

THE TRUTH CHRONICLES

BOOK I: THE TIME MACHINE

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PROLOGUE

Just a few more weeks. Dr. Jeff Thompson thrust his arms into the sleeves that controlled the robotic arms poised above his life's work. *A few more weeks and this thing will finally be done.*

"So this is your new toy, Dr. Thompson?"

The startled doctor snapped his head around to see his new lab assistant enter the room. "Hey, Michael. I didn't think you were starting until tomorrow. Yep, this is my baby. It was originally built for the folks at Mayo Clinic to perform telesurgery. We've reconfigured it so that I can manipulate the microcircuitry."

Michael pointed to the end of the mechanical arms. "And this would be The Cube, right?"

Dr. Thompson chuckled at the nickname his younger colleagues had given the device. "Actually, it's called APEC, which, of course, stands for Advanced Photovoltaic Energy Cell."

"That's cool. You can give me all the details tomorrow since I'm on my way out. Here, I just wanted to make sure you got something to eat tonight."

"Thanks, Michael. Just set it on my desk over there," he said, nodding to one side of the room.

Michael walked over to where Dr. Thompson had motioned and laughed.

“Where exactly is your desk?”

“Try to clear a spot among all those trial cubes.”

Michael shuffled the objects around on the desk, then stopped and held up a picture. “Hey, Doc, is this your wife and kid?”

“Yeah, that’s Ellen and Jax. It was taken on his first day at Silicon Valley Prep.”

“He got in there? That’s great. You must be very proud,” Michael said as he placed the picture back on the desk and grabbed another. “You aren’t in any of these pictures. Don’t you ever get out of this place?”

Dr. Thompson’s face turned downcast as he realized Michael was right. *I have been spending too much time here.*

Looking suddenly uncomfortable, Michael returned the picture to the mess on the desk. “Doc, I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to get too personal. I’m gonna get going. See you tomorrow.”

“It’s alright. I’ll see you bright and early. Be sure to lock up on your way out. I’ll be here a while.”

He sighed as Michael left the room. Moving over to the desk to eat his dinner, he glanced at the picture. *Just a few more weeks, guys. If this thing works, I can retire and we can spend all our time together.*

After the much needed meal, he returned to his work with renewed resolve. While focused on the giant high definition screen in front of him,

which provided a magnified image of the intricate circuitry of APEC, an unexpected movement caught his attention. *What was that? No one's supposed to be in here this late.* He glanced at the security monitor and noticed two shadowy figures disappear from view.

Silently, Dr. Thompson removed his arms from the robotic sleeves, stood, and hurried toward the alarm on the far wall. As he reached for the button, a sharp pain ripped across the top of his head. He fell forward, and everything went black.





ONE

Two and a half years later

After pressing his thumb to the biometric scanner that opened his locker, Jax Thompson rummaged madly through its contents. Amid the many loose papers, textbooks, candy bar wrappers, and his jacket and backpack, he knew he should be able to find his physics homework. *Where is it? If I weren't spending so much time trying to solve the problems with that machine, I would probably remember where I put it.*

He patted his pockets, rifled through books and pulled at his hair in frustration. About to give up, he noticed the corner of his assignment sticking out of a book. As he reached for it, the sound of running footsteps seized his attention.

"Jax!" Isaiah Weber, his best friend since seventh grade skidded to a halt just short of crashing into him. "I figured it out."

Jax turned and grabbed his friend's shoulders. "What do you mean you figured it out?"

"I mean I know what's wrong with the machine."

Jax's hold tightened as he looked into his friend's excited face. "Izzy, are you saying that this thing is going to work?"

“Yeah, I think so,” he said, with just a hint more caution. “Obviously, we won’t know until we test it, but the numbers all make sense now.”

Jax’s mind raced with the implications. “Can you come over right after school? We really should get the testing done tonight.”

Izzy nodded. “I should be able to. I just have to call my mom and let her know where I’ll be.”

“This is going to be awesome.” *If he’s right, tonight we could actually be traveling through time.*

Jax entered the room just as the bell rang. He hurried to his seat under Mr. Li’s half-menacing glare. *Yeah, right, like you could really be mad at your favorite student.*

“Okay, class,” Mr. Li said. “Pass your homework forward, please.”

During the mad rustling of papers that ensued, Jax handed his completed assignment to the student in front of him and then looked around the room. Under the large periodic table of the elements hanging on the wall was an enormous fossil replica of a tyrannosaurus rex femur. *Man, maybe I could see a living dinosaur. I bet she would be impressed then.* He turned to the front of the room and pretended to study the blackboard as he focused on JT Bankers, the cute brunette with pigtails sitting a few rows up.

Mr. Li finished collecting the students' work and said, "Okay then. Now remember, the science fair is this Friday, so you've only got two more days. Don't forget, each of you gets two tickets, and you won't be able to get any more because it's already sold out.

"I shouldn't have to tell you how big of a deal this is around here. You know there are going to be recruiters from some of the top colleges in the nation looking at your work. So, if you are having any problems with your projects, let's take the time to discuss them in class. Go ahead and get together with your partner, and I'll come around to see if you need help with anything."

As the students moved their desks, Jax fought to hold in his excitement. He noticed Mr. Li approach JT and her partner, Micky Simmons.

Izzy said, "So last night I was going through all the lines of code and—"

"Shh, I wanna try to hear what the girls are doing."

The boys leaned in to eavesdrop. Amidst the racket of two dozen students talking, Jax heard Mr. Li ask, "So, ladies, how's your antigravity device coming along?"

Jax glanced at Izzy, who mouthed, "An antigravity device?"

Jax strained his ears for several seconds, trying to make out the rest of the conversation.

He looked back at his friend. "I can't hear anything else."

"Me neither. It's too loud in here now."

Mr. Li looked up and said, "Alright everyone. Let's quiet down a bit." Moments later, he continued to the next pair of students, Ted and William. "Guys, I shouldn't have to tell you this, but if you're still bent on making a ray gun, I want no disintegrations."

Jax laughed, then scooted his chair closer to the girls. He bent close and whispered, "An anti-gravity device? That's what your big secret was?"

JT smiled. "I guess we should have told you guys sooner. After all, you did give us the idea."

"What? When did we ever talk about this?"

"Remember when you and Izzy insisted that we watch those old *Back to the Future* movies with you?"

Jax nodded and then grimaced as he remembered the way the girls had laughed at them when they mentioned their idea of building a time machine.

Izzy jumped in. "Hey, we were just doing research. We watched as many time travel movies as we could get our hands on. But, you know, since it was kind of our idea, if you win, you'll have to give us credit."

"Whatever," Micky said.

"Jax, Isaiah," Mr. Li said, startling them all,

“why don’t you tell me how your project is coming along?”

Jax regained his composure first. “Well, we’re not quite finished putting it together yet. We were having problems with some of our equations, but I think Izzy may have solved them. We’re going to test it tonight.”

“Sounds like fun,” Mr. Li said. “Just don’t blow anything up.” This elicited a chuckle from the class. He and Izzy very nearly had blown out a portion of the chemistry lab wall when they mixed a bunch of chemicals together the previous year.

As the smiling teacher turned to go, Jax placed his left hand on Mr. Li’s sleeve. “You don’t think we can do it, do you?”

His expression sobering, Mr. Li stooped low and said, “Jax, I didn’t mean to offend you, but you know that you’re trying to do what the world’s greatest inventors have been unable to accomplish. So you can understand why I have my reservations about two sophomores doing it.”

Jax scowled and wanted to continue the discussion, but before he could formulate an objection, Mr. Li moved on to another group of students.

When he noticed JT looking at him, Jax quickly changed his demeanor. He turned back to her and Micky. “Did you actually get that thing

working?” He flashed a coy grin, “You know, I can always stop over to make sure you’ve got the connections put together correctly.”

“Yeah, like you could do anything we can’t,” JT said playfully. “Anyway, things are coming along pretty well. We’re just having some trouble with the power source, but we’ve had success with the technology itself.”

Jax sat up a little too quickly and almost fell out of his seat. “Are you serious? You really built some sort of, well, I guess hoverboard? Or have you come up with a different name for it?”

Her green eyes brightened even more, and she bit her lower lip as if to hold back a smile. “Yeah, we’re calling it a hoverboard for now, thanks to your lame movie. I guess it had at least one redeeming quality. Can you believe people thought that’s what the year 2015 would look like?”

Micky tossed her long green ponytail behind her shoulder and gave Jax a challenging stare. “Hey, guys, speaking of *Back to the Future*, do you honestly expect us to believe that you’re building a time machine?”

Jax quickly pressed his index finger to his lips and glanced around the room to see if anyone had picked up on Micky’s comment. “Not so loud. This thing is top secret.” *And not just because it’s a time machine and we want to win the science fair*, he thought to himself.

Micky laughed. “Yeah right. Like you’ll ever get it to work. Of course, we could probably pull it off. Maybe we could check to see if *your* connections are put together correctly.”

Jax shot back, “Keep laughing. We’re testing it tonight. We’ll be the ones laughing after winning first place on Friday, along with that \$50,000 scholarship.”

“Sounds like a challenge,” Micky said. “How about if we beat you, then you guys buy us dinner and vice versa?”

Jax gave a quick look to Izzy, whose nose had been buried in his calculations, but who was now listening intently to the exchange. Izzy nodded. Jax turned back to the girls and extended his hand. “You’re on.”