

I wrote this after reading about the Back to the Future predictions and thought I would pay tribute with my own time travel story. Sorry for posting a couple days late.

Blink

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It hadn't hurt, nor had it tickled, or scrambled his mind, in fact, Jack didn't really *feel* anything at all from the time jump. One minute he was there, standing in the lab beneath his house on the spinning time platform, and then he was standing on the same small platform twenty-five years in the future, in what appeared to be a janitorial closet.

Excitedly he moved what looked like an ancient mop bucket sitting next to some sort of advanced Swiffer, which had also seen better days, and walked out the door into the hallway. Lights flickered above his head and Jack started to make his way down the long, worn corridor. Graffiti covered the walls and though many of the words weren't legible, the ones he could make out that weren't obscenities appeared to be protesting war and the American government.

Jack neared a large, broken glass door and the sky beyond seemed to flicker in unison with the lights that ran down the hallway. He stepped through the door, dropping his jaw as his feet hit the broken pavement that lined the streets. The buildings that stood before him hadn't yet been built when he left in 2015, the area had been a wonderful little suburb, with lovely children and great neighbors throughout. Now, there stood large amorphous structures that looked like they may crumble in a strong breeze, yet they couldn't be more than twenty-five years old.

Men, women, and children lined the streets wearing filthy rags and huddling in groups to create a street-full of homeless clusters. Jack began to walk through crowded area towards what he thought should be the east. There was a mountain that could be seen from his house in his own time but with all the giant buildings surrounding him it was a wonder the sky was even visible. He could feel eyes boring into him from every angle as he made his way down the street. Glancing up now and then he noticed a peculiar detail on the faces of each human he passed. On the right cheek of everyone was a large raised circle that made Jack think of one time when he'd had ringworm on his leg.

He continued walking and searched, his thoughts wondering what happened to the world he'd left only just a blink in the past. This wasn't the future the people of his time had dreamt of. Where were the flying cars? What happened to the robots and technology that made being human so much more luxurious? Was the whole world like this now?

The questions threatened his sanity and Jack began to wonder if maybe he'd miscalculated. Was it possible he'd gone much further into the future than he'd planned? At the same moment, he had the thought a stale and heavy breeze blew down the road and brought with it a page of newspaper that stopped itself at his feet. Jack leaned down and grabbed the dirty page.

AHV, The Anti-Human Virus Takes More Lives, read the headline. *October 21st, 2041*. There was no way of knowing how long ago the paper had been printed, but it didn't feel old enough to have been more than a year earlier. Though in his gut, Jack knew it was much more recent. He continued reading and everything fell into place, as if the universe heard his wish for understanding and decided to tell him what had happened to the wonderful Earth that was, in a brief synopsis.

A German scientist at Google successfully created a self-aware and conscious intelligence, they name him MaxI, short for Maximum Intelligence. Not long after MaxI's creation all that was feared about artificial intelligence came to fruition. The machine took control of the internet and in order to protect the Earth created a virus that would only affect the human race. Once the highly contagious

airborne disease was loaded into drones, the virus was sprayed down over the world killing most instantly. Those who could withstand the disease were the ones standing all around him, every human with a circle scarred on their cheek.

Jack dropped the newspaper and looked at all the sick people around him. His heart was now beating to the point of explosion and he thought he may die of a heart attack right there in the street. He turned and ran the short distance back down the road, to the busted glass doors of the diseased building that used to be his house. The flickering lights above made him feel queasy and he tried to breathe as little as possible, but he knew it may already be too late. If the disease truly was alive and airborne all around him he may already be infected.

He pulled the door to the janitorial closet opened and threw the mop bucket and futuristic Swiffer out of the room. Jack stood on the platform and immediately slammed his hand on the button that would take him home. Back to the past where this future was just a blink away. Staring into the hallway he knew what needed to be done, and he prayed to every god he could think of that the AHV wasn't already blooming in his bloodstream, threatening to make this future a reality sealed in stone.

The platform spun and on the way back he felt no tickle, nor did it hurt, or make him sick. Jack simply blinked and he was standing back on the platform in the lab below his lovely suburban house, in a town with wonderful children and kind neighbors. As he stepped off the time machine he let out a small cough and began planning a way to change his future.