

The White Door
by Brandon M. Dennis

1950

“No, put the seasoning on it like so.”
“Like this?”
“Yes, that’s right.”
“Mmmmmm, this steak smells soooooo good!”
“Well, I am a master chef you know.”
“Of course you are honey.”
briiiiiing!
“Dear, could you get that?”
briiiiiing!
“Yes, coming!”
briiiiiing!
“Hello?”
click!
“Hmmm. That’s strange.”
“Who was it?”
“I’m not sure. Whoever it was hung up.”

2000

“Nice grind!”
“Thanks, Pete. Now your turn.”
“What should I do?”
“Try the rail.”
“Ok, here it goes... ack!”
“Shoot, you ok?”
“Yeah, it’s just a scrape.”

dedildedildedildedildeeeee!

“Aup! Hold on, my cell’s ringing.”

dedildedildedildedildeeeee!

“Hello?”

click!

“Jerk.”

“Who was it, Tim?”

“Dunno. Some loser.”

“What did he say?”

“Nothing. That’s why he’s a loser.”

2050

“Hey, no fair! You can’t hide in a cloud!”

“Well, you did earlier, Marv!”

“No, I was just passing through.”

“Fine then. Let’s start over.”

“By the way, those are nice anti-grav pants. Where did you get them?”

“Sears-Nordstrom Inc.”

“Really? I got mine at Wall-Target Inc. Yours are much nicer.”

“Thanks.”

deet! deet! deet!

“Is that your watch or mine?”

“Mine.”

deet! deet! deet!

“Hold on, hold on. Let me turn on the screen. There. Hello?”

pssshhhhhhhhh!

“That’s funny.”

“What?”

“The screen went blank.”

“Weird. Think it was your mom?”

“I don’t know...”

2100

“Put the subelectronic-light-degenerizer down! Good, that was a smart move. Steven, cuff him.”

“With these?”

“No, the automatic ones. Just throw them at him and the cuffs will do the rest.”

“All right mister, you do not have the right to remain silent—”

tap tap tap

“Er...hold on. I’m getting a mental message.”

tap tap tap

“Hello?”

click!

“Hmm...”

“Still talking?”

“No, the mental link failed.”

“Figures. I swear, the Mind-Touch server has been getting increasingly bad lately. Maybe you should go in and get an IR-SMT installed instead of the old IR-SV’s. I heard that the operation is painless.”

“Well, if it was anything like the last one, I don’t want another operation.”

“Oh, shoot! He’s running for it! Stun him!”

2150

“Henderson, bring the psydo-ducts out and place them by that crater over there,” thought Jenkins over the mental tap. Henderson nodded, signifying that he got the message. He got three other men to help him and opened the belly carriage of the rocket. The four of them pulled out the psydo-ducts and carried them to a nearby crater. The load was light due to the decrease of gravity on the Martian surface. They set the psydo-ducts

down and Henderson pushed the little red button. Suddenly huge stakes shot out from under the psydo-ducts, anchoring them to the ground.

“Psydo-ducts established”, thought Henderson.

“Good, now turn on the main reactor.” Henderson flipped the trigger guard, exposing a thin, green button. Hesitating only a moment, he pushed it.

Instantly an invisible wave of information shot out from the reactor of the psydo-ducts and was sent to a low orbiting satellite that the space men had just released hours earlier. The satellite took a mapping of the Martian landscape and sent it back to the psydo-ducts.

“How are we doing there Henderson?” asked Jenkins. Henderson waited for a moment for the results to come onscreen. He smiled when they did.

“Sir, the results came back fine. The satellite is functioning exceptionally. The mission is a success!” All three men cheered, but because they cheered from their mouths no noise issued forth. Amidst the silent cheering, Henderson noticed something irregular on the psydo-duct reactor’s screen.

“Eh... sir?” Henderson thought. *“I am finding an abnormality on the Martian surface.”* All eyes looked to him. Jenkins ran up and looked at the screen.

“Where?”

“Actually, it is approximately fifty meters... that way.” He pointed off towards the nearby mountain range.

“What does it look like?” asked Jenkins.

“Well sir, it looks...it looks like a door.” Jenkins looked off toward the nearby mountain range. It was monumental compared to earthly ranges. Jenkins squinted in the mist. He could vaguely make out the form of some white object off in the distance.

“I see it! I see the door!” thought Gunner.

“We don’t know exactly what it is yet. Let’s not jump to conclusions. All right, let’s check it out. As part of the earth expeditionary force it is our duty. Make sure you have your side arm easily accessible. Ready? Let’s go”

The five men trudged on towards the white object. They arrived about twenty minutes later. It was indeed a large, white door, laid into the mountain like a storm cellar

door. It was made of completely white stone, and it had intricate carvings inlaid about the perimeter. It looked very much like the structure of an earthly door.

“Well, so much for there being no life on this planet,” thought Jenkins. He tapped the door with the butt of his gun. Seemed sturdy enough. He reached for the handle.

“Sir, I don’t know. Maybe we should wait a while on this one,” thought Carpenter. Jenkins blinked at him stupidly.

“And why should we do that?” he asked. *“We are here now, we might as well explore a little.”* Carpenter nodded. Jenkins grabbed the door and twisted the handle. With all his might, he pulled on the door. And then it clicked.

The door was flung open violently and a gust of air burst forth, stronger than anyone there had ever experienced. It shot out of the door and caught Carpenter, throwing him into the air. Carpenter ascended into space, and floated towards nowhere. The remaining four clung onto the door with all their might. One by one, each man pulled himself into the room as the stream of air continued to pound them, and clung to the inside wall. Jenkins was the last one in. He climbed in and shut the door, straining with all his might. He latched it from the inside and turned around. His men were staring at him.

“Where is Carpenter!” he shouted in his mind.

“Lost,” said Henderson. *“The wind blew him into space. There is no way we can recover him.”*

“Drat!”

Jenkins pounded his fist on the door. There was a hollow gong.

“Did you all hear that?” he thought. Gunner quickly pulled out his atmospheric tester.

“Sir, readings show that there is an atmosphere in this room, similar to that of earth.”

“That would account for the wind,” said Jenkins solemnly. *“Is it breathable?”*

“According to the tester, yes.”

Jenkins pushed a button on his suit. The glass of his helmet slid back, exposing his head to the air.

“Ahhh,” he said audibly. When his men saw that he was not sucked out of his suit and crushed into a bloody mass, they slid their helmets back also. All four men breathed in the martian air. It was not so dissimilar to that of earth’s. But there was a metallic smell to it.

“So how are we going to get out of here?” asked Simmons. “If we try and open the door again, our fate will be the same as Carpenter’s.”

“We will worry about that later,” said Jenkins sternly. His men grumbled. “Right now our task is to discover what sort of beings live on this planet.” They looked at the room about them. It was a small room, and there were no decorations. It was made completely of chiseled stone. Against the far wall was an opened door. Weird noises and lights issued forth from the room.

Jenkins took point. He walked towards the door and his men followed. They entered. The place looked like a museum; a museum of telephones. The first display they walked by was that of an old, turn of the century telephone. It looked very ancient. The wires of the telephone led to a little green box attached to the wall. The next display was of an old button telephone, the kind used in the 1980’s. It also was wired to a little green box. The next display was a cell phone. Then a television phone. Then a watch phone.

“Dang, whoever set this place up had a fixation on phones,” said Henderson. The last display was a decapitated human head. This took the men by surprise, but they refrained from showing it. The forehead has been cut taken away, and what was left of the brain was exposed. Installed in the brain was a small red box. A light in it was blinking. “*A mind tap,*” thought Jenkins. Everybody heard him.

“Ok, this is crazy,” said Gunner. “I don’t like this one bit. Let’s get out of here.”

“How are we going to do that?” said Simmons annoyed. “We go out the door we came in, we get sucked into oblivion. Like the cap’n said, we gotta find our way out. A decompression chamber or something.”

“Who said that?” said Gunner. Everybody looked at him.

“Who said what?” asked Jenkins.

“Hold on.”

Gunner had his hand to his forehead as if listening to something. He walked over to the side wall and pushed on it. It scraped back and slid aside, exposing a hole. Jenkins blinked.

“How did you know about that?”

“Somebody told me over the mental tap,” Gunner said flatly. A fear suddenly crept over Jenkins’ men.

“Decompression chamber or no, I say we go back,” said Simmons nervously. The rest of the men agreed.

“Now hold on a moment,” said Jenkins. “Nobody panic! Whoever it is that contacted Gunner wants us to find him.”

“Exactly, that’s why we should go.”

Jenkins became angry.

“Fine! Do what you will. I will go on and I will discover what is going on here. Now who is coming?” Grudgingly, each man raised his hand.

“Good. Now come on.” Again the four walked through another entrance. This room was quite different though. Monitors covered the walls and they were focusing on one thing: Earth. Each monitor showed a different part of earth. Africa, Great Britain, Nebraska, and many others. Along the far wall was a speaker. Noise was coming out of it, but the men couldn’t understand what it was saying. Jenkins walked up and put his ear to the speaker.

-point 234AI8-

tap tap tap

“Hello?”

click!

-point 34GD45-

tap tap tap

“Yeah?”

click!

“Hey Henderson, come take a look at this.”

“What is it?”

“It appears to be calling people over a mind tap.”

“Really?” Henderson bent over and listened to the speaker.

-point 7TS43N-

tap tap tap

“Hello?”

click!

“Hmmm.”

“What do you make of it?”

“I don’t really know.”

Jenkins was frustrated. His men walked around the room, examining the equipment, but Jenkins sat sown against the wall to think. There were the phones, the head. The terminals and the speaker. *What does it all mean?* he thought. He made sure to turn off the projector so that no one else could hear his mind.

tap tap tap

A call? he thought. *Who could be calling me?*

“Hello?” There was a pause.

“Hello, Jenkins,” said an unfamiliar voice. It was deep, rustic, and it sounded tired. “*Do you know who I am?*” Jenkins looked about the room to see if he could see anybody. Only his men.

“No,” thought Jenkins.

“*I...am Death,*”

Jenkins laughed to himself.

“*Death? What, is this some kind of prank?*”

“*I am afraid not. For you see, you have accidentally walked into my office.*”

“*Oh really...*” said Jenkins in a patronizing way. “*So we are sitting at the desk of Death?*”

“Yes.”

“*And you are running around killing people on earth right now?*”

"Yes."

Jenkins couldn't help himself. He burst out laughing. His men looked at him.

"What is it?" asked Gunner.

"Oh, nothing. I am just thinking." His men returned to their snooping.

"I see that you don't believe me," said Death to Jenkins.

"How can I? This is just too absurd! Death is on a far distant planet, calling people on the mental tap and then killing them? Nonsense!"

"I see that you need some convincing, Jenkins. Walk over to the speaker," Jenkins complied, not that he expected anything, but he was curious.

"Ok Death I'm here. What do you want?"

"Listen," Jenkins leaned close to the speaker.

-point 5,678,980 ADF-

tap tap tap

"Hello? Who is this?"

Silence.

"Please, whoever you are, you must help me! I am all alone drifting out here in—"

"

click!

Jenkins' face went pale. He walked over to the wall and sat back down.

"Well?" said Death. He sounded almost amused.

"What."

"Did you recognize that voice?"

"Yes. It sounded like Carpenter."

"And where is Carpenter right now?"

"Drifting somewhere in space."

"Wrong. I just hit him with a asteroid." Jenkins became angry.

"Listen, whoever you are, what are you trying to pull!?"

"I am just doing my job."

"Your job! Killing Carpenter wasn't part of your job! It wasn't his time!"

“He saw the door to my office. I had to get rid of him. Besides, he would have died anyway.”

Jenkins was silent. He realized they had all seen the door to Death’s office. In fact, he and his men were actually in his office.

“Ummm, Death?”

“Yes Jenkins.”

“What will happen to all of us?” Death laughed silently, but Jenkins heard him.

“Why are you laughing?”

“You will see.”

click!

Jenkins jumped to his feet.

“Alright men, we gotta get out of here!”

“What’s wrong Jenkins?” asked Simmons.

“I’ll tell you later, but we must get back to the ship! We will have to go out the way we came in.”

“But—”

Jenkins whirled on Simmons.

“Do not argue! We must leave *NOW!* Do you understand?” Simmons quickly nodded. The four men ran out of the monitor room and into the telephone room. Jenkins looked into the room in which they had entered Death's office.

“Ok, because this door was open, all the air in this complex was trying to rush outside. If we close this door, the air will only rush out momentarily. We will just have to hang on. Does everybody understand?” They all nodded. Quickly they entered the room in which they had come in. Jenkins closed the door. All four men closed their helmets.

“All right everybody, hold onto something! Ready? Good. Gunner, open the outside door and hold onto something tight!” Gunner hesitated. He held onto the handle with all his might. He turned it.

All the air in that room rushed out with a mighty blast, flinging the door open and flinging Gunner along with it. The three other men clung to the wall as hard as they could, their bodies flapping in the air. Henderson began to slip.

“*Captain!*” he screamed in his mind. Jenkins outstretched his hand and grabbed Henderson’s suit just as Henderson lost grip. All three men flailed in the wind. Gunner was slammed back and forth as the door convulsed with the rushing air. Soon the wind began to die down. Jenkins, Simmons and Henderson slowly stood to their feet. The outside door was open and the men could see Gunners hand still clutching the door.

“*Gunner!*” thought Simmons. “*Gunner, the wind is over, you can let go now.*” The three walked outside. They gasped. Clinging to the door was Gunners severed right arm. His body was nowhere in sight.

The three began to run for the rocket. Henderson was in the lead, followed by Jenkins then Simmons. *I should have had Simmons open the door*, Jenkins thought. *I forgot that Gunner had already received a call when he opened the secret passage.* They were almost there. Abruptly Simmons stopped. Jenkins looked over his shoulder, and seeing Simmons, he stopped.

“*Simmons! Don’t stop! Get your butt over here!*”

“*Hold on I got a call...*” thought Simmons, but he never got to finish his sentence. A meteor from space slammed into Simmons and crushed his whole body. The impact of the blast sent Jenkins flying. He hit the psydo-duct hard and a small hole was ripped in his suit. Air was escaping rather fast. Henderson ran up to him.

“*Sir! Sir! You alright?*”

“*No! I’m gone. Leave without me Henderson!*”

“*But sir—*”

“*Shutup! That is an order! Fly! Fly!*” Henderson nodded. He ran to the rocket ship and entered through the main bay. Jenkins watched as Henderson fired up the engines and took off. The rocket slowly ascended, then with a burst of light, shot off in the direction of Earth.

Farewell, thought Jenkins. *At least one of us survived.* He looked about him. The psydo-duct was still there, sending information back and forth between the satellite and the reactor. There was no sound. All was quiet.

“*Hello Jenkins.*”

“*Death! But...you already called me once.*”

“I know, I know, but who says that I can’t call my victims twice?” Jenkins smirked.

“Well, I guess you make the rules.” Death laughed

“Besides, I kinda like you.” Jenkins paused.

“Does that mean you will let me live?”

“...No.”

Jenkins body was sucked out of the small rip in his suit. He became a small, fine line of liquefied flesh, blood, and sinew.

The rocket was almost to earth. Henderson looked out of the portal as the blue planet filled his window.

Earth, he thought to himself. *Oh, how I am glad to see you. I just wish the others could.* He looked at the planet. He gazed at the continents. He spotted Africa, Great Britain and... Nebraska. He looked at the water.

As soon as I get home, I’m going to buy me a boat. I’m going to sail out into the waters and live on it. I will throw away all my telephones. I will have my mental tap removed. I will just sit on my boat, and relax. Maybe I’ll write a book.

tap tap tap

Oh good! Thought Henderson. *The United Earth Government has decided to greet me!*

“Hello?”

click!