

Time

by Mark Waldrop

Down in the basement, as far away from the Arizona sun
As we could get, we were led by a man that loved the word
Motherfucker. He said this was where we belonged.
In the basement.

He told us science fiction had rules:

1. Don't read anything before the year you were born.
2. Time is a motherfucker.

He couldn't stand still and
He left his reading glasses on around his neck.
He'd swoop them up off his chest the way a gunfighter
Quick draws a revolver — to fire some paragraph right through
us.

*That goes for my stuff too, he said. Don't go reading my books
Until you've finished Bradbury and Wells.*

Time, he'd say, *is a motherfucker*. He told us to put our hands on
the flat

Cool surface of the desks, to touch them so we knew they were
real.

Some of us did, some just watched him, shuffling
Birkenstock sandals, playing with curls of hair.
He stopped moving to tell us this one thing.

*This is the past, he said. You don't know it yet but this moment is
over.*

Time is a motherfucker that way.

