

SHIP & CHAMBER

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Imagine you and a sizable group of excitable humanoids, as well as choice fauna, flora and animate beings, were living on an extraordinary spaceship, one with a built-in, self-regulating, constantly evolving biosphere. I'll translate the latter part for you: the spaceship, with all matter on it, forms a magnificent vivarium. It might be an organic computer. Or a simulation. Or something else entirely. Whichever the case: it is a topflight spacecraft.

In a far future, millions of lightyears from Earth, this ingenious ark floats across the vastness of the universe, bobbing around, but also exploring new worlds (your lot hasn't found any yet ... or hasn't looked closely enough) and seeking out new life and new civilizations. Thus, you're going, boldly so, where no one—no male, no female, no diverse, no feline creature—has gone before. Yes, cats came along as well, next to many more species. It's the ultimate adventure!

Speaking of, your lot isn't ultimately sure who'd built that spaceship originally, and it kind of doesn't matter; it's there, it works, it's fun to be on. Plus, the part with "new life and new civilizations" reads nicely, perhaps they'd fancy a sandwich? Note: in the on-board archive, one Bucky Fuller has been mentioned an 'architect of spaceships,' hence a few passengers have come to call the spaceship "Bucky."

One otherwise fine day on your voyage, you realize that something isn't right with Bucky. The spaceship's average atmospheric pressure has been increasing. Dramatically. This gives your lot headaches. Literally. What's worse, an infectiously catchy tune has been spreading on board: once people start singing along, they can't stop. They hardly catch their breath. Some muse that the song, or the pressure change, might have been fabricated by the cats, or by a witch, or by a scapegoat, the sum of which gives everyone even more headaches. Especially the young, by far less experienced passengers are questioning your key assumptions, but you let them scream, they will learn over time when they've grown into proper adults who know better. Naturally, their screaming causes extra headaches.

What to do? There isn't any nearby, habitable retreat (at least that's what Bucky has concluded). No spare Bucky. Nor the material, let alone capability, to build a new one. You figure the pressure change might have to do with your lot's excessive fiddling with the ship's gravity chamber. You blame the kids. But in secret, you know it was you and the other adults, and those before you. So delightful when gravity is neutralized on command, isn't it? One can fly! Essentially, one becomes a mini-Bucky of their own, for a few seconds. Everyone loves it.

Ok, so the pressure is on, and to avoid disaster (and family breakups), you decide to make a change. You suggest everyone be involved in a group gathering: the young, the old, the age groups sandwiched in-between, the ones who don't eat sandwiches but other foodstuffs, that quirky quantum toaster, even the cats may linger around.

You announce that three questions shall be decided upon:

1. Should we stop fiddling with the atmospheric pressure, yes or no?
2. Could we please take counter measures to stop that song? (Please!)

Everyone has a different opinion, of course, and it turns out that a good number of folks have more than one opinion of their own, even. But it's great to have each and everyone present and a say. Plus, at the beginning, the group agrees that, contrary to your announcement, there are only two discrete questions to be answered, not three. Only the quantum toaster begs to differ, but has a hard time radiating why.

This initial, practically uniform group agreement paves the path to further successes: thanks to the diversity of insights, you realize that fiddling with the gravity chamber wasn't a good idea from the get-go: With gravity off, we have a really hard time catching rodents", the cats state; „both negative as well as increased gravity gives us headaches and we can't keep the sandwiches down“, plenty of passengers complain; the oldest amongst the passengers remember a time when they „danced“ and felt as if there was no gravity at all, and doubt that this feeling could ever be reproduced by a gravity chamber.

Then, a breakthrough occurs: one of the brightest, youngest and noisiest kids presents an inflatable gravity chamber prototype that doesn't affect the ship's overall atmosphere and can be carried around and be used independently. The kid states it has managed to meaningfully communicate with the quantum toaster, too, and is, at once, elected an adult as per majority vote; but the kid doesn't accept the vote until all other kids are heard equally, too, summarizing that "state shouldn't matter, only circumstance." You're suspicious that the quantum toaster might have had their slice in the argumentation.

At last, you give in to the kid's condition, because you're the adult, and the ultimate call should be yours: all non-adult passengers are declared emancipated, even the cats ... and that toaster, too. The pressure's released, the headaches are gone, and so is that cursed song ... the kids had found out that the gravity alterations not only had generated the song, but also, that they caused irregular speed-of-sound variations that let the song spread exponentially. (Or so you understood.)

In a galaxy far, far away, in a future ahead, the day after the gathering, you wake up to a new song that the ship's rodents have been gnawing on. At first, you're afraid and petrified. But then the song grows strongly on you: it uses a melody the rodents assert they've found in the on-board archive. It's called "We will survive". You hum along, in sync with Bucky and the lot, and wonder about collective intelligence, and the sunbeams from a close-by giant that dissolve into the majestic blackness.