

No Future

By Frank Lantz and Eric Zimmerman

1

NO FUTURE

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NO FUTURE...

Yeah, right. You pull off your headphones and stare at the gray depths of your monitor, squinting at your reflection in the dull glass. You boot up your computer and it begins its interminable process of becoming useful, as you contemplate the prospect of another day at work. The phone rings. If you want to answer the phone, turn to page 2. Or if you want to sit there and let it ring, turn to page 3.

2

You pick up the phone. Before you can speak, a voice on the other end says, "Hello?" Say "Hello" right back by turning to page 4. Or say nothing and just listen by turning to page 5.

3

You feel a certain satisfaction as your phone bleats helplessly. With this small victory under your belt you turn to the day's business. You really should straighten up the mess on your desk (turn to page 6). Or maybe that can wait until after you've checked your e-mail (page 11).

4

Tentatively, you say "Hello."

You hear a voice say "Thank you for choosing MEMEX automated voice message reminder system," and then the smug voice of your boss, Alpha Male: "Yeah. Just want to make sure you know about the THRRST brainstorm in the Palmetto Grove room around 11. Yeah." No way. Your day is already planned out and he can't drop this shit on you at the last minute. Screw the stupid meeting and cheer up by going online and buying yourself a shiny new CD instead (turn to page 22). Or bite the bullet and do some quick preparation for the meeting (turn to page 12).

5

You hold your breath and wait. A second voice comes on the line:

"Hello?"

"Hello, is that New York?"

"No, this is Chicago, I think New York's in the bathroom."

"Should we wait for L.A.?"

"Jesus, I've got an 10:15 that started at 9:45. Can't you guys do anything without L.A.'s permission?"

"All right, all right. But I haven't forgotten who fucked up last week."

This conference call was obviously not intended for you. You can hang up by turning to page 13. Or, if you want to keep eavesdropping, turn to page 14.

6

Your desk is a disaster: unread memos about guerrilla marketing and a half-finished personality quiz from Psych Out magazine lie scattered over Powerpoint printouts enumerating the brand attributes of something called THRRST. You cock your head to the side to decipher your handwritten scrawl in the margins: "tastes good. for women!! replenish fluids(?)"

Right. You were going to clean up. Begin by meticulously labeling everything on your desk with Post-it notes (turn to page 21). Or start by finishing that personality quiz (turn to page 7).

7

Question 3. Some people have the experience of finding themselves in a strange place and having no idea how they got there. Choose the response that reflects how often this happens to you. If you want to complete the test as honestly and accurately as possible turn to page 9. Or fill it out at random by turning to page 8.

8

You circle answers at random, add them up, and then turn to the results key: You are a dynamic, independent, strong-willed individual. Your urge for freedom sometimes causes you to do exactly the opposite of what is expected of you. You seek to live according to your own ideas and convictions.

Congratulations. Well it's time to finish cleaning your desk. So, like it or not, turn to page 10.

9

You answer each question as carefully and truthfully as possible and then turn to the results key: You find it difficult to distinguish between fantasy and reality. You are unusually passive and withdrawn but capable of erupting into wildly irrational, even violent, behavior. To find out how Paxadril can help call 1-800-NEWDAWN.

Why does this sound so familiar? You remember: you worked on the Paxadril campaign. In fact, this "personality test" ad was your idea. Don't you have some free samples around here somewhere? To finish cleaning your desk and maybe find a few loose pills, turn to page 10.

10

The stacks and drifts of unwanted information seem to have grown even higher. How to begin finding an order in this unruly chaos? Post-it notes! Their bright colors and simple geometry are just the tools you need to tame this mess. Implement your Post-it note strategy by turning to page 21. Or forget your stupid desk and give yourself a well-earned reward by going online to buy a shiny new CD by turning to page 22.

11

There are five unread e-mails in your inbox, poking up like weeds in the immaculately groomed garden of your desktop. Go ahead, read one. Pick by subject line: *From Your Secret Admirer* (page 17), *Free Will & Determination* (page 16) or *Memo* (page 15).

12

THRRST is a women's sports drink that tastes like a cross between saliva and soapy Kool-Aid. From the piles of paper on your desk, you pry loose a document called *THRRST Re-Branding Strategy*. Did you write this? You try to read it but can't penetrate the cascade of meaningless buzz-words. Do you think it is all sheer crap? (Turn to page 30.) Or maybe you can make sense of it if you would just try a little harder (page 31). Hey... if you squint, it's almost like the words become a maze of twisting passages on the page (page 32).

13

You drop the receiver into its cheap plastic cradle and strategize about how to waste the rest of the morning. Turn to page 11 and check your e-mail.

14

The voices continue:

"Let's cut the crap, New York is out."

"Who lives?"

"No one. No one lives. The word from HQ is no survivors, no prisoners. Zero. Everybody in New York gets the bullet."

You hang up the phone. This sounds serious. How should you react? To play the secret agent and put the clues together turn to page 57. Or let the chips fall where they may. Get up and take a last look around your soon-to-be-liquidated New York office by turning to page 23.

15

Memo. You scan it: "...employees are instructed to sort glass and metal recyclables in the kitchen..." Just another useless company email. To delete it and read another one, turn to page 18. Or continue reading on to page 19.

16

Free Will & Determination. This sounds important. You click to open the e-mail, but nothing happens. Is something wrong with your computer again? Turn to page 49 to confront the problem. Or get up from your desk in disgust and turn to page 23 to stalk angrily through the office until your frustration subsides.

17

From Your Secret Admirer. You scan the first line of the e-mail and your eyes glaze over. You start again and the letters blur. You try one more time, but you just can't focus. What is wrong with you? If you're suffering from attention deficit disorder, take a deep breath and turn to page 27. But if you're merely a distracted genius, pat yourself on the back and turn to page 28.

18

Two e-mails left. Pick by subject line: *Free Will & Determination* (page 16) or *From Your Secret Admirer* (page 17).

19

You skip past the bit about recycling: "...due to ideological differences with the management, the following employees will be terminated..." Wow. And then you see YOUR NAME on the list! Is this some kind of joke? You hurriedly delete the e-mail. What now? Get up from your desk in a panic and turn to page 23. Or forget the whole thing and read your next e-mail on page 18.

21

Post-it notes, Post -it notes. Now where did you put those Post-it notes? You can't find any in the riot of papers on your desk. So in one righthetous gesture, you push your chair

back and stand up, heading for the supply closet with a kaleidoscope of beautiful Post-it notes twirling through your head. You see the closet door ahead of you, and it looks unlocked. Turn to page 37 to slip inside.

22

Yum. You fire up your browser and type in the URL. You scan your wishlist, cursor hovering between two possibilities: *John Cage*, "Indeterminacy." Like you: smart, adventurous, ambitious, a little difficult. To put this item in your cart turn to page 36.

Britney Spears, "Oops ... I Did it Again!" Why not? You're young enough to give in to the simple pleasures of a well-crafted pop juggernaut. To put this item in your cart turn to page 35.

23

You glance about the over-designed office, wondering where to turn. Amidst the crowded maze of chrome and frosted glass, a coworker kneels beside an obscenely expensive, cheaply made, and completely broken office chair (page 29). A huddle of snickering interns are faxing dirty images to destinations unknown (page 34). And off to one side, the solitude of the supply closet door beckons you like an old friend (page 37).

27

Isn't A.D.D. just a mild form of schizophrenia? Flip to a random page and continue the story from there.

28

You are smart. And it's time people knew it. You stand up from your desk and stride confidently over to J., who is squatting next to an ugly and expensive office chair, unsuccessfully re-attaching a broken wheel. Turn to page 29 to start up a genius conversation with her.

29

She looks up at you, her fingers black with oily underchair grime. Before you can speak, she asks, "What did you think about that new commercial - the one with the dancing dinosaurs?" You have no idea what she's talking about. Lie and tell her you liked it (page 38). Or lie and tell her you didn't like it (page 39).

30

What a bunch of nonsense. A pointless chain of empty phrases. As you crumple the piece of paper into a ball you feel a paw on your shoulder. It's Alpha Male: "Ready?" As ready as you'll ever be. Follow your boss into the conference room for the brainstorming session by turning to page 33.

31

The jargon is pretty dense, but careful reading reveals a surprising amount of thought behind the wordplay. You realize that THRRST represents a genuine alternative to the mainstream. THRRST really is something different. Something important. It's a sports drink for strong and independent women who don't like to be told what to do by men they don't respect. You wipe a tear of joy from your eye. With a new sense of purpose you stand up and head over to the Palmetto Grove room to join the meeting. Turn to page 33.

32

There's something odd here, a pattern in the words. Is your mind playing tricks on you or is there a message here, disguised in a simple code just below the surface? ... D ... O ... N ... T ... before you can finish decoding, you feel a tap on your shoulder. It's time for the meeting. You tuck the document into your pocket and head into the Palmetto Grove room. Turn to page 33.

33

You take a seat at the conference table surrounded by the blank faces and vacant stares of your coworkers. Some help they're going to be. Do you fight the urge to slack by thinking super-duper hard about everything you've learned so far? If so, turn to page 52. Or join the ranks of your coworkers by letting your consciousness drift away and turn to page 53.

34

You approach cautiously, deciding whether to reprimand the interns or join in their mischief. Then a hand on your shoulder stops you in your tracks. "Yeah. I really need you to come to this brainstorming meeting." It's your boss, Alpha Male. You are steered roughly to page 33.

35

As you click the buy button you feel a hand on your shoulder. You turn to see Alpha Male's smug face. "Yeah. I really need you to come to this meeting." Sheepishly, you

get up and follow him into the conference room. Turn to page 33.

36

You click the buy button. Nothing happens. You click again. Nothing. Right click, escape key, Ctrl-Alt-Delete. Nothing. Your machine has crashed. How do you react? To calmly accept the inevitable, turn to page 50. To give in to pure rage, turn to page 51.

37

You sneak off into the dark safety of the supplies closet. Behind you, the door swings closed with a heavy click. You try the doorknob and it doesn't turn: you're locked in. And it's pitch black. So what's next? Turn to page 44 to search for the lights, page 45 to bang on the door for help or page 46 to pause and enjoy a rare moment of peace.

38

She must not have heard you, because she repeats her question. "You know, the ad for the THRRST campaign." She wipes her hand on your pant leg, leaving a black smudge. "Did you like it or not?" To insist that you liked the commercial, turn to page 40. To tell her you hated it, turn to page 41.

39

She must not have heard you, because she repeats her question. "You know, the ad for the THRRST campaign." She wipes her hand on your pant leg, leaving a black smudge. "Did you like it or not?" To insist that you liked the commercial, turn to page 40. To tell her you hated it, turn to page 41.

40

She ignores your response once more and asks, "The dancing dinosaurs. The one that tested so well with the 25-to-37 divorced head-of-household migrant stockbrokers. Didn't you just LOVE it?" If you did just LOVE it, tell her and turn to page 38. If you say you didn't love it, turn to page 39. Or tell her the truth by turning to page 42.

41

She ignores your response once more and asks, "The dancing dinosaurs. The one that tested so well with the 25-to-37 divorced head-of-household migrant stockbrokers. Didn't you just LOVE it?" If you did just LOVE it, tell her and turn to

page 38. If you say you didn't love it, turn to page 39. Or tell her the truth by turning to page 42.

42

For the very first time in your miserable life, you actually tell the truth. "I DIDN'T SEE THE DANCING DINOSAURS!" you shout at the top of your lungs. And as if in response, your coworker, the broken chair and the rest of the office collapses like a house of cards. Wiping the pink smoke from your eyes, you move on to the next elaborate and meaningless fiction.

THE END

44

You fumble for the switch, reaching deeper and deeper into the dark. You feel, to your surprise, fur coats all around you and you smell mothballs. To keep on going, turn to page 47. Or run back to the door and bang for help on page 45.

45

You rap gently on the door, but when no one responds, your knocks intensify to a panic. Wildly pounding in the darkness, you knock over supply shelves as staplers and loose pencils batter you from all sides. Slipping on reams of spilled paper, you stumble and clutch at the doorknob, which suddenly and miraculously opens. Covered with ball point pen inkstains and torn Post-it notes, you stand in the doorway, seething with hatred and embarrassment. You can shuffle back to your desk and sulk on page 63. Or seek your revenge on page 48.

46

Peace at last. You slump to the floor in a contented doze. Some time later, you wake to the sounds of construction. How long have you been asleep? You get up and feel for the door, but it's been replaced by cement: you've been walled in. You prepare a luxurious bed of Post-it notes and drift into a vast and dreamless sleep.

THE END

47

You keep walking forward toward a chill wind, the snow crunching under your feet. You part the last of the pine trees and emerge into a snow-covered landscape. Passing by a lonely lamp post, you keep on walking. And you never turn back.

THE END

48

Exactly two days later, a bomb fashioned from paper clips, scotch tape, and white-out fluid completely destroys your office building. From deep in your underground bunker, you wait for the revolution to take hold, for advertising offices everywhere to burn, baby, burn. But the world moves on as if nothing ever happened. Eventually, you find another job.

THE END

49

You try clicking again. Still nothing. Your index finger explodes in a spastic frenzy as you click wildly all over the screen, desperate for some kind of response. By the time you stop, you've deleted all of your e-mails and crashed your machine. How do you react? To accept the inevitable, turn to page 50. To give in to pure rage, turn to page 51.

50

You are flooded with a peaceful inner calm. Things break, and that's Okay. It's all clear to you now: computers aren't merely tools for work, they are instruments of self-abnegation. You settle in for the kind of richly fulfilling rest-of-your-life that the rest of us can only dream about.

THE END

51

In a single angry gesture, you stand up and overturn your flimsy cubicle as your computer explodes in a riot of sparks and glass. And then the violence begins: grabbing a razor-sharp X-Acto and handfuls of cheap pens, you dispatch your fellow office workers in an orgy of computer rage. Looks like it's time to find yourself a new job.

THE END

52

Women. Sports. Drink. Women. Sports. Drink. For some reason you picture Shelly Long wearing a beer hat. "Cheers." Hmm. That might actually be promising: Women athletes toasting each other. Clear your throat and try this half-formed idea out on the crowd by turning to page 55. Or jam your pencil into your eye by turning to page 54.

53

You let your mind wander. You see yourself in another place, thumbing through a thick magazine filled with shiny,

beautiful objects. You see yourself take a coin from your pocket and flip it in the air. If it comes up heads turn to page 59. If tails, turn to page 56.

54

Yes! Finally you take control over your own destiny! You plunge the sharp point of the bright yellow #2 deep into your right eye. Say goodbye to the shimmering ambiguities of stereoscopic vision. Embrace the simple clarity of a two-dimensional world. And then it starts to really, really hurt.

THE END

55

You start in with your brilliant idea but Alpha Male interrupts you with a raised hand. "Got it." He looks around, pauses dramatically, and then says, "THRRST: Your Body. Your Choice." Invoking reproductive rights to shill flavored water? You've never heard a stupider or more vulgar idea. Tell your boss exactly how you feel by turning to page 62. Or take the diplomatic approach and give him some constructive criticism by turning to page 61.

56

The coin comes up tails. You look from the coin back to the magazine. What are you doing? Where are you? You have no idea. You shake your head, close the magazine and walk away.

THE END

57

You're very close to blowing the lid off this whole operation. So choose carefully. If you think you've got it all figured out, turn to page 58. But if you're really in it for the sport, turn to page 59.

58

There is a pattern. Choices add up. It's all starting to make sense. Or is it? To beat the game, turn to page 59. If you just want out, turn to page 60.

59

Yes, it is a game. But unfortunately, you lose. To end this right now, turn to page 60. Or go to page 58 to learn from your mistakes.

60

You search for an ending but can't find one. Is this how you win? Turn to page 59 to find out. Or follow your decisions back to their source on page 58.

61

The room turns to look at you as you begin to speak. And then their eyes open wide at what comes out of your mouth: a fountain of excrement. Stunned silence. Suddenly, the room explodes into applause. Your coworkers lift you up onto their shoulders and carry you from the room, cheering. You are given an executive title, a corner office and a salary that will allow you to do whatever you want for the rest of your life.

THE END

62

You demolish him with a tirade of vicious, heartfelt and articulate invective fueled by years of suppressed anger. Alpha Male says nothing until your explosion has finished. Then he points at the door and says, "Get out." You stumble out of the room and wander back to your desk, buzzing with adrenaline. Turn to page 63.

63

You are sitting in your cubicle, staring at your trembling fingers. Your boss Alpha Male creeps up behind you, reeking of tuna and expensive cologne and puts a hand on your shoulder. "You know something? You remind me of myself at your age." Snarl, "Get your stinking paws off me!" by turning to page 65. Or, play the situation to your advantage and turn to page 64.

64

You gently take his manicured hand off your shoulder and nudge the fattened sausage of his pinky into your mouth with a soft sucking sound. Several weeks later, after you've slept your way to the top, you still can't wash the taste of his finger out of your mouth. The sweet taste of success.

THE END

65

You shrug him off and raise your hand to strike his face. But he grabs your wrist in an iron grip and gives you a strange smile. The walls of your cubicle fold back, revealing bright lights and a cheering studio audience. Alpha Male grins and lifts your arm, "Congratulations. You made it. I'm pleased to present you with this check for \$1

million." As the theme music plays you look down at the check, trying to make out your name.

THE END

66

The alien horde shudders under the onslaught of your particle blaster. And then you hear that mysterious voice inside your head again. "We've been expecting you. Welcome back ... to EARTH!"

THE END?

67

You never thought of yourself as bisexual - but you were obviously wrong. Your eyes still closed, you feel fingers on your thighs, your lips, your nipples. Removing the torn remnants of your clothing, you wonder how you ever chose work over pleasure.

THE END

68

The doorway opens and you step into golden light, accompanied by the sound of deafening applause. Two dark-haired men introduce themselves to you as F. and E. "Congratulations," one of them says admiringly, "we didn't think anyone would make it this far." "Now for the real challenge," says the other. "Find your way from here to the start. Backwards."