

THE FUTURE IS COMING
By Adrian Ahlquist

Cast of Characters

8 Males; 13 Females; 2 Either

<u>JIMMY:</u>	Embarrassed teenager.
<u>HOKUM:</u>	Arrogant, jerkish professor.
<u>GILLIAN:</u>	Statistics Professor, normal but clueless.
<u>DORIC:</u>	Pompous, dramatic, clueless professor.
<u>CLIPPER:</u>	Smart-alec professor along for the ride.
<u>GARY:</u>	Gary Krump, happy, dumb security guard.
<u>BUBBA:</u>	Dumb Jock, student.
<u>CLAMOR:</u>	Nicer, diplomatic professor.
<u>RUPERT:</u>	Business professor, very practical, arrogant, boy or girl.
<u>MOM:</u>	Archetypical Devouring Mother.
<u>JENNY:</u>	Normal tour guide, frazzled.
<u>MONICA:</u>	Straight man, normal pessimist, student.
<u>CARRIE:</u>	Doesn't hide her snarkiness and bluntness, student.
<u>SUDUKA:</u>	Optimist who cracks, student.
<u>KALE:</u>	University President, Standard, unhappy.
<u>EDDA:</u>	Vice President Edda Sada-Smith, politically correct.
<u>ROBERTA:</u>	Normal college student you'd find in STEM.
<u>ADILAH:</u>	Modern American Muslim, student.
<u>ROSE:</u>	Dramatic, crazy professor.
<u>GRADILLA:</u>	Angry, sassy feminist professor.
<u>XANATROPE:</u>	Old, stuffy professor with glasses on tip of nose.

SIBIL:

The Voice of the Oracle.

CONDUCTOR:

The Band Conductor.

Scene Breakdown

ACT I – Physics Lab

ACT II – Physics Lab

Approximate Length

90 minutes

Time

c. 2018

Place

Physics Lab at Crowncake University

ACT I

Setting: Physics laboratory at Crowncake University.

At Rise: Enter JENNY, a tour guide, followed by a MOM and her son, JIMMY

JENNY

And here we have one of our physics labs. As you probably know, Crowncake University is world-renowned for its research in the fields of science and technology. Almost all of CU's prestige comes from our physics department, which we are most proud of. They got to come up with Crowncake's motto: "*the future is here.*"

MOM

Oh Jimmy, look at all this neat science stuff! You would be in heaven here!

JIMMY

Mom—

MOM

(Looking at the balls representing molecules)

Look! This is exactly like what you have at home!

JIMMY

I know, mom—

MOM

(To JENNY)

You should see his nice set-up at home—

JIMMY

Mom—

MOM

He'd be up there for hours playing with his little toys—

JIMMY

Oh my gosh.

JENNY

(Laughs)

Well, take your time looking around.

JIMMY

Mom, can you just not say anything else?

MOM

She's cute, isn't she Jimmy?

JIMMY

Yes, and you have swiftly killed any chance I have with her.

MOM

Oh, are you embarrassed of your ol' mother?

JIMMY

Yes.

(HOKUM enters)

JENNY

Oh, and here is one of our fabulous professors.

JIMMY

Wait, you're Rodney Hokum, aren't you?

HOKUM

Ah, an admiring fan?

JIMMY

Yeah, I recently read your research paper on the utilization of quantum entanglement in data compression. You're part of the reason I want to come here.

MOM

You'd love to have him. My Jimmy here is really smart. He managed to get himself a cumulative 36 on the ACT.

HOKUM

(Looking impressed)

Wow.

(JIMMY is looking very proud at this point)

MOM

Yes. He's very smart and hard wor—

HOKUM

Cumulative? Did you say cumulative?

(HOKUM bursts out laughing. JIMMY's face falls considerably.)

MOM

What are you laughing at? That's the highest score!

HOKUM

Not if it's cumulative. You've got some RFI, buddy.

JIMMY

RFI?

HOKUM

Room For Improvement.

JENNY

Professor Hokum!

HOKUM

(Laughs uproariously)

Yeah, how about you take it a few more times until you get a natural 36, go back in time so you can get it on your first try, and then come back with the something actually impressive, like the solution to the Reimann Hypothesis, or you know, a cure to congenital arteriovenous shunt.

MOM

Listen here, I'll shunt you right across the room if you don't watch it.

JIMMY

It's fine, Mom.

MOM

No! I've worked too hard— I mean, he has worked too hard just to have you—

HOKUM

Look here, Mrs.—uh, what's your name?

MOM

Warble.

HOKUM

Look lady, if you wanted your son to get into a place like Crowthorne University, maybe you shouldn't have let him slack off so much. Shoulda kept a closer eye on him.

JIMMY

(To himself)

Oh don't say that. Why would you say that?

MOM

Listen buddy, I don't care how good the science program is at this school. I don't care if you're the best scientist in the nation—

HOKUM

I am, actually—

MOM

My son is too good for you! Come on, Jimmy, let's go look at Harvard.

(Exit MOM and JIMMY)

JENNY

Professor Hokum! That was totally rude! You can't ridicule my prospects like that!

HOKUM

You mean prospect, singular? I noticed you had only one this time. Your numbers are getting piddly.

JENNY

That's because of people like you!

HOKUM

Well, it's a quality over quantity situation, uh—uh...what's your name?

JENNY

Jenny.

HOKUM

Anyway, we're after quality. Don't waste your time giving tours to people who are most definitely not coming to our school. I'm doing you a favor.

JENNY

A favor! I'll be out of a job at this rate, and it'll be your fault!

HOKUM

Then I'll be doing this university a favor by shaving off some dead skin. Our staff is way too big as it is.

JENNY

I'm going to the administration with this!

(Exit JENNY)

(At this point, MONICA, CARRIE, and SUDUKA enter just in time to catch the end of the last conversation. HOKUM attends to some papers.)

SUDUKA

What was that all about?

MONICA

Professor Hokum drove off another prosy, obviously.

SUDUKA

He should maybe stop making fun of them. We have a pretty snobby reputation as it is.

CARRIE

I don't think our reputation is snobby at all. Not compared to how *actually* snobby the school is.

MONICA

Yeah, you take one step through our golden gates, you realize you can't overestimate the size of our ego.

SUDUKA

When'd you guys get so cynical?

HOKUM

Ladies, have you finished grading the tests for my 1102 class yet?

CARRIE

Yes, as a matter of fact, we finished all 67 of them.

HOKUM

Good, because I've got all of the 1203 tests and the 1401 tests for you next.

(Pats the big pile of papers he just brought in)

And it's time we start hustling on our virtual assistant! Well, *my* virtual assistant. But it's *your* responsibility now, since I've supplied you with the skeleton and the base code for it. So...what's taking so long?

CARRIE

We were busy grading tests.

HOKUM

Girls, you have one job.

MONICA

That's two different tasks!

HOKUM

Yeah, but one job. It's all under the umbrella of teaching assistant.

SUDUKA

(Desperately)

Professor Hokum, we are really overwhelmed. We not only have to be your TA's and work on your device, but we also have a full course load as students!

HOKUM

(Mocking her desperation)

Ohhh, well maybe you should have thought about that before you signed up to be a student and then a TA at the most difficult and demanding school in the United States. Alright, good talk. I have to go figure out how to approach quantum gravity.

(Exit HOKUM)

MONICA

You want to know when we got so cynical, Suduka? Right about the time we started working for our dear professor over there.

CARRIE

I don't know if I'm cynical. I just tend to believe that people are selfish, dishonest, and bad.

SUDUKA

(Sarcastically)

Very funny, Carrie.

MONICA

For me it's the little things. "Have you finished grading the tests *yet*." It's that yet. We got them yesterday.

CARRIE

For me it's the part where he disregarded our concerns and mocked us with no mercy.

SUDUKA

Ok, maybe Professor Hokum can be a little severe sometimes, but he's kind of right. We should have known what we were getting into. Let's just hunker down and do what we have to do.

MONICA

Ah, Suduka, the eternal optimist.

SUDUKA

I got a whole 4 and half hours of sleep last night. That's three whole sleep cycles. So I don't think anything can get my spirits down today.

CARRIE

You weren't kidding, Monica.

SUDUKA

What, it's better than being a pessimist.

CARRIE

I think you'll find that we aren't too different from you, Suduka.

MONICA

Yeah, you get too positive, you end up coming full circle.

SUDUKA

That'll be the day.

(Pulls out an electrical device)

Alright, what name did we program this thing to respond to again?

CARRIE

Sibil, I think.

MONICA

Let's see where we're at. *Sibil*, what will the weather be tomorrow?

SIBIL

Playing "Weatherman" by Dead Sara.

(Loud hard rock music begins playing out of SIBIL)

MONICA

Stop! Stop!

CARRIE

Pause! Pause!

(The music stops playing)

MONICA

Gosh, the simplest thing.

SUDUKA

Still haven't cracked that yet, have you?

CARRIE

Why do we really need another virtual assistant? We already have Alexa, and Siri, and Cortana, and they're all trash. Why do we need another trash assistant.

SUDUKA

I think the idea is that this one won't be trash.

CARRIE

Yeah, that was the idea of the other ones, too.

(Over the course of this conversation, Professor DORIC, Professor RUPERT, and Professor GILLIAN begin to settle in at the lab desks in the back: First, Professor GILLIAN enters, and upon seeing that the room has some empty desks, ushers in the other two. The three professors start laying their laptops and all their books out on the desks.)

MONICA

(Fuming)

This son of a gun! I'm gonna—

CARRIE

Hold her while I disassemble her alive. I'll take her apart with my bare hands, I swear.

SUDUKA

Ok, how about we take a little break and grade some tests? A little grading break.

MONICA

How relaxing.

(MONICA, CARRIE, and SUDUKA move to a table in the back to grade papers)

RUPERT

This is ridiculous. With all this construction, I haven't had a real office in weeks. And to think they're tearing down our building to make way for a new science building! A new science building! What's wrong with this one? When I worked in the private sector, I had a great big corner office. Then I had to go and discover a passion for teaching.

DORIC

You teach business. Saying you have a passion for teaching business is like saying you have a passion for cooking takeout.

RUPERT

At least I teach people stuff they can actually get a job with.

(Aside)

Not like the cold dead languages you teach. That's why colleges exist, you know, to help people get jobs.

DORIC

(Dramatically wailing)

Dear gods, why have you brought this grief that haunts my heart? Alas, our universities have long forgotten their origin, long past the thought of "wisdom for its own sake." The whole

university system has been going downhill ever since Harvard first introduced options between majors. It destroyed the educated man.

RUPERT

Doric, I think that's a bunch of historical hogwash.

(Enter CLIPPER)

CLIPPER

Did someone say historical hogwash? I happen to know a bit about that. History I mean.

DORIC

Tell him, Clipper, how the universities strayed from their path of educating free men with their modernist ideas about practical education.

CLIPPER

Whoa, that was a lot of words. You know, this doesn't sound like my field of expertise.

DORIC

But you teach history.

CLIPPER

Applied history.

GILLIAN

Clipper, what the heck is applied history?

CLIPPER

Well, it's sort of like public history, just focused a little differently.

GILLIAN

Oh...What the heck is public history?

CLIPPER

What do you teach?

GILLIAN

Statistics.

CLIPPER

Ok. Can you tell me the difference between statistics and applied statistics?

RUPERT

Sort of like public statistics, right?

CLIPPER

Ok, if I have to explain it, you're not going to understand.

GILLIAN

Then how do you teach it?

RUPERT

I don't have to specify between business and applied business, because business is already applied.

DORIC

Don't you understand, the highest knowledge is that which you need *not* apply? It is simply *true*.
(Lets out a sigh of pleasure)

GILLIAN

Did you know 314 Americans had their butts surgically lifted in 1994? There's some knowledge that I challenge you to apply.

(Enter HOKUM)

HOKUM

Well, if it isn't my homeless peers. But then again, if you're homeless, you're not really my peers, are you?

GILLIAN

Hey, I would have an office in the science wing if there was one vacancy. One. But right now there's only enough room for the "important" scientists and mathematicians.

HOKUM

Well yeah, I mean we can't just let anyone in. If we did, pretty soon we'd have to make way for the business people.

RUPERT

I will have you know that we wouldn't take office space in your new STEM building if you paid us.

HOKUM

Good, because instead you have to take our old crappy STEM building, and we don't have to pay you anything.

DORIC

Alas, we have become subservient to the wishes and whims of the fleeting sciences. *Caulis delenda est!*

HOKUM

Right back at ya, buddy.

(Enter President KALE and Vice President EDDA SADA-SMITH)

KALE

Professor Hokum, we need to talk—

HOKUM

Ah, President Kale, so nice to, uh, yeah...and I see you brought your trusty steed.

EDDA

What? You can't say that! President Kale! Did you just hear what he said? He called me a horse!

KALE

(A little annoyed)

Yes, Edda, I heard.

HOKUM

You shouldn't have come all the way down here, really. You could have emailed.

KALE

I did email you with all of my...concerns. And you emailed back, and I quote, "Come face me like a man, you coward."

HOKUM

(Chuckles)

Oh yeah, I did, didn't I?

EDDA

That is so disrespectful—

KALE

Edda, please. So Hokum, can we get on with it?

HOKUM

Of course.

KALE

...In private?

HOKUM

Anything you say to me you can say in front of my subordinates.

CLIPPER

You're talking about your TA's, right?

EDDA

Go on, it will just be worse for him in public.

KALE

(Looks around)

You know, I don't care. Hokum, you need to let up on your students.

HOKUM

Do you mean in regards to the course load or how I treat them when they complain about the course load?

KALE

Yes, both, both of those things. The amount of work you assign is not reflected in any of our curriculums—

DORIC

Curricula.

KALE

(Harshly)

Excuse me?

DORIC

Never mind.

HOKUM

I don't know what you're talking about. My TA's have taken my classes and they can tell you it was just the right amount of coursework. Right, girls?

SUDUKA

Yes, absolutely, Professor Hokum!

(MONICA and CARRIE shoot her a glare.)

KALE

The tests you administer are way too difficult—

HOKUM

How do you know? Do you study quantum mechanics?

KALE

I've verified it with four other expert physicists.

HOKUM

They probably don't know squat about quantum mechanics either, to be honest—

KALE

But the main problem is that when any student approaches you with a request for a grade change or a deadline extension, you deride and humiliate them. You react with what has been described to me as a look of both amusement and disgust simultaneously, and then proceed to berate them until, in some cases, they are reduced to tears.

CLIPPER

Dang.

HOKUM

So what's the problem?

EDDA

Hokum, as the Vice President of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equality, you are an obstacle to everything I work to achieve—

DORIC

Dangling participle.

EDDA

Hm?

DORIC

You were implying in that sentence that *Hokum* was the Vice President of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equality. A little Latin would probably—

EDDA

Yeah, is that so?

DORIC

You know what, forget I said anything.

EDDA

As the Vice President of Diversity, Inclusion—

HOKUM

Can't you abbreviate it to D.I.E.? Vice President of D.I.E.? That'll make things way quicker—

EDDA

You are a stain on our university!

HOKUM

Not everything is about diversity, inclusion, and whatever, Edda—

RUPERT

D.I.E.

HOKUM

Right, D.I.E. Anyway, you need to take off your blinders.

EDDA

President Kale! He's saying I'm a horse again!

HOKUM

Heh, yeah I suppose I am.

KALE

Hokum, if you don't change this pattern of behavior—

HOKUM

You'll what, fire me?

KALE

You know we're not considering that at the moment—

HOKUM

Because of my brilliant published research?

KALE

I was thinking more of the tenure thing.

HOKUM

Which I got because of my brilliant published research.

EDDA

You know you can still get fired, right?

HOKUM

Yeah, but that would be a lot more work for you guys. Plus that would look *really* bad for the U. Just imagine the headlines: "Crowncake lets their lead physicist go, right into the hands of MIT."

EDDA

You wouldn't!

HOKUM

Try me.

EDDA

President Kale!

KALE

Hokum, we may not fire you, but if you don't change this pattern of behavior, we can probably think of something worse.

EDDA

You'll wish that you were fired!

(Begins to leave, and then looks back)

A stain on our university!

(Exit EDDA and KALE)

CLIPPER

Sounds like they're not happy with you.

HOKUM

I think it's time for you lot to beat it. Girls, tell 'em to scram.

SUDUKA

Um, professors, we have to teach a class in here pretty soon.

MONICA

Chop, chop, you know the drill.

(MONICA, CARRIE, and SUDUKA begin to herd the PROFESSORS out)

DORIC

Driven away like a common beggar. You don't understand Xenia.

GILLIAN

You can't treat me like this. I teach STEM too.

CARRIE

Oh, we don't discriminate here at the university. Everyone is welcome to leave!

(Exit GILLIAN, DORIC, RUPERT, and CLIPPER. GARY, a security guard, enters right after, looking around.)