

Icebox Radio Theater  
**“The Traveler”**  
by Jeffrey Adams

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TRAVELER: Sine wave.

**SOUND: THREE SECONDS OF A SINE WAVE.**

TRAVELER: Square wave.

**SOUND: THREE SECONDS OF SQUARE WAVE.**

TRAVELER: Sawtooth wave.

**SOUND: THREE SECONDS OF SAWTOOTH WAVE.**

TRAVELER: White noise. Vibrations on air, but more than that. Movement, physics. Movement at an atomic level. Electrons flying around a nucleus. Flying around protons and neutrons. Elements vibrating, moving, at different speeds.

Can we change them? Can we alter them?  
Can we alter...everything?

**SOUND: GARAGE BACKGROUND UP, THEN DOWN AND UNDER.**

TRAVELER: When I was a kid, my father left. And because my father left my mother became...clingy. She never wanted me to be dirty. For some reason, she saw my cleanliness as the primary indicator of her abilities as a parent. I could not be dirty, so I never was.

For that reason, I was fascinated by the auto shop that shared an alley with our apartment building. I'd sneak down to the alley to the garage which was full of very dirty, hard working men. They took a liking to me even though I wasn't allowed to go inside. And what I remember most was their friendliness, their good humor, the way they razed each other. And I remembered the gasoline rainbows in the puddles outside this garage. I was fascinated by them. Rainbows in the sky dissipate, they came and went according to some cosmic

1 force I didn't understand. But these rainbows,  
2 these rainbows stayed. Even when it rained,  
3 they stayed. They were the result of a  
4 problematic marriage between humans and the  
5 natural world. Gasoline – refined oil, human,  
6 man-made; water – a base element of the  
7 planet. That which makes it possible for us to  
8 exist.

9  
10 Mixing. And yet not mixing.

11  
12 Isn't this science? Isn't this what it's always  
13 about? Mixing but not mixing? I mean, face it,  
14 we've conquered the natural world. Everything  
15 we worried about a hundred years ago has  
16 been more-or-less sorted out. As I sit here,  
17 speaking to you, I'm in my house and there's a  
18 blizzard outside. They're predicting up to 20  
19 centimeters of snow, and I couldn't care less.  
20 I'm in a warm house with central heating  
21 (overcoming the cold). Insulation (overcoming  
22 the wind). I'm sipping a cup of tea (electricity  
23 heating water).

24  
25 We've overcome it. We overcame it a hundred  
26 years ago but then...what happened to  
27 progress. What happened to moving forward?  
28 What happened to overcoming other things?  
29 OTHER things?

30  
31 **SOUND: WHITE NOISE MIXED WITH A HOSPITAL HALLWAY, DOWN AND UNDER.**

32  
33 TRAVELER: The doctors told her that she had an infection.  
34 What they didn't know is that she had a heart  
35 condition. She didn't know, either. But the  
36 doctors, they didn't know because they didn't  
37 test for it. They didn't test for it because they  
38 were poor scientists.

39  
40 The coma lasted three days, and then it was  
41 over. Everyone told me they were very sorry.  
42 But when I suggested that we had to do  
43 something, that we had to take action, when I  
44 suggested this even after we put her in a box  
45 and put her in the ground that we had to do  
46 something...they started to worry about me.  
47 They started to apply their piss-poor science to

1 me. When I talked about changing the fabric of  
2 things, they didn't want to hear it. They called  
3 me insane but I'm not..

4  
5 Because of gasoline rainbows.

6  
7 **SOUND: STRANGE HUM SOUND RYTHMIC LIKE AN ENGINE**

8  
9 TRAVELER: Atomic Level Movement. Electrons orbiting a  
10 nucleus. What if we could change those?  
11 What if we could reverse their direction? What  
12 if we could slow them down or speed them up?  
13 I mean, I can create sound.

14  
15 **SOUND: CLAPS**

16  
17 TRAVELER: Waves on air. It didn't exist before. It only  
18 exists now because of my will. What if I could  
19 do the same thing at the atomic level?

20  
21 **SOUND: ENGINE TONES SLOW, SLOW, SLOW DOWN UNTIL THE STOP.**

22  
23 (PAUSE)

24  
25 TRAVELER: Experiment number one.

26  
27 **SOUND: FADE IN, AN SMALL ENGINE LIKE A FAN OR FRIDGE.**

28  
29 TRAVELER: Hotel room. The last place we spent a night  
30 happy. It was five years ago. We were going  
31 through a rough stretch in our marriage.

32  
33 **SOUND: RAIN SLOWLY FADE IN, MIX WITH OTHER SOUNDS**

34  
35 TRAVELER: We had car trouble driving back from her  
36 parent's place. The visit had been bad. I'd  
37 gotten into a fight with her father. And then the  
38 rains came. We found a motel that to the  
39 naked eye appeared to be nothing special.  
40 Just a roadside fleatrap. But, strangely,  
41 everything about the room was just...perfect. It  
42 was clean. And even though the fixtures and  
43 furniture was old it was all well maintained.  
44 And there were little touches everywhere, little  
45 bits of kitsch here and there. Little figurines on  
46 a shelf on a wall, cherubs and ponies. She  
47 loved figurines. She loved small, smooth

1 porcelain cupids and unicorns. And I could tell  
2 just by touching the shelf that it was installed  
3 correctly. Wood screws set deep in the stud.  
4 You probably could have put 50 or 60 pounds  
5 on that shelf and it wouldn't have given a single  
6 creek.

7  
8 Everything about the room was right. So we  
9 went to bed with the rain pounding against the  
10 windows, the clean sheets against our skin,  
11 feeling safe. We couldn't go anywhere until the  
12 mechanic came the next morning so we  
13 stayed. And we made love more sweetly and  
14 more passionately than we had in years. We  
15 never made love like that again.

16  
17 **SOUND: RAIN UP, THEN DOWN AND OUT.**

18  
19 TRAVELER: I return to that hotel. I go in November when  
20 it's likely to be cold and wet and raining. It is  
21 cold, but there is no rain. I lay on the sheets of  
22 the bed and I use the greatest tool we have: my  
23 mind, to being the experiment.

24  
25 I concentrate. I try and clap.

26  
27 **SOUND: CLAPS**

28  
29 TRAVELER: With my mind. I try and move the atoms  
30 around me in a different direction. If I can just  
31 turn it back, if I can just go back and find her  
32 before she was in the hospital bed, find her  
33 before she was doing what she was told by an  
34 incompetent quack, before she was in the  
35 ground...I can take the pills from her. I can stop  
36 her from taking the medication that killed her.  
37 Then everything will be okay.

38  
39 **SOUND: AN AIR CONDITIONING UNIT OR SIMILAR SOUND.**

40  
41 TRAVELER: I listen, deeply, a fan or a motor nearby.

42  
43 **SOUND: WHITE NOISE OF TRAFFIC, DISTANT, NOW MIXING WITH THE MOTOR**  
44 **SOUND.**

45  
46 TRAVELER: The freeway a quarter mile away. White noise.  
47 The trick is to find the white noise within your

1 range of hearing and reach into it.

2

3 **SOUND: A NEW SOUND ABOVE THE OTHERS, A HUM THAT BEGINS TO SLOW DOWN**  
4 **UNTIL IT FINALLY STOPS.**

5

6 TRAVELER: Block out everything else. Concentration is the  
7 art of elimination. Eliminate everything but the  
8 white noise and reach into it deeper, and  
9 deeper, and deeper until you can identify that  
10 single atom spinning.

11

12 Slow down.

13 Slow down.

14 Slow down. Stop

15

16 Now give it a slap.

17

18 **SOUND: SINGLE CLAP. THE HUM BEGINS ANEW, GRADUALLY BUILDING.**

19

20 TRAVELER: Other direction, slow. Other direction, medium  
21 fast. Gears grinding, doesn't want to spin this  
22 way, but I am the one in control. It's  
23 responding to my will, human will. Gasoline  
24 rainbows.

25

26 Now, pullback...

27 Pullback...

28 Pullback...

29 Pullback...

30 Pullback...

31

32 The white noise of the freeway is a freeway  
33 again. The air conditioning fan motor is  
34 running. A faint tinnitus hum in my ear.

35

36 **SOUND: RISING FROM A BED.**

37

38 TRAVELER: I get up from the bed and I look outside.  
39 Everything is different now.

40

41 **SOUND: THE FREEWAY FADES AND THE MOTOR CROSS-FADES WITH AN**  
42 **ELECTRONIC HUM, A CORD OF SEVERAL TONES.**

43

44 TRAVELER: And I leave the room and go out the door.  
45 There is no one at the desk. I go outside and  
46 there is no one on the street. My watch tells  
47 me it should be six in the morning, but it is pitch

1 black. The sky should be dark, night blue by  
2 now but it is not.

3  
4 I walk two city blocks. Then I walk a mile.

5  
6 But...there's no one here.

7  
8 I go back to my car but it won't start. I begin to  
9 walk the five miles to my home. It takes me a  
10 couple of hours and I never see anyone else on  
11 the road. The sky is purple by the time I reach  
12 house. My key doesn't fit in the lock. I break a  
13 window and open the door. Inside, it's dark.  
14 The light switches don't work. And I go down  
15 the hall, and I turn to the kitchen doorway. And  
16 when I cross the threshold of the door, I see a  
17 woman sitting at the kitchen table with her back  
18 to me.

19  
20 Her hair is long and black. But my wife's hair  
21 was auburn. And I'm overcome with a kind of  
22 childish, overwhelming fear. And I close my  
23 eyes, and I concentrate, looking for the white  
24 noise, looking for the way home.

25  
26 And I hear...nothing.

27  
28 **SOUND: A DISTANT SHOCK OF ELECTRICITY, AND A VERY DISTANT SCREAM.**

29