

●冯晓慧 李守仁
●丁 牛 贺明华 译注

宇宙城游记



YU ZHOU CHENG YOU JI

天津科技翻译出版公司

英汉对照科普系列读物之一

JOURNEY TO
UNIVERSE CITY
宇宙城游记

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译注

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Journey to Universe City

Leslie Dunking

Last week I went to Universe City again. It's like no town in the world. That's because it's in the sky—far out in space. Universe City is the school for spacemen and spacewomen. Young people go there for five years. After that, they can work in space. They work in a spaceship, or perhaps in a space city.

You get to Universe City in a spaceship. The journey takes three days now, but that isn't very long. Some journeys in space take three years. A good car must have a good driver, and a good spaceship must have a good captain.

Before my journey last week I asked: "Who's the captain of this spaceship?"

"Here he is now," a woman said. "Captain Fontes."

"Not Manuel Fontes?"

"Yes," a man said, behind me.

I looked round.

"Yes," the man said again. It was Captain Fontes. He looked at me, and I looked at him. Then: "Hello, Stephen," he said.

"Hello, Manuel."

"I often think of your words Stephen—"

"My words?"

"Yes. One day you said to me: 'Manuel, today you are going to die'."

"Yes." I said. "But we were young men then. Now, here you are, captain of a spaceship."

"That's right."

"And you're alive and well."

"Yes."

"So I was wrong."

"I know. But I often think of those words. And that journey"

"It was a journey like this—to Universe City." I said.

"This journey is not going to be like that one," he said.

I looked at him. Yes, he was right. He was Captain Fontes now, captain of a spaceship. At that time, he was Manuel, a young man. And on that journey into space we were all very young.

"No, it's not going to be the same," I said.

1. Four Young People

There were four of us on that journey. Four young people in a very small spaceship. Ayesha said it was like a taxi. It was a space-taxi, and the taxi-driver was not a person, but a computer.

That was one of Ayesha's jokes. She always liked to make jokes*. Sometimes she joked about the computer.

"It's a good driver." Ayesha said one day. "It's going to take us all the way to Universe City, but not ask for any money! That's not like the taxi-drivers in Cairo"

Ayesha came from Cairo, in Egypt. She was very good with computers. She liked to build them.

"But girls can't build computers," I said to her. "Men build them."

"Is that a joke, Stephen?" Ayesha asked.

"It isn't a very good joke," Manuel said.

Ayesha was eighteen years old. Manuel was nineteen at that time, in the year 2085. He came from Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil. He worked on the motors of the spaceships.

"You're good with motors, not with people," Ayesha said to him.

That was one of her jokes.

"No," Manuel said. "But I like motors. I don't always like people."

"Do you like me?" Ayesha said.

"Yes."

"That's good."

I looked at them. They were good friends. She liked him and he liked her.

"I don't like motors and they don't like me." I said.

* make jokes 开玩笑

"You say strange things sometimes." Karin said. Karin Svensson was eighteen years old and came from Stockholm, in Sweden. She wrote programs for computers.

"I'm a strange person." I said.

"You joke about it, but perhaps it's true." Karin said.

I was not very happy about those words. Karin was a very beautiful girl, and I liked her.

One day I said to her, "You think in numbers, not words. I'm not a computer program, Karin. And I'm not a motor. I'm me."

I looked at Ayesha and Manuel. They said nothing, but they looked at Karin. From that time, perhaps, we were not four young people in that spaceship. There were three of them—and me.

And who am I? you ask. I am English, and my name is Stephen Short. Because I'm English I speak English, of course. But I also speak good Russian and some Chinese.

I'm not going to say much now. This story is about that journey to Universe City. I was a young man then, not the same person. Who was I then? Read my story. The answer to that question is there.

2. Day One

At that time it was a Five-day journey to Universe City. Five long days in a spaceship!

"Good," Ayesha said. "We can eat and drink and talk. Perhaps, Stephen can give some English Lessons?"

"Your English is very good," I said.

"Ayesha speaks good English, but my English is poor." Manuel said.

"I'm sorry," I said. "I'm not going to give English lessons."

So they talked, and I listened. They talked about Universe City, the space school. Ayesha said, "The people at Universe City want to know all about you. They want answers to all their questions. So they test you all the time."

"We must do well in the last tests," Manuel said.

"But what tests are they?" Karin said. "We had a lot of tests last month."

"I don't know. They never tell you. I asked about them, but they said nothing."

"I asked too," Ayesha said. "My sister is a spacewoman and I asked her. She said: 'The very last test is the *true* test'."

"The true test? What's that?"

"We're going to know in a day or two," Karin said.

"I *must* do well in that test," Manuel said. "At five years old I looked up * at the sky. I said: 'One day I'm going to be there, in space. That is going to be my life'."

"Yes. I was like that," Karin said.

"Me too. You don't think it—you feel it," Ayesha said. She looked through ** the window of the spaceship. "Look at it," she said. "millions of kilometres of space."

Karin looked at me. There was a question in her eyes. I looked

* look up 仰视, 向上看

** look through 透过(玻璃等)看

at her, but said nothing.

3. Day Two

That was day one of the journey. The big bang was on day two. Manuel was asleep at the time. Karin and Ayesha were near the computer. Then came the bang.

"What was that?" Manuel said. "look." I said. "Over there. A fire. Do something. Manuel!"

"The girls—are they all right?"

"I don't know. But do something about that fire!"

Karin and Ayesha were on the floor. I went over to them. Karin's eyes were open.

"I'm OK." she said.

"Ayesha isn't." I said.

"Is she?"

"She's alive." I said. "Help her. Karin. I'm going to help Manuel."

Manuel and I worked for some time. then: "OK." I said. "There's no more fire. How's Ayesha. Karin?"

"She's going to be all right."

"That's good." I said. "but the computer isn't working."

"So we have no taxi-driver." Ayesha said. "It's OK. I can get up now." she said to Karin. "We have no taxi-driver." she said again. "All right. ~~we~~ must drive the taxi."

"That's right." Karin said. "Ayesha can work on the computer. and I can write a new computer program."

"A taxi with two women drivers!" Ayesha said.

"You can still joke about it?" I said.

"Why not?"

"She's right," Manuel said. "I'll have a look at the motors. That's going to take some time."

"It's always the same," I said. "Things always go wrong with motors."

"Things can go wrong with people, too," Karin said. She looked at me.

"Why was there a big bang?" I said to Manuel.

"Don't ask questions," he said. "Come here and help me."

"I don't work with motors," I said.

"Sometimes people *must* work with their hands," Ayesha said.

"Stephen doesn't like that," Karin said. "He works with words. He thinks."

"Think about this," Manuel said. "We must have good motors, and we must have some answers from the computer. We work at it now or we all die."

I looked at him. "All right," I said. "what must I do?"

Manuel and I worked for a very long time. Then he said: "The spaceship is OK now. The motors are working well."

"But the computer isn't," I said. "And we must have a new computer program."

"The computer is my work," Ayesha said.

"And the program is mine," Karin said.

"Can we help?" Manuel asked.

"No, it's all right, thanks. Do you want to eat now?"

What was the answer to that question? Perhaps Manuel said "Yes." perhaps he said "No". I don't know. I said nothing. I was in my chair. asleep.

4. Day Three

Ayesha worked on the computer all day. She worked. but joked at the same time*. Some people are like that. They always make jokes. We were a million kilometres from home. in a spaceship with no computer program. but Ayesha joked about it!

Ayesha. Karin and Manuel talked all the time. Sometimes they talked to me. but it wasn't the same. They were three friends. I was not one of them.

"What are you thinking?" Karin asked me at one time.

"Oh. nothing." I said.

"Perhaps he's thinking: 'look at those two beautiful girls'." Ayesha said.

A joke. of course. but it was half true. Karin was very beautiful. A good programmer. and beautiful at the same time. She looked at me. Perhaps my face was red.

Ayesha said. "This computer is ready to work again."

We all went over to the computer. Ayesha looked at us. "Yes." she said. "our taxi-driver is back with us. The computer is working. Now Karin can write the new program."

* at the same time 同时

5. Day Four

We were happy, but something was still wrong. Karin wanted help.

"Help you?" I said. "HOW?"

"Where are we now? How far are we from Universe City? Talk to the people at Universe City. Stephen. We must have help."

"He can't," Manuel said. "The radio isn't working. I looked at it yesterday and again today, but I don't know much about radios."

"A radio?" Ayesha said. "I know about radios."

"Good, you can look at it," Manuel said. "I work with motors. I know nothing about computers and things like that."

Ayesha went to the radio. After some time she said: "You are right, Manuel. This is a very strange radio."

Karin said. "I can't write the new computer program without the answers to my questions. Can you do something about that radio?"

"I don't know," Ayesha said. Then she joked: "But I can build a new radio."

Ayesha worked on the radio for a long, long time.

"Can we help?" Manuel asked her many times. The answer was always "No."

"You must have a meal". Karin said. She came back to Ayesha with some food.

"No. I can't eat." Ayesha said.

"Yes, you can." Manuel said. "Come and sit down. Eat this. and have this drink."

"OK." Ayesha looked at us. "I can't do it," she said. "I can build computers, but this radio is"

"Listen." Karin said. "Listen!"

We all listened.

"It's the radio." I said. "It's working. Ayesha. That's coming from a spaceship."

"But what is it?" Manuel said. "I don't know any of those words."

"I do." I said. "It's Chinese. It's a Chinese spaceship."

"We must have help." Karin said. "Tell them."

I went to the radio and talked to the Chinese spaceship. Then I listened to their answer.

"They're going to speak to Universe City." I said. "The people there can help us. They can talk to the Chinese spacemen. and the spacemen can talk to us. Sit here. Karin. You can ask your questions."

"But I don't speak Chinese."

"It's all right. They speak English too. All spacemen and spacewomen speak good English. I don't speak good Chinese."

After some time Karin had the answers to her questions. She

* have a meal 进餐, 吃饭

thanked the Chinese spacemen. then worked on her computer program.

"And now we can sleep." she said at last. "Our taxi-driver knows the way again."

6. Day Five

"Manuel, today you are going to die." I said.

"Is that one of your very bad jokes?" Manuel said.

"It's not a joke." I said. "We're all going to die today."

"What's that?" said Karin. She was awake now. Ayesha opened her eyes too.

"He said we're going to die today." Manuel said.

"No, not me. The computer said it." I said. "It's because of that big bang. A lot of our air went out of the spaceship."

"Manuel...." Ayesha said.

"I can do nothing about that." Manuel said. "Nothing."

Karin looked at the computer. "There's still air for three people." she said. "But not for four. Three people can get to Universe City alive."

We said nothing. then Manuel said. "One of us must go."

"Yes." Ayesha said. "One of us must go through that door — out into space. Then three people can live."

"Can the computer be wrong?" I said.

"No." Karin said. "Sometimes computers are wrong. but not this time."

"So one of us must die." I said.

"Yes. "

Karin looked at me. and I looked at her.

"Not me. " I said. "I'm not going through that door. One of you, perhaps, but not me. "

Karin said nothing. Ayesha and Manuel said nothing. Then Manuel looked at the girls.

"We haven't much time. " he said. "I'm going through that door. "

"No. Manuel. " Ayesha said. "Not you — me. "

"Not Manuel or you. " Karin said. "I want to go. "

"No. " Manuel said. "There are a lot of people like me. I'm not very good. But you're very good with computers. Ayesha. and Karin writes good computer programs. There are not many people like you. The two of you must go to Universe City. "

"No. " Karin said. "you two must go. I"

"Stop her!" Manuel said. Ayesha was at the door.

"Goodbye. " she said.

"Ayesha. stop!" I said. "All of you. stop. Look through the window. We're there. We're at Universe City!"

7. The True Test

The four of us were in a room.

"What was wrong?" Ayesha said.

"The computer was wrong. " Karin said. "My program was wrong. "

"No. " Manuel said. "The program was OK. Karin. We're