

Parallel Commutiverse
by John Darnbrough

On the 10th of July 2018 at 8:30am, Professor David Welch picked up his car keys from the kitchen table just like he did every weekday morning as he prepared to leave his house to go to work. He kissed his wife, gathered some papers and a magazine and walked out of the house.

His neglected car was waiting on the driveway and beeped disapprovingly at him when he pressed the unlock button on the key fob. The Professor dropped himself into the driving seat and swept away yesterdays fast food packaging from the front passenger seat into the foot well below it so that he could place his papers and magazine on it.

He started the car, backed it off the driveway and began his commute.

David worked for the National Space program and was based at a research laboratory located 10 miles from his home. He specialised in space, time and theoretical research of the universe and was highly respected amongst his peers due to his 25 years of commitment to the program.

His car juddered and backfired as he drove the first part of his commute.

He would only drive for one mile of the journey and then he would park at the train station. The second part of his journey would be the nine mile train ride to the Science Park and then a brief walk to his laboratory.

As the car engine warmed up after half a mile, the usual smell of burning oil filled the car's interior but the Professor's mind was already elsewhere thinking about his research, blocking his sense of the heavy oil aroma.

The last 100 yards of the car journey would be to drive across the train tracks and then into the station car park just in time for the train arriving.

The car backfired as the Professor approached the track crossing and then came to an abrupt halt right on top of the tracks.

David snapped back to his reality and with a surprised expression looked around him trying to understand what was happening. His intelligent space, time and theory brain should have worked quickly enough for him to comprehend the situation but was struggling to react.

The car emitted a burst of steam from the front grill as a sigh of neglect and impending doom.

The Professor turned his head to his right as his reality dawned on him and raised a hand as if it would have stopped the train. His last thought was to grab the magazine from the passenger seat and tightly close his eyes as the train hit.

On the 10th of July 2018 at 8:30am, Professor David Welch picked up his car keys, kissed his wife, gathered papers and a magazine and set off to work.

His car complained as he drove to the train station.

As he approached the station, the car juddered as he crossed over the tracks to the car park and David felt a slight nerve tingle at the same time.

He pulled into the car park and saw his train arriving through his rear view mirror.

The station platform was attended by the usual commuters and one or two nodded to the Professor as they always did when he arrived and he returned their acknowledgement.

The train doors swished open and David entered one of the carriages.

As usual, the train was quite full so David, as he always did, decided to stand at the end of the carriage and flick through his papers for the duration of the short journey.

The train trundled rhythmically on and the Professor studied his papers not noticing the man stood opposite shifting from foot to foot in a slightly agitated manner.

When the train began to slow as it came close to its destination, the man suddenly lunged forwards and faced David in close proximity.

'Give me your wallet!' he said.

David was pinned to the carriage door by the man and was reeling from this sudden invasion. He realised what was happening and his automatic response was 'No! Why, why should I?'

At that moment he felt a sharp point pressing against his abdomen as the man resorted to a single aggressive command. 'Wallet!'

David was perspiring heavily as he started to slowly reach down to his jacket pocket.

'Ok, ok' he said calmly. 'I'm getting it'.

'Quick!' said the man as he realised the station platform was imminent.

David had dropped his papers and as he grasped his wallet with one hand, he tightly gripped the rolled up magazine with his other.

The thief was becoming more agitated as the train slowed even more and the platform became visible alongside through the carriage window.

Both of David's hands were now slowly on the rise, one with his wallet and the other holding the magazine. He wasn't sure what would happen next and didn't have time to even fathom the options.

The train suddenly jolted and everyone on it was shifted six inches forwards by the force.

The Professor felt the deep pain immediately and gasped.

The thief looked down to see a patch of red spreading out on David's white shirt just above his belt.

David started to drop to the floor and as he did the train came to a halt. By now the thief was banging on the door, impatient for the automatic opening mechanism to operate.

As the door finally slid open, the thief fled and David slumped to the floor. His wallet had gone, his life had gone and as he was crowded around by distraught passengers, his hand was still gripping the magazine.

On the 10th of July 2018 at 8:30am, Professor David Welch picked up his car keys, kissed his wife, gathered papers and a magazine and set off to work.

As he arrived at the station in his long suffering car, he felt a slight nerve tingle as he crossed the train tracks towards the car park.

David caught the train and as it approached the station at the Science Park he stood near the doors waiting to alight.

For a moment he thought he saw someone from the corner of his eye but when he turned his head to look there was no-one there. It did give him a slight feeling of butterflies in his stomach for just a

moment.

The train door opened and he left the carriage for the short walk to the laboratory.

It was a warm, sunny but fresh morning as he strolled towards the building. He took it in as a deep breath and a glance up to the sky before swiping his security card at the door and entering for the day.

His workplace in the lab was shared with two others who he greeted as he laid the papers and magazine on his desk and took off his jacket.

At that moment, he became light headed and unsteady on his feet. He grabbed the back of his chair. His colleagues noticed the change in his behaviour and went over to him.

'Are you ok David?' asked one of them.

'You've gone as white as a sheet' said the other.

'I'm not ...' started the Professor but didn't say anything else as he dropped to his knees.

His colleagues grabbed a shoulder each to steady him.

'I think he's having a heart attack' said one of his colleagues who recognized the signs in him.

As he was about to instruct his other colleague to get help, David let out a loud gasp, grabbed the magazine from the desk and then his whole body became limp as his life departed.

On the 10th of July 2018 at 8:30am, Professor David Welch picked up his car keys, kissed his wife, gathered papers and a magazine and set off to work.

His journey was as normal as any other day apart from two slight shivers down the back of his neck, firstly as his car coughed its way over the train tracks and secondly as his train arrived at the Science Park.

Now as he entered his workplace in the laboratory where his two colleagues sat, he had a sense of Déjà Vu for a moment and his heart felt like it had skipped a beat.

He greeted his colleagues, put the papers and magazine on the desk and took off his jacket.

'So gentlemen' said the Professor to his colleagues.

'Have you seen it?' he asked them.

In unison his colleagues swivelled around in their chairs to face David. They were both holding up a copy of the magazine that David had brought with him and they grinned at him whilst doing so.

The Professor let out a laugh as he picked up his copy of "Science Now" and also held it up.

The cover of the magazine had a main story line that read "Universe or Multiverse? Professor David Welch tells the latest theories".

The cover picture was a photo of the Professor in the centre holding a question mark. Surrounding that image were three more copies of it, each copy of him holding a number. 1, 2 and 3.