

"Into the jungle in 3D", by Kostas Bantounos

Summary: *An enthusiastic academic and a sceptical professor disagree about the usefulness of a new 3D-imaging technology. When they get lost during a surveying expedition, the technology is unexpectedly put to the test.*

Characters:

Research Assistant (-), *an academic, early 30s*

Professor (-), *a senior academic, 40-50s*

Coffee Room at an academic institution. PR making coffee.

RA: Good morning Prof. I'm so excited for our surveying field trip!

PR: Oh yeah, 'into the jungle.'

It's just another job, terrain and resource mapping, nothing sensational.

RA: But it's literally uncharted territory, no one has been there before. We could make history!

PR *pours coffee*

PR: You're overthinking it.

Our mission is simple. Take notes, take photos, document the journey.
Most of these field trips are uneventful anyway.

RA: It's more than that!
I've been researching this for ages. Could be ground-breaking.

PR (*dismissive*): Sure, okay. Anyway.

Any news on the grant you applied for? You wanted to buy a robot or something?

RA: Yes, I got it! That's why I'm so excited.

PR (*immediately suspicious*): What do you mean? How are the two related?

RA: It's a surveying robot – it has a 3D camera on board.
kind of like the ones you find in video games.

PR: Did you say a 3D camera?

RA: Yes. It uses lasers to measure distances around it and generate images based on the depth information.

PR: Oh okay (*confused pause*). How does that help us?

RA: It's perfect for our surveying work. It will generate a 3-Dimensional map of everything around it..

No need for us to tediously take pictures.

Oh. And it can navigate on its own.

PR (*sipping coffee*): Hmm right... And you're sure about it?

RA (*getting carried away*): Definitely! And the technology is so very cool. It fires laser pulses and has thousands of stopwatch-like pixels./

PR: Ok/...

RA: /They measure the time for the laser light to travel to the environment and back.

PR: Ok, I understand.

From the time measurement it calculates distance, since the speed of light is constant.

RA: Exactly! So it can build a virtual replica of the whole area. Impressive, isn't it?

PR: Hmm. It sure sounds capable.

But I'd rather use my trusty notebook and photography skills as always.

RA: But this is a great chance to test it. It could change the way we do research!

PR: Sure, maybe one day.

But I like my methods and I don't want that machine getting in the way.

RA: You know, innovation can be a good thing sometimes!

PR: Aren't you a few decades too young to lecture me?

RA: Well, the old way is not always the right one.

I'm taking it with me. I'll make space in my own luggage, if I have to.

PR (*sipping coffee*): Fine. Suit yourself.

Just let me have my coffee in peace.

Scene transition – *in the field, jungle sounds*

PR: Pass me the coffee flask.

Let's stop walking for a moment.

RA: We're lost, aren't we?

PR: Everything is fine.
I just need to bring out the map and double check our location.

RA: Sure. I'll check on Sir Veyoncé in the meantime.

PR: What?!

RA: The robot. I want to see if his data gathering is going well.

PR: That bloody robot has done nothing but slow us down.

RA gives an exasperated deep sigh, but says nothing

PR (cont'd): Do you have the map? I can't find it.

RA: No, you've had it the whole time.
Please don't tell me you've lost it!

PR: I'm sure it's somewhere here.
I just need to check the bag again.

RA: It better be! There's no GPS signal here!
And the sun is going down soon. We're not prepared.

PR mutters some unintelligible expletives while unsuccessfully searching in backpack

RA: You can't find it, can you?

PR: Hmm it would appear we're in quite a tricky situation.

RA: Well, that's an understatement!

PR (near panic): Don't panic. We can retrace our steps.
I remember we headed west, then turned at the river, then again at that big tree,

RA: 'At that big tree?'
We're in a jungle!

PR: Then uhhh.... Can you remember?

A meaningful beat

RA: I need to check the robot.

RA tinkers with the robot

PR: Now is not the time for silly robot games!

We've got more important things to worry about!

RA: Just a minute! Let me think.

PR: Maybe if we just wait until it's dark and use the stars.

I think I learned that in scouts...god, this jungle is dense...maybe if I climbed up a tree I could see more clearly? ... I remember, something about the north star and the horizon...

RA: There! Fixed!

I've reconfigured Sir Veyoncé to use the 3D mapping data he has been capturing all this time.

PR: Aren't you listening? We have bigger problems! Give me a leg up this tree!

RA: The robot can trace our steps backwards! He can take us back to the base.

PR: Oh!! Of course. That's brilliant!

Remind me to buy a few more of those robots, when we're back.

RA: Finally, something we can agree on!

Admit it! The robot has saved the day!

PR: I always knew this robot - Sir Veyoncé - was going to be useful!

RA: Erm... Yeah you sure did...

END