

THE GREATEST  
by Dave Biscella

Devon paced back and forth anxiously in his own driveway with his garage door closed behind him. Lyle was his best friend, and he knew he could count on him. He had just called Lyle and begged him to come over and help him with something, and he Lyle never let him down the many times before that he'd asked him to drop something and come over. It had only been about five minutes since making that call, and Devon knew Lyle would be here in the next ten minutes or so, but the wait felt like it had been hours already due to the anticipation and excitement running through Devon's body.

After some more pacing and staring up and down the street hoping any car approaching was Lyle, Lyle finally pulled up in the driveway casually and began getting out of his car. Devon rushed over to him.

"Thank you for coming over, man," Devon said. "This is huge and I definitely couldn't do it without you."

Lyle chuckles to himself. Devon was an excitable person, and Lyle loved that. Devon could take the smallest pleasures in life and react as if they're the greatest thing that will ever happen to him. Lyle always admired that and loved being around him because his joy was extremely infectious. "No, problem, Devon. I wasn't up to much of anything anyways."

Devon rushes over to his garage and begins to open the door. "I need to you trust me not ask too many questions, OK?"

"Whoa, Devon, you're actually letting me in the garage?" Lyle asked, watching with anticipation as the garage door opened. He'd known Devon for over a decade, but hasn't seen

the inside of his garage for the last five years. Devon was adamant about nobody going in the garage and nobody asking any questions about what's going on in the garage.

The garage door opened and Devon rushed inside as Lyle looked around in awe. The garage was nearly empty except for a large red structure to the right, and a small control board to the left, with a mess of wires and cables connecting the two. The red structure to the left was circular and made of a somewhat shiny material with a door on it. It stood probably six and a half feet tall and looked like it could fit three or four people in it. It looked like a mix between a phone booth and a giant barrel. Cables came out of the back and side leading the other side of garage, leading up to a small control panel resting on a podium. The control panel had two physical buttons and a handful of digital controls.

"Devon, what the fuck is all this?" Lyle finally asked after soaking it all in as Devon was checking the connections on all the cables and wires.

"It's what I've been working on for most my life," Devon answered, still checking the cables, following them to the control panel, checking it, then checking the cables again. "I'm about to finally fire it up for the first time. That's why I need your help. I can't control the panel from within the box. I'll have everything set up, it's as simple as pressing a button."

Lyle was still trying to make sense of everything as Devon was frantically going back and forth between the two. He worked his way over to the control panel to get a closer look at it. There were red and green lights flashing throughout, two physical buttons, one red, one blue, and a display that read 10.26.1974.4.3871S.15.9700E. "Devon, you're going to need to fill me in a little bit about what's going on," Lyle asked, finally letting his curiosity break the silence and distract Devon from his frantic double checking of everything.

"October 26, 1974 and the coordinates for Kinshasa, Zaire," Devon answered matter of factly.

“I’m going to need a little more information than that, Devon,” Lyle asked, his curiosity slowly turning to frustration. “What is going on?”

Devon finally stopped checking all the connections and came right over to Lyle, looking more serious than he’s ever looked in his life. “I think I’ve finally broke through and developed time travel, Lyle. The controls inside the box can only go forward, thus they can only be used for coming back, if they work at all. In order to go back, I need the waves to transmit the set distance to the box in order to initiate the sequence. That’s why the controls are on the other side of the garage. I’ve tried other distances, but I think I finally figured it out. I just need you to press the blue button when I’m situated in the box.”

“You’re insane,” Lyle said, lacking the ability to come up with anything else to say. “What’s the significance of that date and those coordinates?”

“Rumble in the Jungle.”

“What?” Lyle asked confused. “The Ali fight? I know you loved Ali, and I’m sorry he passed last week, but are you being serious right now?”

“The first Ali fight I saw was when I was five and I became fascinated,” Devon began. “It was beautiful. He was an artist in the ring. He fought how you weren’t supposed to fight, he fought by his own rules, and he made them up as he went. He grew, he adapted, he changed. I became obsessed and started trying to go through and watch all of his fights. That led me to discover who he was outside of the ring. What he stood for.”

“I know all this, Devon,” Lyle replied. “I know you love Ali, but forgive me if I’m struggling to follow what’s going on. Because he died, you feel compelled to travel back in time to see the Rumble in the Jungle? That’s insane.”

Devon was afraid to tell anybody that he was working so hard on time travel, but he thought of all people, Lyle would be the one that would understand and be supportive. Lyle was

always there for him. He was a bit taken back by Lyle being so disruptive and unsupportive. “All I’ve wanted in my whole life was to meet Muhammad Ali. And now that he’s gone, I can’t. That will never happen in this time. So I have this set to go back to four days before the Rumble in the Jungle. I know where he is leading up to the fight, so I can run into him and meet him in his prime. That also gives me time to secure tickets and see the fight. Then I’ll come back. I just need you to press the blue button when I say so.”

Lyle stared silently at Devon. This all seemed like a bit much and he really didn’t know how to react. “Devon, if you’ve actually figured it out, and you’ve invented time travel, aren’t there better uses for it than going back to see some fight that you’ve already watched dozens of times? This is a big deal, I just feel like there are better uses for it.”

“Like what?” Devon asked. “I created it, I cracked it. It should be entirely up to me what it’s used for. What do you think should be done with it?”

“I don’t know, something Hitler related maybe?” Lyle answered, feeling thrown on the spot. “Or take some current research back to cure diseases decades earlier. Save JFK. I don’t know, anything of significance.”

“This will be the most significant thing in my life, Lyle,” Devon responded. “I expected you of all people to understand. You know me better than anybody. You know how important Ali is to me. I don’t really have heroes, except for one. And he’s gone now. So, please. Press the blue button once I enter the box and tell you to.”

Lyle truly did love Devon. He loved how much Devon relied upon him and enjoyed always being there when he was needed. But he was conflicted. “Devon, I don’t know. I feel like there’s gotta be a better use.”

“Fuck that!” Devon exclaimed, showing more emotion than Lyle has ever seen him display. “I did it, I made it. I’ll do what I want. If somebody else wants to cure diseases, or save

JFK, or whatever, they can build their own. This is my machine, I'll use it how I want to. And I need your help."

Devon stormed over to the box, opening the door and putting one foot inside the box. Lyle heads towards the control panel, unsure exactly what to do. This all seemed so insane and definitely not how he expected to spend his afternoon.

Devon slides all the way in the box and pulls the door closed, checking to make sure it sealed. He opens it back up and sticks his head out. "OK, Lyle. Once I close this door, count to five and press the blue button. Got it?"

Lyle looks at Devon blankly as Devon slips back into the box and secures the door. He looks down at the blue button. He knows he should count to five and press it, but something in him is not letting him. He stands there, motionless.

The door of the box opens back up and Devon steps out. "What the fuck, Lyle? Just press the goddamn button!"

"Devon, I can't let you do this. This is insane. We need to talk about this we need to tell somebody. What if it doesn't work? What if something happens to you? I can't have that on my conscience."

"Lyle, I've tested it," Devon explains. "As well as I can. You have to trust me. If you won't press the button, whatever. I'll find somebody else that can press a goddamn button."

"Who else would press it for you, Devon? Where will you find anybody else to press the fucking button!"

"Right here!" a voice screams from the garage door. Devon and Lyle look to the garage to see Devon rushing in towards the control panel. He looks over at Devon. "Get in there. I got you. It's so worth it."

Devon is kind of in awe seeing himself on the other side of the garage, but he doesn't have time to take it in. He has a fight to get to. "Thanks, Devon."

Devon smiles back at Devon. "You'll have a bit of an issue the first time you try to come back, but you'll figure it out pretty quickly. Ali Bomaye."

"Ali Bomaye," Devon says, sliding back into the box and securing the door.

Lyle watches everything, extremely confused. He silently counts to five in his own head, and as soon as he gets to five he watches Devon press the blue button. Lyle flinched expecting lights or noises to happen, but nothing happened. He felt a bit of relief assuming that it malfunctioned and that his friend did not go back in time after all. He heads over to the box and opens it up.

"What the..." Lyle says to himself looking inside the empty box. He steps inside and looks around, seeing no sign of Devon. He steps out of the box and looks at Devon. "What the fuck just happened?"

Devon looks at Lyle, his best friend, and smiles big. "You hungry? I feel like it's been decades since I've eaten at Neil's. Wanna do lunch?"