

THE BUBBLE

TILL WITTWER

FOR THE PERVERTED CREATORS OF **EMPIRE**, THE WORLD INSIDE THEIR FOSSIL-FUELED TECHNO-COLONY IS JUST PERFECT – THEY HAVEN'T YET NOTICED THAT THEIR ACT OF PULVERIZING HISTORY IN ORDER TO PRODUCE ETERNITY HAS ALSO FOLDED TIME ONTO ITSELF, WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT A RE-SOLIDIFICATION OF THE PAST, THIS FORMERLY LIQUIFIED AND RUTHLESSLY EXPLOITED RESOURCE, WHICH IS ABOUT TO MEET ITS MAKERS FOR REVENGE.



2019

Thinking that it was time to bring down the Monarch from his raptures to the level of common sense, I determined to endeavour to open up to him some glimpses of the truth, that is to say of the nature of things in Flatland.

Edwin A. Abbott – Flatland

An embankment along the Tapajós River in the state of Pará. The cries of countless species of birds and the sinister growls of more obscure life forms are equally deafening and unsettling. It is dusk, deep in the Brazilian rainforest. Suddenly, the grim gloom hovering over the thicket of branches, leaves and vines is disrupted. Two horizontal spotlights are cutting through the darkness like machetes before the beacons' paths are abruptly reflected by the membrane-like wall of an enormous inflatable dome that someone has stretched over the forest – here, in the middle of nowhere. It is impossible to estimate the dome's perimeter.

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A rustle in the bushes. A long, reptilian tale swiftly disappears amongst the leaves. The membrane rips with one quick flick of the claw as curious, predatory eyes, attached to a bird-like menacing head, slip through the soft shell to move in closer and investigate the source of illumination. A hissing sound indicates an artificial atmosphere's air escaping through the dome's torn skin. After a few quick strides the dense and chaotic vegetation clears up and gives way to a soothingly regular line pattern of planted trees – small aluminium bowls dangling from their sides. Milky liquid lazily runs down the trees' trunks to gradually fill up the small reservoirs.

HEVEA BRASILIENSIS.

There, amidst a small clearing in the pattern, a group of hunchbacked old men can be spotted having gathered around a large, boxy object. It is a Ford Model-T car. Its flaring headlights shoot their stereoscopic cones into the forest slicing through the night while its idling ancient 4-cylinder engine rhythmically coughs and spatters as if it were trying to compete with the organic life crying out its soul in the dense jungle out there. It smells of exhaust and money.

Fordlândia, Henry Ford's unsuccessful endeavor of establishing a rubber colony in the Amazon Jungle, is where the leading industrialists of the 20th century have secluded themselves in a giant fossil fuel-coated bubble of rubber. Eternity is the goal pursued by JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, ANDREW MELLON, CORNELIUS VANDERBILT, GEORGE PULLMAN, HENRY FORD himself, and a handful of others. A butler makes his rounds serving champagne flutes filled with crude oil. It is WERNHER VON BRAUN. The men take posture, raise their glasses to a mumbled toast praising "the giants of the earth" and chuck down the crude in one long gulp. The drink instantly hits. The industrialists' eyes turn all white and they snarl as guttural, animal sounds erupt from the depths of their stout bodies.

Spasms of pleasure shoot through the men and have them lash out uncontrollably. Contorting violently, they stumble about in utter delirium; some are trying to grab a hold of the bobbing car as their knees refuse to support their bodies' weight. Giggling and gurgling, Henry Ford, their host, staggers off towards the accurately lined rubber trees. As he throws his head back in imperialist confidence to yell out with a predator's shriek, he doesn't notice that the dome's roof has begun to cave in, as more and more air escapes the rubber bubble. The crack of a branch close by. Ford wheels around with a start and spots the creature — dead-eyed as he is — its razor-sharp toothy pegs sparkle as they reflect the headlights' double beam. A sudden flash of words in Ford's terrified mind: IRRITATOR CHALLENGER!! He has not the faintest clue how to process this phrase as shivers run down his spine. Time stops in the stare-off between two merciless beasts, one of them about to wreak vengeance on the other for an inexcusable desecration of its grave in the name of progress. Another flick of the claw. A tripping industrialist's suffocated gasp is drowned out between the unbridled cries of his fellow trippers and the birds, the hiss of air escaping the dome and the car's clanging motor. Black, oily liquid oozes onto rubber tree leaves.

