2097 - Adam accidentally discovers the principles behind the time engine while exploring new forms of renewable energy. He begins developing a time engine in his free time.

2098 - Adam opens the first portal with the time engine and travels a week into the future.

2099 - Fortek Unlimited introduces time travel to the world and develops a commercial version of the technology, allowing mass time travel to begin.

2129 - Adam formally retires, but keeps contact with the time network department

2127 - Fortek Unlimited's market cap grows to be larger than all world governments combined, and they assume indirect control over all world decisions.

2132 - The first portal incident: a portal connects to the wrong time for the first time. Adam unretires in order to study the incident.

2148 - The second portal incident: a portal collapses with travelers inside. Adam is concerned and begins developing systems to monitor the condition of the portals in an attempt to know when a collapse will happen in the future.

2152 - Adam's research shows that there may be a weakening of the time network. He fears that it may be too late to do anything about it and regrets his invention for the first time.

2155 - The monitoring system Adam created sends an urgent alert. A full scale collapse is imminent, affecting all portals across all time, and there is practically no way to prevent it. If this happens, time itself may cease to exist. Adam believes that the only option is to shut the entire system down, but Fortek Unlimited refuses. Adam decides then that he only has one option. He must undo time travel, so he starts to travel back to the past to prevent himself from ever inventing the engine. No matter what he tries, history changes to make sure that he still invents time travel. His last attempt is to talk himself out of it on the very day he invented it. But as soon as he convinces himself to stop his research, the paradox ignites the test portal and pulls him in. He realizes that he may have just caused the exact collapse he was trying to prevent. The paradox plus his frequent travels have disrupted the portal network and caused random portals to open throughout time and stay open, leading to countless random travelers getting lost all through time.

Time Collapse - Adam is pulled into the portal and fears that he is stuck in the space between time, but he is soon rescued by a mysterious high tech vehicle that can slice between the layers of the time network. Shockingly, he finds out that the vehicle was actually sent by himself from the future. The vehicle takes him to the far future and leaves him with instructions to invent that very same vehicle so that he can send it back in time and restart the cycle.

Far Future - Adam repurposes his portal engine technology to create a vehicle that emanates its own localized portal, so that it can safely travel anywhere. He also has the time to research what happened with the portal collapse and discovers a solution. He must return all travelers to their original times and then close all the portals through all of time to reset the network. He sends a fleet of his vehicles back into the portal to both save himself, and to find anyone and everyone who is out of time and to bring them home.

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