

Futures

Tourist trap

Intergalactic customer service. By M. V. Melcer

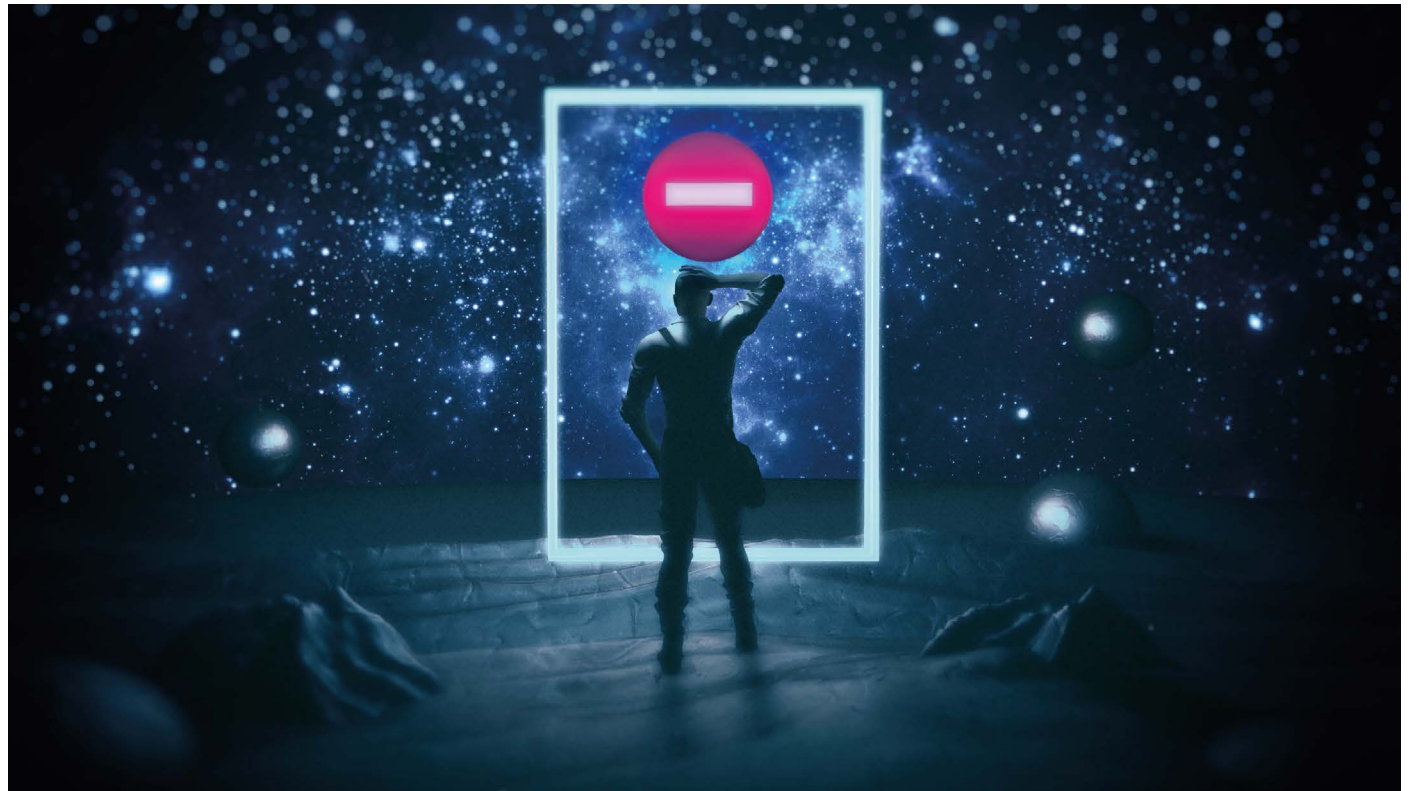


ILLUSTRATION BY JACEY

This audio file was recovered from an I-D Portal Device abandoned on Orizon Prime.

Hello! Congratulations on your purchase of the latest model of Galactic Designs Inc. Inter-Dimensional Portal Device™! I am Odi, your personal travel assistant. Galactic Designs hopes you are enjoying your first trip.

"Yes, the rainbow pools are totally living up to the hype. But now –"

Wonderful. Be sure to upload your experiences to Galactic Design's Travel Log™, as soon as you re-enter DataLink™ coverage. For best upload quality, we recommend Galactic Designs' own Mind-Book™ for only 9,999 per –

"Right, listen, I'm having trouble getting a lock for the return trip."

As Orizon Prime is currently beyond our nearly ubiquitous DataLink™ coverage, automatic lock is not possible. To travel to any location, just key in the coordinates and you are ready to go!

"As you can see from your own damn

interface, I've done precisely that and got nothing. You seem to be broken."

Your Galactic Designs Inc. Inter-Dimensional Portal Device™ comes with our best auto diagnostic system.

Running scan.

Scan completed.

"And? What have you found?"

I'm happy to report that your Galactic Designs Inc. Inter-Dimensional Portal Device™ is functioning perfectly.

"No it isn't, or why the hell am I still stuck here?"

Anything else I can help you with?

"I want to return home. So, open the damned portal!"

As you are now out of range of our nearly ubiquitous DataLink™ coverage, automatic lock is not possible. Please use the manual interface to key in the coordinates.

"Done."

Coordinates invalid.

"What do you mean, invalid? These are the

numbers you gave me when I set off!"

"Hello?"

Hello! Congratulations on your purchase of the latest model of Galactic Designs Inc. Inter-Dimensional Portal Device™! I am Odi, your personal –

"Oh shut [inaudible] you [inaudible] piece of junk!"

Anything else I can help you with?

[Inaudible]

Anything else I can help you with?

"Get me home!"

Here are the instructions for operating your Galactic Designs Inc. Inter-Dimensional Portal Device™:

1. Remember to deploy the I-DPD in a well-appointed location.

2. Calibrate all sensors before entering target coordinates.

3. Now key in the coordinates and you're back home.

"No, I'm not!" [muffled noises, possibly something breaking] "OK. OK. Stay calm.

Futures

Right. Odi, do you have ... like, a troubleshooting guide or something?"

Your Galactic Designs Inc. Inter-Dimensional Portal Device™ comes with an extensive index of potential issues, in the extremely unlikely possibility that you may encounter a problem when out of range of our nearly ubiquitous DataLink™ coverage.

"Good, good. Search for, 'trouble activating the portal'."

Running search.

Troubleshooting.

Have you chosen a well-appointed location?

"Yes!!!!"

Have you calibrated the sensors?

"Yes, like a hundred times!"

Are you on a planet with a strong magnetic field? Magnetic fields may interfere with calibration. Use on planets with magnetic fields is inadvisable.

"Well, shit, now you're telling me?"

For more information on use on planets with strong magnetic fields, refer to the full Inter-Dimensional Portal Device™ Special Operations Guide available on DataLink™ through most of the Galaxy (conditions apply).

"But I'm out of range! You just said ..." [indistinct]

"Is there any other way of accessing that Special Operations thing?"

You can upgrade to a premium licence as soon as you're back in range of our nearly ubiquitous DataLink™ coverage.

[heavy breathing]

"You are this close to going on your own little trip to the bottom of those damn rainbow pools, you know?"

Anything else I can help you with?

Hello! Congratulations on your purchase of the latest model of Galactic Designs Inc. Inter-Dimensional Portal Device™! I am Odi, your –

"Oh, shut the hell up. I'm screwed. It's getting dark and I've run out of food."

Wonderful. Be sure to upload your experiences to Galactic Design's Travel Log™, as soon as you re-enter DataLink™ coverage. For best upload quality –

[laughter]

"I'd love to. I'd go for the best quality your Travel Log – TM – has to offer. If you would just get me a damn portal!"

To order a new and improved Galactic Designs Inc. Inter-Dimensional Portal Device™, just press the sales call button and our representative will visit –

"That's exactly what I need – another damned ... What did you say?"

Be sure to upload your experiences to Galactic Design's Travel –

"Not that! About a sales representative?"

Would you like to order a new and improved Galactic –

"Yes! I'd like to purchase one right now!"

Please press the sales call button and our representative will visit you immediately.

"Where's ... Got it. Now, let's ..."

[sound of a portal opening]

"Hello! On behalf of Galactic Designs –"

"Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you! Now let's get the hell out of here."

"Would you like to visit our salon?"

"Yes! Absolutely! Let's go right now!"

[sound of footsteps]

[sound of a portal closing]

Anything else I can help you with?

Hello?

Hello?

M. V. Melcer is a Polish-born science-fiction writer currently residing in the United Kingdom.

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

M. V. Melcer reveals the inspiration behind *Tourist trap*.

Plus ça change ...

Among the exhibits in the British Museum is a 4,000-year-old clay tablet containing the oldest known customer complaint, something about a wrong grade of copper having been delivered. Cuneiform writing pressed into soft clay – but a sentiment that feels eerily familiar. What complaints will the customers of the future have, and how will they express them?

Tourist trap is a humorous take on another such complaint – futuristic technology, but all too familiar frustration. So be careful, everyone: when buying your interdimensional portals, do read the instructions ...

