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WHY SHOULDN'T IT BE US?

There are many who say that Hologram Park is the most exciting place ever created. Roaming free over thousands of acres of mixed terrains the most spectacular creatures from the past and present, from near and far and from reality and fantasy all flock and frolic and fool around together.

Little can compare with the ground shaking majesty of huge herds of giant zanthor buffalo stamping across the scorched savannah plains or match the shrieking drama of a mid air battle between rival flocks of brightly coloured robart gulls or make you gasp like the surprise charge of a fully grown bulkasaurus bursting out of the heavy scrublands. Whether it is the full three day safari or just a half day pass, Hologram Park offers up-close experiences that touch the imagination of every visitor.

As the Director of the zoo Marcus was technically a competitor to Hologram Park, albeit not a particularly close competitor. OK, not close at all. By comparison, the zoo offered a more modest experience. The live exhibits dozed behind rocks, passed wind in the least endearing manner possible, scowled at the keepers, begged food from the visitors and fornicated without restraint in front of crowds of

shocked school parties and embarrassed teachers. In the 24th century reality entertainment was no longer as compelling as it had been in the past. Now it was the holograms that ruled.

Every hologram in Hologram Park was made by Big Boot Workshops. Marcus and Grand Master Alf were sitting in their foyer surrounded by scale models of their instantly recognisable creations. The models were so intriguing that soon Marcus and Grand Alf were walking around the small gallery, touching the displays, admiring the intricate details and enjoying the masterful precision of the sculpting.

Grand Alf was in the middle of making a comment about one of the pieces when suddenly, and entirely unexpectedly, a half size hologram Tyrannosaurus Rex ran through the doorway at the other end of the lobby. It slid on the marble floor and fell with a teeth rattling crash. Its tail thrashed wildly and its short forearms scrabbled furiously as the beast scratched itself onto its feet. It took a couple of unsteady, slippery steps but its claws skidded on the shiny surface and it went down again, landing dangerously close to Grand Alf.

The T-Rex roared in frustration. After a frantic burst of writhing and tail slapping it finally gained enough traction to right itself. Marcus pressed himself against the wall as it stamped past and fled out of the main door. As it ploughed through, Marcus saw the scaly front section of the T-Rex was shiny with sweat and perfect in every detail but the tail was no more than line drawings and a hollow frame.

Moments later three young men wearing 'Creative Team' t-shirts ran through the foyer, "Look out, prototype on the loose," cried one, a warning which seemed just a little too late. The team pursued the beast out of the door.

"This happens from time to time," said the receptionist. "It will

be caught by the perimeter fence. The 'grams can't hold their form beyond that. Something about needing to be within the electronic network field."

Marcus was a good deal more concerned about it coming back than getting free and cautiously looked out of the door. The T-Rex had stopped by the gate and was pacing back and forth, its unfinished tail swinging from side to side with big, heavy strokes. Two of the creative team approached with long poles while the third hammered commands into a laptop.

"They will use a combination of high tech radio waves to switch on its passive state and low tech poles to lead it back to the workshop," explained a tall man with a youthful face and the air of someone who could marvel at the most simple of life's gifts. "These holograms choose independent actions consistent with overall species behaviour patterns. Aren't they magnificent?" The speaker extended his hand, "I'm Noggin Norwenson, welcome to my workshop."

Noggin Norwenson led Marcus and Grand Alf through a door next to the reception desk and into a room that was a testament to the creative talent and technical mastery at Big Boot Workshops. A glass case full of the most prestigious awards available for hologram effects ran the length of one wall. Row upon row of shiny trophies were accompanied by pictures of Norwenson and various members of his team at the ceremonies that bestowed them.

The other walls had glass cases containing both static and 'living' models of the holograms produced by the workshop. The exquisitely detailed small scale 'living' miniature holograms paced from side to side, chewed lazily and reclined in sleep positions. There was even a small holographic scene of Norwenson and some of his creative team

assembling a creature. The scene was fully animated so the characters moved around and interacted with each other. “That’s on a 24 hour loop,” Norwenson explained as they pressed against the glass to view the action. “It resets every morning and unfolds in a unique way every day. Slightly different stimuli provoke complex interactions which in turn generate new possibilities. Chaos theory in action.”

Norwenson invited them to take a seat at the long boardroom table, “What can I tell the manager of our greatest zoo?”

Marcus knew it was, in all honesty, the only zoo on the planet and the word ‘great’ had not been applied for decades. Nevertheless, Marcus was flattered Norwenson had recognised his name and he appreciated the compliment. “We’re particularly interested in how you make your business bubble with creativity,” Marcus had rehearsed the question and thought it sounded just right.

“I’m not really sure,” replied Norwenson.

Marcus looked disappointed.

“I mean I’m not sure I can easily explain it.”

Marcus smiled encouragement.

“I can tell you what I do if that would help,” Norwenson added with a shrug of his shoulders.

Marcus said it would and Norwenson began. “As you know this workshop is a long way from the traditional centre of special effects. Until we came along there was no business of this kind in this part of the planet. Maybe it was naivety, maybe it was optimism or maybe it was both but we started the business with the unshakable belief that someone was going to be successful with these creatures so why shouldn’t it be us?”

“Why shouldn’t it be us?” echoed Grand Master Alf somewhat

mysteriously, as if a profound truth had been revealed, which perhaps it had.

“There’s a show business saying,” Norwenson went on, “Always be in the spotlight, never in the limelight. Life isn’t a dress rehearsal’ and we approach our work with that spirit. We always give the client more than they expect, we never compromise on quality, we never let problems defeat us and we deliver on time and on budget.”

Norwenson paused for Marcus to take notes. “A couple of high profile projects gave us the exposure we needed and the business took off. We now have the contract for all the upgrades and renewals in Hologram Park and we have requests for holograms for other applications exceeding our production capacity by five or six times.”

“So you’re limited by the number of talented people you can employ,” surmised Marcus.

“Not at all,” replied Norwenson as if Marcus did not really understand anything. “Firstly we’re limited by how big we want to become.” Norwenson emphasised the word ‘we’. “There’s a size of business I want to run and at the moment we’re at that size. Secondly, many people have a lot more talent than they know and we can bring that out of them.”

This did not make intuitive sense to Marcus, “You mean talent enough to make one of those?” Marcus pointed at the models in the case.

“That’s exactly what I mean.” Norwenson carefully opened a glass case, standing in the way so the holograms were not tempted to jump out and extracted a horse. He placed it on the boardroom table and the horse trotted around in a circle, its hooves clip clopping on the surface. “This horse is as good as any piece we’ve made. It’s good enough to

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be in the finest art galleries on any planet. Guess how many models the artist made before he fashioned this one?”

“Twenty five,” offered Marcus. Grand Master Alf was too intrigued by the hologram to pay much attention to the guessing game.

“None,” said Norwenson triumphantly. “This young guy came to me with a determination in his eyes, a fire in his heart and a real passion for holograms. I just knew he could learn the technical side of the work and I took him on. This was his first project.”

“Just like that,” said Marcus sceptically.

“Behaviour comes from blending the right person with the right environment,” Norwenson qualified. “We work hard to create an environment that gives permission for people’s creative instincts to be voiced, a place that encourages ideas, experimentation and invention, a place where everything is possible and the word ‘cannot’ is only used when every option has been tried. This is a place where failure is seen to be part of a successful creative process and where people can wield a creative sword. We throw ourselves at what others see as being certain failure - and try to miss.”

“How do you do that?” asked Marcus.

Norwenson glanced at his watch, “Let me show you but we have to hurry.”