

# THE FRAGILE UNIVERSE

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## **Abstract**

Context. We present a study following the unintentional creation of a micro-universe.<sup>1</sup> We exposed the subject to a standard stimulus, particularly tracks designated as 'popular' by the *Billboard Hot 100* chart. Over the course of five days, we exposed the subject to songs from this list from 9:00 AM PST to 5:00 PM PST. A deviation occurred on the third day in the hours in-between.

**Key Words:** stimulus: dark matter: micro-universe: love: Nine Inch Nails: mop and bucket: backstab: Morgan Freeman's voice.

## **1. Introduction**

As detailed extensively in Dr. Ellis's article, the Department of Astronomy at the University of Arizona, in coordination with the Department of Astrophysics at Arizona State University, unexpectedly created a self-sustaining object of immense matter and gravity in a self-contained environment.<sup>2</sup> This anomaly was unanimously identified as another universe, albeit on a micro-level.

During the course of our study, it was observed that the micro-universe responded in supernova-like colors, although on a smaller scale, when exposed to complex sound patterns: specifically music. The team initially observed that songs by Celine Dion and Air Supply stimulated the subject in ways to mimic our understanding of physics during The Big Bang. It is also noted that during this period, the micro-universe responded with the most variation of color and energy to Dolly Parton and Kenny Rogers' 1983 single, *Islands in the Stream*<sup>3</sup>.

Upon the universe's unintentional creation, as documented by Dr. Ellis, the subject's response to stimuli was immediately observed<sup>4</sup>. While the unstimulated subject was originally observed as only a dormant, black orb

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1 Rahim Ellis, Ph.D. (UA) "We Created Another Universe!" *The Astrophysical Journal* (September 2012): 76-102.

2 A ten gallon aquarium with a faulty lock.

3 *Billboard Hot 100* number-one single, October 29-November 5, 1983

4 Third year graduate student, Kelly Van Der Schmidt, Physics (UA), was humming near the subject when the first response was witnessed. While she claimed not to recall what tune she repeated, it was noted how fellow lab members were unreasonably annoyed with her repeated whistling of Lady Gaga's *Born This Way* (2011).

that produced readings of immense matter, musical stimulation produced peaks of color and light, as well as multiple forms of radiation. Evidence also suggested that, as observed by its effect on its surrounding environment, it created dark matter as well<sup>5</sup>.

Immediately, lab assistants began clustering around the self-contained environment. At first, the team tried to produce stimuli by talking to the subject. Claps and outbursts of “hey” and “boo” were repeated to no effect. Only after one lab member<sup>6</sup> hummed a child’s tune<sup>7</sup> did the subject again respond. At the discovery of a stimulus, the construction of an iTunes playlist was immediately initiated. Under the guidance of Dr. Ellis, a criterion was produced for the selection of additional stimuli. The criterion was; stimuli must be A) catchy, as determined by Dr. Ellis, and B) popular, as determined by *Billboard Hot 100*.

As primary observations concerning the construct of the micro-universe were underway, the study of the subject’s response to sound stimuli began as a secondary observation. The sound study lasted for five days and fourteen hours, with the subject being exposed to only the standard stimulus (music) for the first three days of observation. A minor deviation occurred between the third and fourth days, at 3:22 AM PST<sup>8</sup>.

**2. Period observations**

DAY ONE: Under Dr. Ellis, the team was engaged in primary observations and analysis of the micro-universe. Assigned to record radiation levels expelling from the anomaly, Kelly Van Der Schmidt exposed the subject to the initial stimulus<sup>9</sup>. After confirming stimulus, a standard set was created. While the approved 5,364 track list is available on the department website<sup>10</sup>, below is a sampling of the standard set:

Artist	Track (Year)
Air Supply	All Out of Love (1980)
B-52's	Love Shack (1989)
ABBA	Money Money Money (1976)
Janet Jackson	Rhythm Nation (1989)
Bon Jovi	Living on a Prayer (1986)
Dire Straits	Money for Nothing (1985)
Steve Miller Band	Take The Money and Run (1976)
Kenny Rogers	The Gambler (1977)
Taylor Swift	Love Story (2008)

5 Since dark matter is still hypothetical, as it emits no light or radiation and is observed only by its effect on other forces, the evidence presented here is for the suggestion of dark matter.

6 Javier Gonzalez, Astrophysics (ASU), and ‘C’ student

7 “Mary Had a Little Lamb”

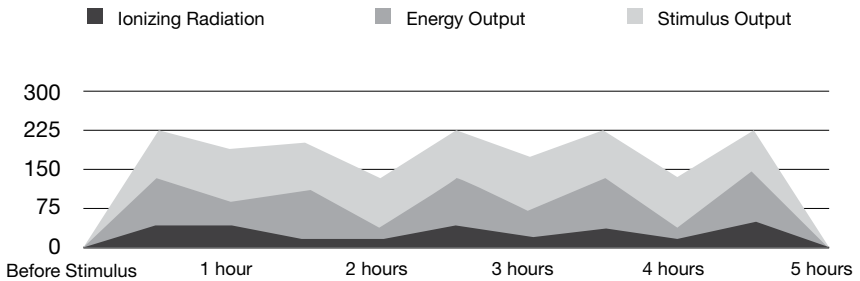
8 Jason Turk, the night janitor for the University of Arizona, inadvertently exposed the micro-universe to a stimulus not approved as part of the standard norm.

9 Her dimples vibrating with every hum.

10 <https://www.as.arizona-micro-universe-ipod-playlist.edu>.

Construction of the standard stimulus took three graduate students three hours to complete<sup>11</sup>. Music was purchased using the department’s credit card. At 11:51 AM PST, the micro-universe was exposed to the playlist for the next five hours and nine minutes, until Dr. Ellis ordered the team to go home and rest for the evening<sup>12</sup>. A few graduate students met after observation hours to discuss Day One findings<sup>13</sup>.

Day One findings are as follows:



That night<sup>14</sup> the lab students determined that, at the exposure of the stimulus, the energy output of the micro-universe increased significantly, yet the amount of stimulus needed for energy production far exceeded output. Lastly, it was observed that the stimulus produced a potential for ionizing radiation to reach becquerel (bq) levels toxic to human life.

DAY TWO: All observations began at precisely 8:00 AM PST, except for the fields of radiational output and magnetic field strength (H), as both students responsible for those observations arrived later than their scheduled time<sup>15</sup>. Data recordings for those fields did not begin until the fifth song of the standard playlist.

Data observations and recordings were initially thought to have duplicated findings from previous day. At the end of the nine-hour observation period, the team was again dismissed by Dr. Ellis.

All observations ceased for the evening and everyone went home, except one researcher,<sup>17</sup> who stayed at the laboratory overnight, solely for the purpose of analyzing data<sup>18</sup>. Analysis continued unimpeded throughout

11 Myself and Kelly. And J. Gonzalez (who had to actually ask Dr. Ellis for the assignment).

12 Unlike research leads at other labs, Dr. Ellis is a firm believer in the mantra, "Early to bed, early to rise..."

13 Myself and Kelly, after I suggested we go out for steaks (my treat) before she invited Javier, and we instead went to the bar across the street. Javier spent the entire night calling me "Sour Kraut."

14 Everything was going fine until Kelly let Javier drive her home. "Because he lives in the same building," she said, as he went for his car. She gave me a kiss on the cheek, hers hitting mine and smudging my glasses, and called me "a good friend."

15 K. Van Der Schmidt and J. Gonzalez, who arrived together, twenty minutes late, and both more tired than usual.

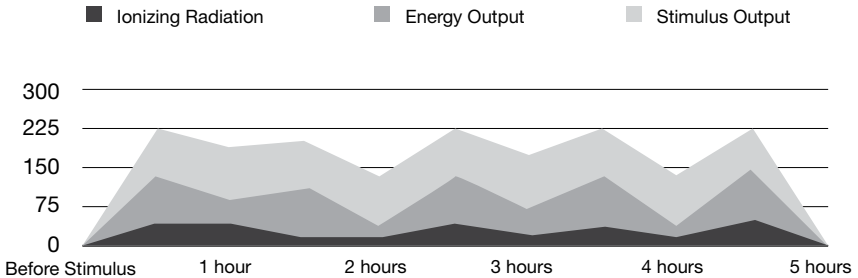
16 "Daytime Friends" by Kenny Rogers (1977).

17 Myself

18 After K. Van Der Schmidt invited me out for drinks with her and Javier, and a few other lab members.

the night<sup>19</sup>, during which the researcher discovered an error in Day Two's findings.

The following graph reflects findings over Day Two's first five hours (since the subject was only observed on Day One for five hours, only the first five hours can be used for comparison):



While initial findings seemed to duplicate Day One data, a closer inspection revealed that, although Stimulus Input remained the same, ionizing radiation increased throughout the five-hour period on a consistent +6 kBq margin, while other Energy Output decreased -11 SI.

OBSERVATION: Contrary to the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics, which states that nature always tends to move towards a state of entropy in order to produce more energy, Energy Output of the micro-universe decreased despite a consistent stimulus. Upon this observation, I formed two quick hypotheses: 1) the micro-universe found a loophole in the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics and was not only governed by a different set of physics than those in our own universe, but that those rules had to be contrary to everything the scientific community has ever observed and expected throughout the long history of physics and/or science or 2) all observations and/or calculations on the matter were most likely utterly wrong.

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"Because it'll be fun," she said, when I asked why I should go. "Because you'll be with your friends," she said, after I asked what evidence she had to determine the evening would, indeed, be "fun". "Because I want you to," she said, when I said nothing at all. At this, I considered her argument. Kelly and I were friends, after all. We had been friends since we started the program three years earlier. She had gone to the university for her undergraduate work, and knew all the bars and clubs in Tucson worth attending. I had transferred from Chile, where I was working at the observatory after graduating Bonn, and she insisted on helping me with my English, even though I spoke the language fluently. She took me to my first American football game. She was my first American friend in America. I helped her through her relationship with Timothy. Then Ricardo. Then Evan. Then Jamal. Then Lisa. Then Cassie. Then Michael.

I hypothesized that maybe her and Javier were also only friends. I deduced they came to work together (for the first time), due to the ease of carpooling, since they originated from the same apartment building. I hypothesized they were late because of reasons entirely of Javier's fault. He was, of course, from the lesser school in Tempe. Kelly taught me that. That the state school was for people with HPV who couldn't get into a real university. That they were the Scum Devils, a pun on their mascot. I concluded that Javier must have herpes and was putting on his medicative cream when it was necessary for them to depart.

Then, before I could answer Kelly that I would accept her invitation, Javier came up behind her, put his arms around her waist, called her "sweet tits," whispered something in her ear to make her giggle, then asked "What's the sour puss for, Sour Kraut?"

I declined the invitation.

19 With Mr. Turk, the night janitor, being the only distraction as he attempted to mop and empty trashcans. I told him the research was too important for any interruptions and that he could come again tomorrow evening, to which he pulled out his headphones and asked me to repeat myself.

DAY THREE: Observations recommenced at precisely 8:00 AM PST, except (again) for radiation output and H. Tardy lab members appeared unwashed and smelling of human mucus upon arrival<sup>20</sup>. Tardy members repeatedly distracted other lab members with continual giggles and winking at one another from across their workstations<sup>21</sup>.

At 8:21 AM PST, six minutes after tardy lab members' arrival, and after I personally notified the entire team of last night's findings, Dr. Ellis was notified of offending lab members' actions<sup>22</sup>.

Day Three findings were pretty much the same: Radiation +6, Energy Output -11. Whatever.

Before excusing everyone for the evening, Dr. Ellis informed the team that news of our discovery had spread, and actor Morgan Freeman would be arriving at the facility in the midmorning to film an episode of his cable television show "*Through the Wormhole, with Morgan Freeman*" in front of the anomaly. Upon learning this news, the team decided to go out to a local bar and celebrate, except for one lab member, who again stayed throughout the night to work<sup>23</sup>.

That night, the micro-universe was exposed to a slight deviation from the standard norm at 3:22 AM PST<sup>24</sup>.

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20 Dr. Ellis observed the smell was like "when [they] used to reembarc on the sub after Fleet Week."

21 The three of us have to sit right next to each other!

22 "What the hell's your deal?" K. Van Der Schmidt asked, after her and J. Gonzalez finished receiving their chastisement from Dr. Ellis. K. Van Der Schmidt pulled me into the lab's unisex toilet for our discussion.

"What's your deal?" I asked.

"I don't have one," she said. She crossed her arms.

"Me neither," I said. I too crossed my arms.

"I Kissed a Girl" (2008) by Katy Perry vibrated through the door separating the toilet from the lab. As we stood in the tiny closet, K.'s normally pouty lips stretched thin. Her chin's little cleft went smoother the tighter her lips pursed. Her brown eyes pierced mine and stimulated something in my brain and chest that made me A) want to reach out and hold her, kiss her, again make sweet passionate love to her right then and there in the unisex toilet, and B) vomit in shame.

I wanted to tell her that I loved her. That I had always loved her. That I loved her since we met at the graduate mixer the start of our first year, both of us wearing name tags that read "Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_" and "I am from \_\_\_\_\_" with a blank space underneath to fill in. My name tag, with 'Willem,' in clunky, block-like lettering and hers, with 'Kelly' written in graceful artistry, the lines curving and twirling like atoms mapped and charted on the quantum level.

I wanted to tell her I loved her since she came up to me, a cocktail in her hand, and read that I was from Germany via Chile, and told me, very slowly and very loudly, that her name was Kelly and that she was from "Ah-Mare-Eh-Ka." That she continued to talk like that even though I responded in perfect English. That I loved her since we stood at the function's open bar and drank more than the university expected its graduate students to drink, and how we made fun of all the other students who were there. Since we took a cab back to my dorm for international students, and she insisted we make love, the one and only time we ever did, even though I kept telling her I didn't have any condoms.

I wanted to tell her I would always love her, even after this fling with Javier ended, which we all knew it would because they all did. I wanted to tell her I would always be there for her. To love her. Forever and always. I wanted to, but instead, all that came out was "We've lost thirty minutes of research because you won't get here on time."

To that, my Kelly, my sweet beautiful Kelly, uncrossed her arms. "Javier's right," she said, unlocking the door, her little dimples quivering in annoyance. "You are a Sour Kraut."

23 With no sleep from the night before, I might add. And without an invitation either. Not as if I wanted to go.

24 At approximately 12:01 AM PST, Mr. Turk again attempted to enter the lab to mop the floors, which were gritty, and empty the trashcans, which were overflowing. A few cockroaches crawled in and out of the debris inside it. I shoosed Mr. Turk away and said he could come back the next night.

"That's what you said last night!" he said, jamming the handle of his mop into the doorway to prevent me from closing it. He took his headphones out of his ears. "And then your boss emailed my boss to bitch how none of the cans were emptied!" With my foot, I nudged the mop out of the doorframe enough to shut it. "You're f-ing with my chi!" he yelled

DAY FOUR: Dr. Ellis arrived at the laboratory at 7:35 AM PST, twenty-five minutes earlier than he needed to be there, per usual. Upon his arrival, he was made aware of the previous night's events <sup>25</sup>. I notified Dr. Ellis that the unapproved playlist was the 1999 dual-disc album, "The Fragile," by Nine Inch Nails. Dr. Ellis inquired as to why I did not turn on the cameras to record the event. I informed him that Mr. Turk and I grappled with one another until the album completed.

Observations were put on hold until (tentatively) 9:00 AM PST, while the team went over the previous night's unexpected data. All new data was reviewed except, not surprisingly, radiation output and H. Upon offending lab members' arrival at 8:44 AM PST, like I even cared, the tardy members were made aware of the previous night's events. Ms. K. Van Der Schmidt was also made aware that her attire was completely inappropriate, when I pointed out that her underwear was on inside out.

"Excuse me?" she said. She stood up and her whale tail disappeared back inside her pants. As she turned, she put her lab coat on. It was the first time she had spoken to me since calling me 'Sour Kraut.'

"I'm sorry," I said. "Maybe you didn't understand me. I can see the Victoria's Secret label on the back of your g-string. They were probably put back on this morning in haste. And in the dark."

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on the door's opposite side. He tried to turn the handle, but I held it so it wouldn't budge. "I'm getting in there as soon as you move," he said. At his declaration, I locked the door. Mr. Turk then yelled that he had keys, and referred to me as a 'dip-shit.' I scooted a chair underneath the door's handle.

For roughly two hours I processed the day's data and became alerted to two troubling facts. First, after roughly fourteen hours of stimuli, radiation rose +15 Bq, meaning radiation would begin reaching levels toxic to human life in approximately eleven hours. Second, I noticed that any time a song was replayed from the standard norm, the micro-universe ceased any and all energy production besides ionized radiation. My calculations concluded that, over the last two days of observation, 5,289 songs had been played from the standard playlist, at least once, and only 75 songs from the list remained. I calculated it would take roughly 5.4 hours to expose the subject to the remaining stimulus.

Upon this realization, I began creating a list of other songs from the *Billboard Hot 100* to be purchased and downloaded once Dr. Ellis returned in the morning, and I would have access to the department's credit card. At roughly 3:02 AM PST, while working at my station's computer, the names of artists and their work began blurring together. I put my head to the keyboard, to refocus myself. I closed my eyes and my thoughts instantly went to Kelly, I saw her at the bar laughing with Javier, until she saw me and a breeze blew her hair over her shoulders and white light bathed her. She put her hand to Javier's face and pushed him away. Like Moses, she parted the crowd around her, and I realized the crowd was made up of Timothy and Ricardo and Evan and Jamal and Lisa and Cassie and Michael, who watched her grab me by the shirt and pull me to her, and we kissed. Her tongue danced in and out of my mouth, its tip gliding over my molars and the front of my teeth and my heart beat like a drum, until the drum beat louder, then louder, then louder, until the sounds consumed everything and I felt her tongue not glide over my molars then the front of my teeth, but glide over both of them at the same time. I pulled away, but her tongue kept licking in the open space between us, only now it was a tongue forked down the middle, and the bar around us was no longer a bar but something like a factory, a steel mill maybe, with sparks and lava and chains, and the faces of Timothy and Ricardo and Evan and Jamal and Lisa and Cassie and Michael and Javier were stretched and demonic. They all laughed at me, ha ha ha, as Kelly's hand was not grasping the shirt on my chest, but instead was inside my chest, gripping my beating heart until she yanked and my eyes opened.

Drool puddled on my keyboard. My neck hurt from being hunched over like that. I realized it had all been a dream.. Except the drums still drummed. The pounding still pounded. The noise was still noisy. Mr. Turk mopped the floor on the other side of my workstation.

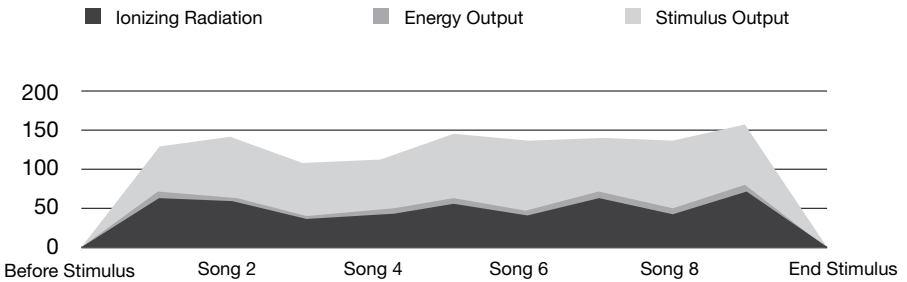
"Forgot about the back door, numb-nuts," he said.

The undefined noise blared throughout the laboratory, and I noticed Mr. Turk's white headphones were absent from his ears. Past him, his iPod sat in the iPod speaker dock which was used to expose the micro-universe to its stimulus, but was now being used to expose the micro-universe to Mr. Turk's unapproved playlist. Mr. Turk's head bobbed back and forth with the noise's beat, and he continued to mop the floors.

<sup>25</sup> Realizing what was happening, I jumped out of my chair and ran toward the iPod dock, knocking over Mr. Turk like the University football players at the game Kelly took me to long ago. When I was only a few feet from the dock, I reached

I then suggested maybe she could start keeping them on long enough to arrive to work when scheduled. I then turned to Javier, who stood next to her as he put on his lab coat, and reminded him to “triple bag it.” I then returned to my workstation <sup>26</sup>.

After reviewing the data, the team discovered that Mr. Turk’s playlist produced more Energy from the micro-universe <sup>27</sup> than any other stimulus before it. It also produced more Ionized Radiation, as well. Further observations were not made though, as Mr. Freeman and his television crew, along with university faculty and administrators, arrived to the lab at 9:04 AM PST. At 9:38 AM PST, after setting up their camera equipment, the laboratory team and the television crew were ready to recommence stimulation of the micro-universe. Only eight songs were played. Below is a graph of data collected from those eight songs:



The graph indicates that the micro-universe produced no Energy Output during the standard stimulus, and actually reacted with a drastic increase of Ionizing Radiation <sup>28</sup>.

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out to snatch the iPod, but my feet were taken out from beneath me. I went flying head first toward the wet ground. When I landed, Mr. Turk was on top of me.

“So that’s how you wanna play?” he said, before calling me a “*sonofabitch*.” We grappled with one another, me on my back, him on top, each of us trying to get the better hold.

“You don’t understand!” I yelled as we wrestled.

“No, you don’t understand,” he said. “I got bitched at for not dumping the trash! I need this gig!” His palm slapped against my cheek until finally my hand found an opening between his grip and I poked him in the eye. He fell off of me, his hands letting go of mine to find his face. He rolled back and forth, screaming, “What was that for? What was that for?” On my knees I scrambled to the dock, and when I went to remove Mr. Turk’s iPod, I slipped on the wet ground. Laying in a shallow pool of sudsy water, my cheek to the moist floor, I finally noticed the universe in the aquarium on the table.

When exposed to stimuli on the standard playlist, the universe flashed in bursts of pink and purples, like amateur fireworks from a roadside shop. We compared it to supernovas and other astronomical events, but those descriptions should have been saved for what the micro-universe did when exposed to Mr. Turk’s non-standard stimulus. When exposed to the noise from Mr. Turk’s iPod, the micro-universe sucked in on itself, divided itself, remade itself into numerous orbs, like the theory of singularity bursting out into everything, a multiverse that blanketed itself in a nebula of reds and grays and greens and yellows. The orbs exploded into dancing beacons of gold and hazel. It twirled streams of orange around it. The multiverse pumped and pulsated with the rhythm.

Mesmerized, I got up on my knees and watched it. It was beautiful. I scuttled over to the computers and turned them on. They clicked and clacked as they recorded data. On my knees I scuttled again, step-by-step, to the aquarium. Almost there, I put my hand up toward the glass, to touch the glass, feel it, but I was stopped short when Mr. Turk, who had obviously recovered, tackled me again.

<sup>26</sup> And felt *really* bad right immediately afterward.

<sup>27</sup> Now back to a singular orb, dormant and waiting.

<sup>28</sup> One of the attending professors whispered to no one in particular: “What do you expect after it listened to that crap all night? It’s like my sixteen year old, all moody and depressed. At least you’re not paying for therapy because it likes to cut itself.”

During this eight-song period, the micro-universe did nothing except float in its aquarium. Mr. Freeman, in his black suit, his hair an explosion of white, a gold hoop hanging from his ear, silently stood with his hands behind his back. He turned to his producer. His producer turned to Dr. Ellis. He told Dr. Ellis to “make it do something.”

As the producer said this, my mind wandered. I felt bad about what I said to Ms. Van Der Schmidt. I wondered if I had ruined our friendship with my words, if I had ruined any chance of us ever being together. I was angry, yes, and what I said was hurtful, but wasn't it true that you always hurt the ones you love? And she hurt me, so I hurt her back, but I had never hurt her before. I had never spoken to her in that way, and I wondered what made me do so then? Regardless, it didn't change my feelings for her. I still wanted to be with her. To love her. To save her from all the bad decisions she made and would make. As I thought this, I felt a burden on me. I felt as if I were being watched. I caught Kelly's eyes through the crowd of lab members and visiting professors, only not with hate like I expected. Or anger. Her pouty lips curled at one end. Her eyes dreamily lay half closed, as if they were sizing me up. As if they were undressing me. Javier noticed it too. He nudged her, but she did nothing. He nudged her again, yet she continued to stare.

“That's not really how it works,” Dr. Ellis told the producer. “You can't just make the universe do something.”

“But that's why we're here,” the producer said. “Because you said it did stuff. That's why Mr. Freeman is here.” Mr. Freeman halfheartedly smiled. Hesitantly, Dr. Ellis approached the aquarium and clapped. He yelled ‘hey’ and ‘boo’ and tapped the glass. He had a lab student replay the stimulus, only this time, louder. To all of this, the micro-universe only withdrew further into the corner of the aquarium<sup>29</sup>.

“Well,” Mr. Freeman said. “Isn't this fascinating?”

As Mr. Freeman spoke, everyone turned to him, and when they did, they missed it. At Mr. Freeman's voice, the universe blipped. As if there were a slight change in its color. As if it shifted, but only for a moment. When he stopped speaking, there was another blip, whereupon Mr. Freeman turned on his heel and walked out of the laboratory, his hands behind him the entire time. His producers and television crew followed<sup>30</sup>.

As everyone quietly went back to their workstations, I stayed a moment and watched the universe. I thought about the blip no one else seemed to see. It

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29 “Yep,” the attending professor again whispered to no one in particular, “At least you don't have to take it to Hot Topic once a month so it can ‘express itself’.”

30 Dr. Ellis followed, asking “Is simply the creation of another universe, albeit on a micro-level, not good enough for you? Does it really have to ‘do something?’ Does it? *Well, does it?*”



looked like the universe had shifted slightly on its axis. Like it looked up toward the lid of the aquarium. Like it longed to get out. I went to the accelerometer and printed out the readings from the last few minutes. At my workstation, I tried going over the perforated pages, but I felt the same burden from before distracting me. Across the workstation, Kelly did nothing to review radiation readings and instead watched me. Next to her, Javier did nothing to review magnetic field readings and, with a scowl, watched Kelly watching me. He coughed but she took no notice. He coughed again, more deliberately, but again, she took no notice. "Excuse me," I said, and with my printouts, I went to the bathroom.

Sitting on the closed unisex toilet, I examined the readings. I noticed at the time Mr. Freeman spoke, the gravitational pull of the micro-universe decreased, as if it were somehow released of a heavy weight. As if Mr. Freeman's voice had a stronger pull. Also, when Mr. Freeman spoke, the micro-universe experienced a blueshift<sup>31</sup> and when he stopped, a redshift<sup>32</sup>. On this information, I began formulating a hypothesis, but I had to speak with Kelly about radiation levels at the moment Mr. Freeman began and ceased speaking, before the hypothesis could be completed.

Just my luck, Kelly was outside the unisex bathroom when I opened the door<sup>33</sup>. After a brief personal discussion, I requested a printout of the radiation levels. Data showed that during the duration Mr. Freeman spoke, radiation levels of the micro-universe dropped, but only slightly. Upon this discovery, I formed a new hypothesis.

ASSERTION: Mr. Freeman's voice is soothing and reassuring.

HYPOTHESIS: The micro-universe was soothed and reassured by Mr. Freeman's voice. The blueshift indicated it was calmed. The redshift, anxious and irritable. Instead of a consistent stimulus, I proposed that sometimes the best way to negate toxic radiation may be to just sooth and reassure the universe.

When Dr. Ellis returned, I approached him with my findings<sup>34</sup>. I suggested maybe we ease off the standard stimulus of the micro-universe, to see how its radiation levels and Energy Output responded<sup>35</sup>. I suggested maybe a

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31 A decrease in light wavelength. Most commonly associated with celestial bodies moving toward observer.

32 An increase in light wavelength. Most commonly associated with celestial bodies moving away from observer.

33 When I tried to leave, she pushed me back in and entered with me, closing and locking the door behind us.

"What's gotten into you?" I said, but before answering me, she grabbed at the zipper on my trousers.

"What's gotten into you?" she said, succeeding at her task. In a single motion, she jerked my pants down the length of my legs. "You've never acted like that before," she said. "You were an ass." She attempted to grab the waistband of my underpants. "It was—" I tried swatting her hands away, but the more I swatted, the more she tried. It was like grappling with Mr. Turk all over again. "It was—" we fumbled and fumbled, until she grabbed my brief's elastic. This was what I wanted all along, but for some reason, I no longer wanted it. Not here. Not like this.

"It was hot," Kelly finally said, and as she did, I stumbled toward the door, the back of my underwear still in Kelly's grip. In the struggle, I flipped the lock, grabbed the handle and fell on it, both of us falling out into the laboratory, my bare butt showing.

34 He cut me off and asked why I was in my underwear.

35 "No, seriously," he said. "Why are you in your underwear?"

new standard stimuli be used. I suggested a team download books-on-tape or other stimuli similar to Mr. Freeman's voice. The micro-universe had changed, I proposed, and maybe the stimulus needed to change as well<sup>36</sup>. My proposition was dismissed.

Dr. Ellis directed the team to reinitiate the standard stimulation of the micro-universe<sup>37</sup>. Standard stimulation continued, uninterrupted, until 5:00 PM PST. There was no change in Energy Output, while Ionizing Radiation increased +6 Bq. At 5:02 PM PST, Dr. Ellis reviewed the data. He alerted the team that the radiation emitting from the universe was beginning to approach unsafe levels. With a sigh, he said observations of the micro-universe would continue in the morning and conclude around noon, when, for the safety of everyone involved, the micro-universe would be promptly destroyed and disposed of<sup>38</sup>. The team was dismissed for the evening.

One lab student again decided to stay after hours, to continue processing the day's data<sup>39</sup>. Once all lab members departed for the evening, the remaining lab member accessed iTunes and accepted the new Terms of Agreement. With the department credit card, he purchased every song and album he had previously researched. He then purchased any audiobooks narrated by Mr. Freeman. Then any audiobook from the New York Times "Best Seller List," simply because he could. Then, every book from the "Classics" list. Then, perhaps unhinged by the freedom of financial irresponsibility, since it wasn't his card and he wasn't bucking the bill, he downloaded everything he could, stopping only when iTunes alerted him that his credit card was denied. The member then downloaded a free file-sharing service and began illegally downloading more content. The lab member then ordered a pizza<sup>40</sup>, and prepared to bunker down to begin exposure of all this new stimuli.

For the entire night, the lab member exposed the micro-universe to stimuli not approved as part of the standard norm. At 11:58 AM PST, he put the trash outside the lab and locked the door. At 12:01 AM PST, Mr. Turk picked up the trash, yelled 'thank you,' and left. At 7:25 AM PST, ten minutes before Dr. Ellis was due to arrive, the lab member put chairs under the handles of both doors, making sure to adequately secure the back door this time as well.

As the subject was exposed to a non-standard stimulus, the lab member reflected over his last interaction with K. Van Der Schmidt. Except for the

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36 "Damn it son, get some pants on!"

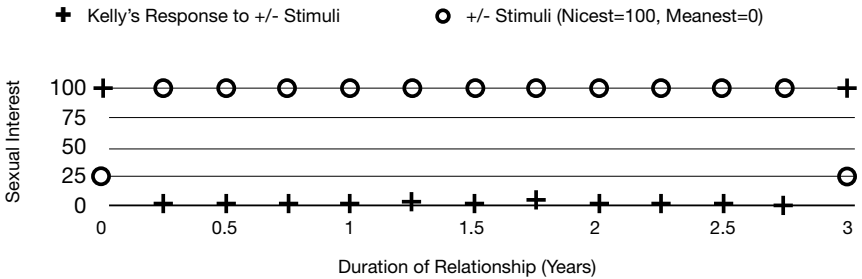
37 And for Kelly Van Der Schmidt to give me back my trousers.

38 I asked Dr. Ellis why we couldn't at least attempt new stimulus to get radiation levels down. Maybe it wouldn't work right away, but sometimes things had to get worse before they ever got any better. He said the experiment wasn't worth the risk of giving his entire team cancer. "I have insurance premiums to think about," he said.

39 "Son," Dr. Ellis said, after I requested to stay late. He hung up his lab coat and prepared for the night's departure. "Of all people, you should probably go home and get the most rest." He glanced down, only for a moment, to make sure, I assumed, that I was still wearing my pants. At his gesture, I put my hands in my pocket, and when I did, I felt an unfamiliar object inside. Rubbing my thumb along it, I realized I still had the department's credit card.

40 Ham, pineapple, bacon and jalapeno. Extra sauce.

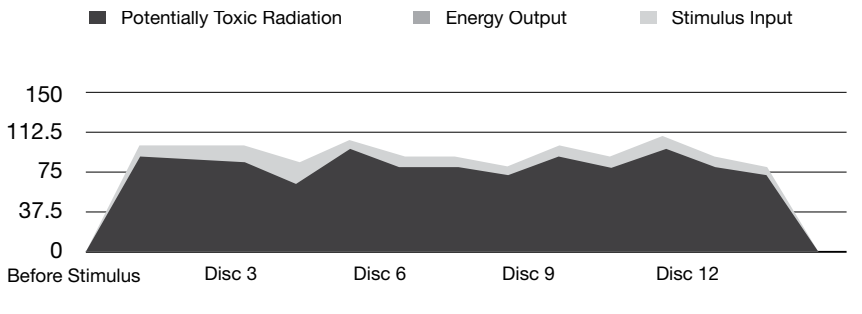
one 'interaction' that occurred after they got drunk and cruelly made fun of all the other incoming graduate students three years prior, the lab member had been sweet and kind (positive stimuli) to the subject, which produced no desired results. The lab member realized that desired results were instead produced by a negative stimulus (being mean). While trying to interpret these results, the lab member quickly scribbled his findings on the pizza box. Below is the scatter chart, reproduced from the original document:



CONCLUSION: ???

DAY FIVE: At 7:35 AM PST, Dr. Ellis promptly arrived at the laboratory twenty-five minutes early, like always. Through the door's porthole window, he saw a lab member exposing the micro-universe to an unapproved stimulus. The lab member refused to unlock the door. At 7:51 AM PST, University and Tucson police arrived at the scene. At 7:55 AM PST, lab members began showing up, only to find the lab still inaccessible. At 8:37 AM PST, Kelly Van Der Schmidt and Javier Gonzalez finally arrived to work. Upon their arrival, Dr. Ellis promptly yelled at Kelly to keep her pants on long enough to show up when she was supposed to, or to quit showing up at all<sup>41</sup>. At 9:01 AM PST, Channel Five (CBS) and local CNN affiliate, Channel Three, began broadcasting the student barricade of university facilities.

By 9:02 AM PST, the micro-universe was on the fourteenth disc of the audiobook version of "Moby Dick"<sup>42</sup>. Here is a graph of data over the first thirteen discs:



<sup>41</sup> Muhahahaha!

<sup>42</sup> Melville, Herman (1851).

The micro-universe had produced no productive Energy Output, and the potential for toxic bq levels of radiation had become a reality. By 9:03 AM PST, blisters began appearing over my skin. My eyes itched. Some of my hair fell out. I realized there would not be enough time to expose the micro-universe to all the new stimuli I downloaded for it, and my purchases were just a giant waste of money. Thankfully, I remembered it wasn't my money.

At this point, my hypothesis seemed false. It appeared no matter how much stimulus was given to the subject, the subject would cease production of any positive energy, and instead just become toxically radiated. This conclusion seemed rushed though, as it was made when the police began using blowtorches on the door locks. Because radiations levels were so high, the police using the blowtorches were wearing yellow plastic suits. They all looked so funny dressed like that. I started laughing and couldn't stop. My skin itched, and when I scratched it, it came off under my nails.

For shits and giggles, I illegally downloaded "The Fragile," and played it for the micro-universe. Same effect as Moby Dick. Ho-hum.

As the police pounded on the door to break the lock, I went to the micro-universe. It hovered in its aquarium, black and dormant, like it existed all pissed off like. I put my face to the glass. "It's okay," I whispered. "It's going to be all right." At my words, the computers clicked and clacked. I looked over at the results and realized, in the moment that I spoke to the micro-universe, radiation levels dropped -.24 Bq. At this, without forming a hypothesis as to why, I put my face back to the glass. "It's going to be okay, little guy," I said. I said it again, this time stretching out my words, pulling my vowels long and hollow. "It's going to be okaaaaaaaaaaaay." Radiation dropped -1.

I pulled my face away from the aquarium. The universe shifted on its axis, as if it looked at me. Then, it shifted again, as if it looked up at the aquarium's lid. "Is that what you want?" I asked. I touched the lock, and when I did the computers clicked and clacked. Radiation -2 Bq.

Limping over to my workstation, I got a paper clip. I went back to the aquarium and began fiddling with the lock. Radiation -5, -8, -15, -21. The police pounded harder and harder. "It's going to be okay," I said. "And even if it's not, you'll figure it out." -27, -34, -42. "You'll just have to."

By the time the police broke open the doors, the lid was thrown open, and the universe, before it hovered into the air vent up in the ceiling, exploded into a blizzard of colors more beautiful than I had ever seen before<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> I was then promptly arrested and taken to the hospital before booking. At the hospital, I was treated for the next eleven months for the seven different types of cancer I was diagnosed with.

### 3. Discussion

Ms. K. Van Der Schmidt visited me in the hospital while my trial was taking place in absentia<sup>44</sup>. At that time, my lawyers were certain they could clear me of the charges, and when Ms. Van Der Schmidt arrived at my bedside, and I said "Hello, my sweet Kelly," she curtly responded with: "Save it, Sour Kraut." She sat in the chair next to me.

"You could've had this," she said, sticking her shoulder blades together to lift her bust. "But you threw it away." She pushed them together and let them go. "And now, you can't have any of it."

She stood and went to the door, where I hadn't noticed Dr. Ellis was standing. "I just wanted you to know what you'll never get again," she said, and then the two of them left, Dr. Ellis's hand on the small of her back before creeping down to her right buttock as they turned the corner. When my lawyers did not clear me of my charges, and I became a convicted felon, I received repeated text messages, then prison letters from Kelly, asking for me to call her.

During my eleven-month hospital stay and subsequent incarceration, I had plenty of time to review and reconsider my experience with the micro-universe. At first, I wondered why it had acted so toxically to the stimuli. To any stimulus. I wondered if it found happiness. If it found its freedom. I wondered what it was doing.

I determined that it did not matter. I determined that we could not force upon the universe anything, and expect it to do anything we wanted. If we gave the universe a stimulus, it would inevitably take it for granted. If we changed the type of stimulus, renamed it from music to audiobook, it was still all just the same noise. All we could do was reassure the universe that everything was going to be all right, and let it do what it was going to do. All we could do was hope for the best. All we had to do was give it some confidence, and let it figure itself out.

I thought about how negative stimuli with Kelly produced the end result I wished for, and I wondered if the result I wanted took those measures, was it really worth obtaining? Was it ever really worth wanting? We are fickle creatures, us humans, and we don't always get what we want, but if we try sometimes, we just might find, that we get what we need<sup>45</sup>.

I realize in this prison cell, I have found the freedom and happiness I also longed for. It is a simple room. A simple construct. Yet, I have found happiness within its means. I am even learning to crochet!

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<sup>44</sup> While I would be found guilty of theft and neglect for having the universe and letting it go, and credit fraud to the tune of a \$14,782.81 iTunes bill, I received the stiffest penalty for the illegal downloading of music.

<sup>45</sup> Rolling Stones (1969)

And every now and then, I'll receive a blank postcard from some far away vacation spot. I know who it's from. As if it was dark matter, emitting no light or energy, but still affecting me. Still tempting me to come find it. To escape, and come to it. Maybe when I can, I'll meet the universe out there. But only until then. Only until I can. Let's not force anything.