

# Time Capsule

*by* stephen hastings-king

He pours another shot and says: Then I buried it in the yard. The time capsule I mean. You have to plug it in to see. I wonder if they'll know.

Q. What would you send to the future? A. I would boil down fading empire in wine with some sugar and throw in sporting events, the Hitler channel and the weather. When the liquid evaporates, I would slice what remains very thin and arrange it like candy. The attractive presentation will entice the future to eat. But as no-one wants to eat alone, I would include menus from my recent meals with optional maps of my trips to the market and details of preparation pasted behind them bound together with stories about eating that would reveal the rituals of consumption in a time of crisis that no-one can name.

Now I am standing in the middle of a driveway. He has dug up the time capsule and sits on the ground by the hole with the bottom of the capsule between his feet. The inside is a tangle of wires and splices, small lenses and light bulbs. A power cord lay coiled on an elevated disc at the center. A red arrow points toward the plug.

You have to plug it in, he says. I was going to fill it with writing and newspaper articles and photographs but none of that says anything about us.

He goes silent and looks into half pill between his feet. After a while he says: I wonder if they'll know what the wire is for. Things change. People have been staring at the ocean forever and only lately have we seen that the water glows when you agitate it, that it happens everywhere but is too faint to register. It took cameras that can shoot in the dark without lights to see it. Maybe that'll change how people think about the ocean. It has been right in front of us

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and we have thought about it for a very long time and that has made it obvious in many ways. But it is also obvious that the obvious changes. Maybe someday the ocean will be obviously a space full of ghosts.

The electro-sphere is like an ocean that is specific to now. It wasn't like this 25 years ago and won't be like this 25 years from now. And we don't really know how to think about it. We're bugs caught in a strange web that we made. We hang in the air and everything confuses us.

Soon he shakes his head a little like he is coming out of something. He says: This is a memory machine. These motors generate a haze of static and these others work like projectors that cast against the haze. Because the top is open, what you experience is dependent on the conditions that obtain when you start the machine. I like that. It makes sure that the past is always fit to the present and that it's all unstable, even now before x years underground.

And then, mostly to himself: It shouldn't catch fire. I don't think it will anyway.

I ask him why he is planning on burying it in his driveway where no-one might ever be inclined to dig. Maybe there's a cemetery for time capsules, I say. If you bait it for archaeologists and grave robbers, someone might come looking.

While he is silent I can see calculations running through his mind and decide that I must be influenced in my imaginings by what he told me of his machine.

