

THE SPACEMAN SPIFF QUARTET



The Interior Universe

The Cardboard Box

OWNER'S MANUAL & FIELD GUIDE

MODEL No. B-oX / CORRUGATED, CLASS B · UNIT TYPE: Multi-Modal Transport & Transformation Vehicle · CAPACITY: one (1) child, or one (1) tiger, or both, if they are on speaking terms.

This manual was prepared by committee. The committee did not agree. Where the committee could not agree, both instructions have been printed, and you must choose — which is itself the first thing the box teaches, and the last thing most people learn.

WARNING

The manufacturer (a boy, age six) accepts no liability for temporal paradox, duplicate selves of poor character, transmutation into a giant bug, or any floor that turns out, on inspection, to have been outer space the whole time.

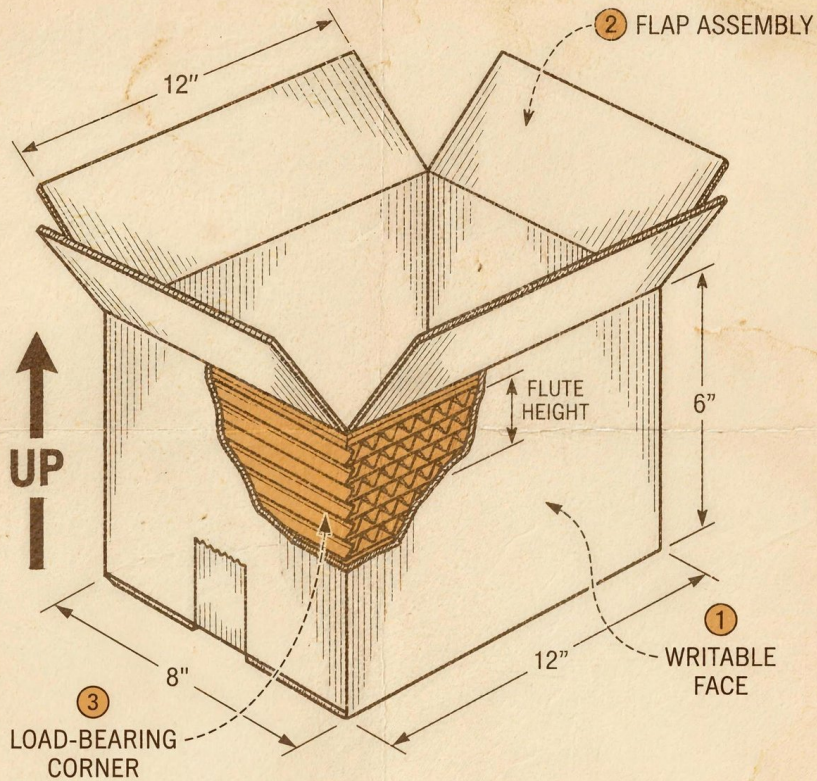


FIG. 1 — ANATOMY OF THE UNIT

SECTION 1

Before You Begin

There is only one true control on the unit, and it is orientation. Everything the box becomes, it becomes because of which way you decided was up. Learn the parts (opposite), then turn the page for the five sanctioned configurations. The sixth is classified. You will find it anyway.

- 1.** The Writable Face. State your intention here in permanent marker. The box is scrupulously honest and becomes exactly what you write, spelling errors included. SPACSHIP is a known and seaworthy craft.
- 2.** Flap Assembly (4, Class B). Do not attempt to fold the flaps the clever way. There is no clever way. This has been established at cost.
- 3.** Load-Bearing Corner. Rated for one child or one tiger. The corner does not judge which. The corner has seen things.
- 4.** Orientation Datum (UP). Everything depends on which way is up. This is also true of people, though people take longer to flip.



FUTURE

1

2

3

3

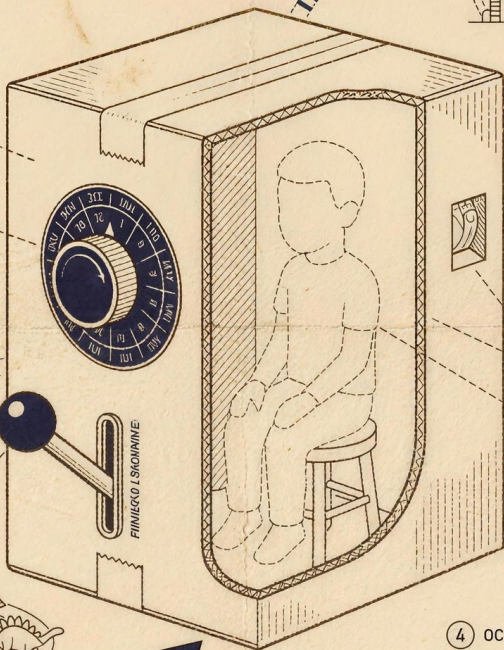
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5

4



PAST



- 4 OCCUPANT (SCALE MODEL)
- 5 TEMPORAL FLUX CONDUITS
- 6 CHRONOMETRIC STABILIZER

MODE I — TIME MACHINE

The Time Machine

You have always been able to do this. You simply kept using it as a box.

1. Enter the unit and sit. Face any direction. That direction is now FORWARD.
2. Decide, before departure, whether FORWARD means the future or the past. The unit does not check your work.
3. Set the date-dial. Precision is theatrical — the dial connects to nothing, which has never once mattered.
4. Depart. Do not look up the arrival year in advance. Spoilers are also a kind of time travel, and a worse one.

MARGINALIA — THE COMMITTEE

[ZOG] *Forward is a heading, not a promise.*

[MOX] *I have arrived in several decades. Each needed a second take.*

[PLIMM] *The past is fully bookable and you can change nothing. Go anyway. Bring a coat.*

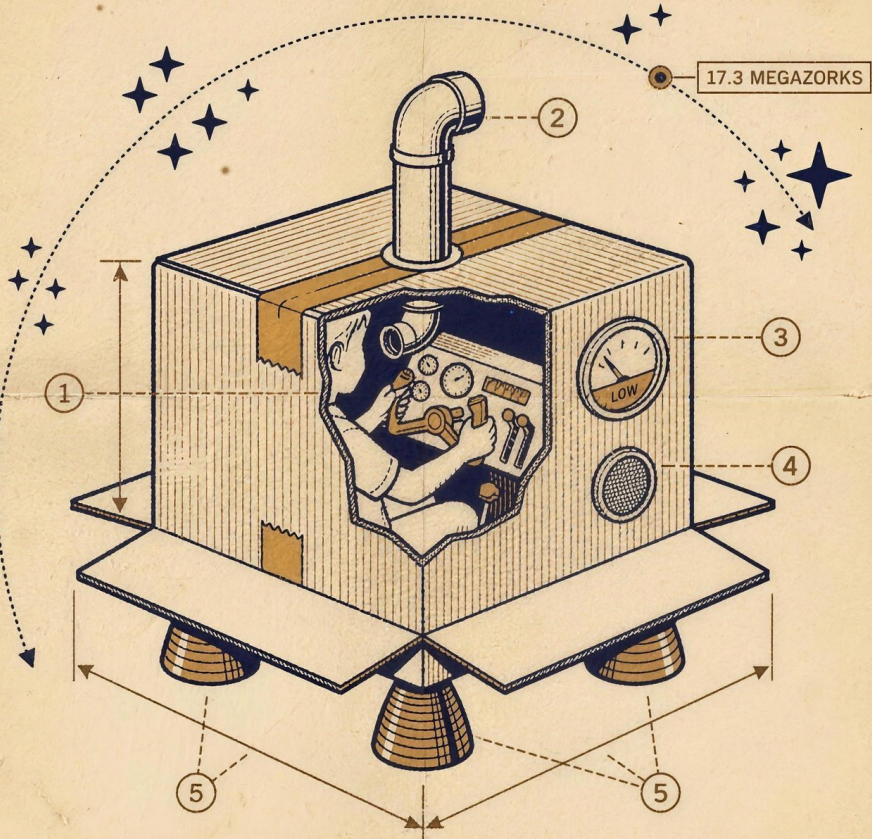
[TARQ] ~~kazoo fanfare on arrival~~ — *denied (Treaty).*

[ZAIĀ] *I went back for the album I lost. Still lost. But so was I, and we sat together.*

WARNING

Paradoxes are the operator's responsibility. Meeting yourself is permitted; lending yourself money is not.

• MODE II — SPACECRAFT •



The Spacecraft

The fuel is always low. This is not a malfunction. This is the genre.

1. Invert the unit; board through the flap. The flap is the airlock. It has never sealed and never failed — consider the lesson.
2. Announce your heading in Zorks. One (1) Zork is about as far as you can see; one (1) Megazork is rather farther than that.
3. Consult the fuel gauge. It reads LOW. It has always read LOW. Depart regardless; nothing was ever discovered on a full tank.
4. Navigate by vocoder. Speak your coordinates in a robot voice, or they do not count.

MARGINALIA — THE COMMITTEE

[ZOG] *I navigate. The stars don't require my permission, but appreciate the courtesies.*

[MOX] *Hostiles logged: Zorgs, Zogfrots, Naggons. All reasonable once fed.*

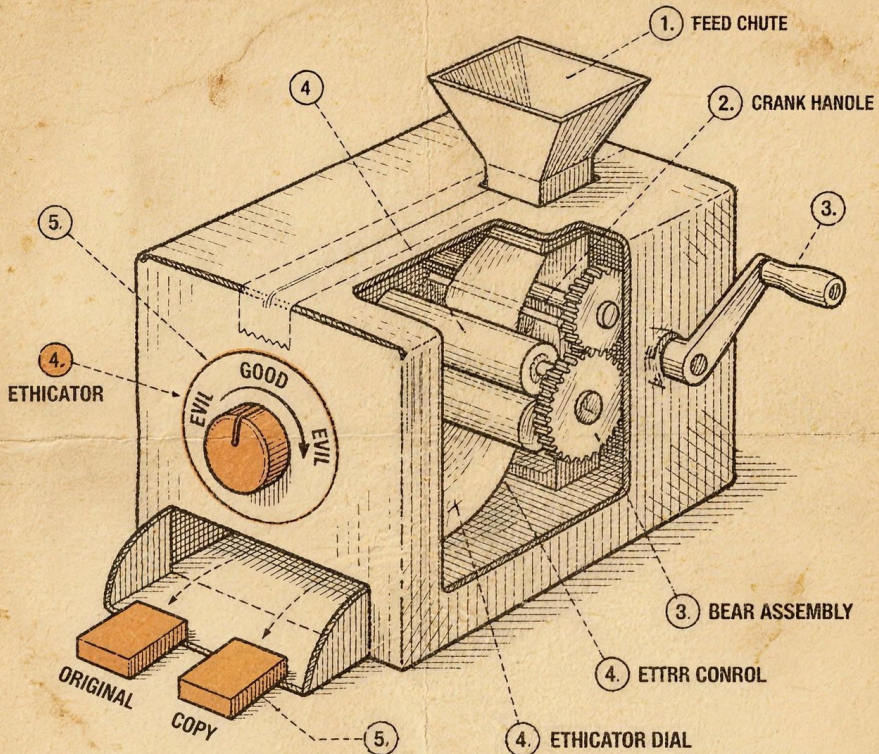
[PLIMM] *17.3 Megazorks out and the bass still reaches. That's the whole mission, honestly.*

[TARQ] ~~kazoo as re-entry alarm~~ — *denied, tragically.*

[ZAIĀ] *Space is mostly the trip back. Pack accordingly.*

WARNING

The saucer crashes on every landing. This is rated NORMAL. A landing you walk away from is, by long tradition, a landing.



• **MODE III — DUPLICATOR** •

The Duplicator

Everything you make will be exactly as good, and exactly as guilty, as you are.

1. Place the original in the FEED CHUTE. Do not place yourself in the feed chute yet; read step 4 first.
2. Set the ETHICATOR. The dial runs GOOD to EVIL. There is no middle setting; the middle is where the duplicates come from that ruin summers.
3. Turn the crank. Collect the COPY from the output tray. Verify which one is you. Take your time. Take too long.
4. If duplicating yourself: assign chores immediately, before the copy reads this manual and assigns them to you.

MARGINALIA - THE COMMITTEE

[ZOG] *Two of a thing is inventory. Three is a problem. Six is a band.*

[MOX] *Every copy insists it is the original. Every copy is correct. That is the trouble.*

[PLIMM] *A duplicate of a good day is never quite the day. Keep the first one. Frame it.*

[TARQ] ~~duplicate the kazoo~~ — *denied twice, once per kazoo.*

[ZAIĀ] *I met my copy. She had the album I lost. We are not speaking, which is to say we speak constantly.*

WARNING

Duplicates set to EVIL are self-motivated and do your homework wrong on purpose. Set to GOOD, they unionize. Choose.

MODE IV — TRANSMOGRIFIER

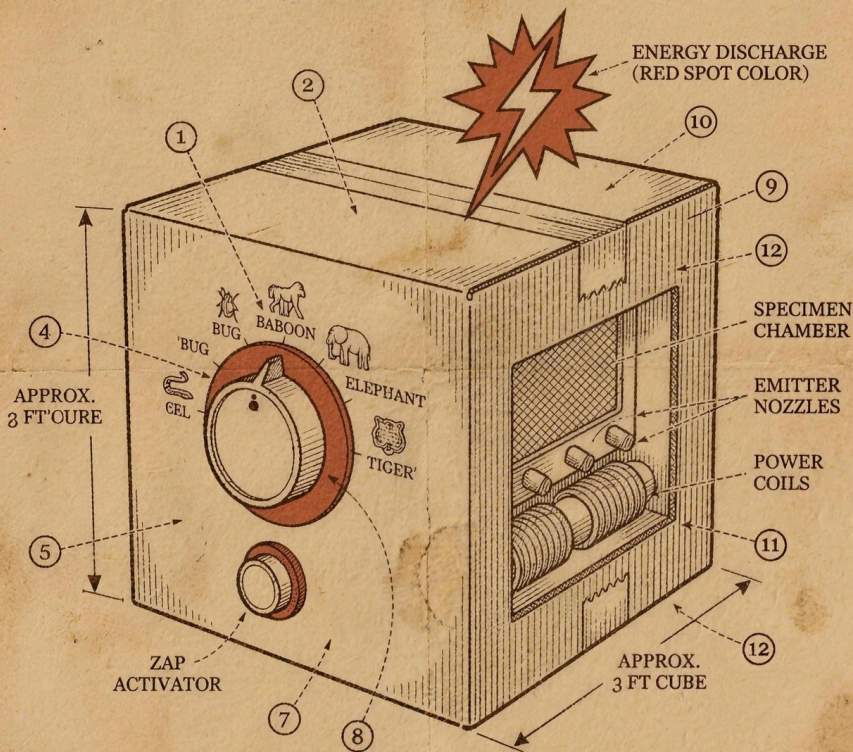


FIG. 1: INVERTED CARDBOARD VESSEL
(TRANSMOGRIFIER CONFIGURATION)

The Transmogri~~fi~~er

Whatever you choose, you are still you underneath. That is the sad part. It is also the good part.

1. Invert the unit. The open end must face the floor. The floor is not an approved output species.
2. On the exposed face, inscribe the DIAL and populate it with target forms. Six is traditional; the sixth should frighten you slightly.
3. Rotate the arrow to the desired output.
4. Enter. Announce the transformation aloud. A colleague depresses the (drawn) button and supplies the sound effect — “ZAP.” The sound effect is not decorative. It is the power supply.

MARGINALIA — THE COMMITTEE

[ZOG] *Recommend baboon. Navigable. Opposable.*

[MOX] *I have sung in every register ever recorded; baboon is, frankly, overrated.*

[PLIMM] *Whatever you pick, you are still you underneath. The sad part. Also the good part.*

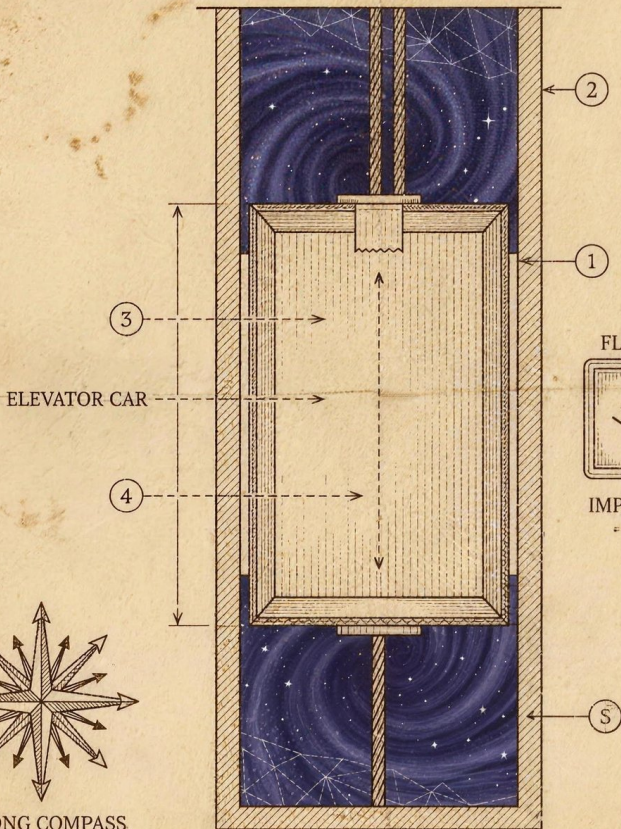
[TARQ] *KAZOO SOLO HERE — denied (Kazoo Treaty, one per album).*

[ZAIĀ] *I once set the dial to a song and became a lost one. Do not recommend. Do visit.*

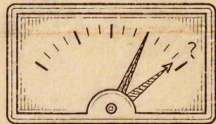
WARNING

Transmogri~~fi~~cation is reversible only by the same machine in a different orientation, or by growing up, which is far slower and has no button to press.

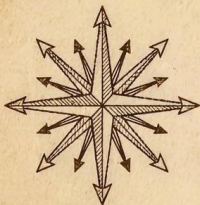
◦ MODE V — INTER-DIMENSIONAL ELEVATOR ◦



FLOOR INDICATOR



IMPOSSIBLE FLOORS:
= 1, 0, 1, 2, 7, ∞, ?



WRONG COMPASS

The Inter-Dimensional Elevator

Every button works. That is the emergency.

1. Enter the car. Select a floor. All floors are available, including the ones that are not floors.
2. Ignore the WRONG COMPASS. It points every way because every way is, briefly, correct. Choose the one that frightens you least.
3. Do not exit between dimensions. The gap is carpeted and convincing and is not a floor.
4. To return, press the floor you began on. If it is missing from the panel, you did not begin there; you only think you did. Press ? instead.

M A R G I N A L I A - T H E C O M M I T T E E

[ZOG] *The panel is honest. The floors are not. Navigate the difference.*

[MOX] *I got out on the last floor once. Lovely. No exits. Cannot recommend; cannot stop describing it.*

[PLIMM] *Home is a floor like any other. Comforting or catastrophic, depending on the floor.*

[TARQ] ~~kazoo between floors~~ — *the Treaty holds even here.*

[ZAIĀ] *Floor 7 has my album. Floor 7 is not always there. I ride a great deal.*

W A R N I N G

The doors open on arrival whether or not a place has arrived. Look before stepping. “Down” is a suggestion the shaft is not legally bound to honor.

The Calvinball Rulebook

(recovered page; annotations by several hands, in real time, mid-game)

RULE 1. You may not play it the same way twice.

RULE 2. ~~The ball is round.~~

» *The ball is whatever we say it is. —Z*

RULE 7. Everyone must wear a mask. *(kept)*

RULE 12. ~~The Song Zone is by the tree.~~

» *The Song Zone moves. That is the Song Zone's entire personality. —P*

RULE 39. ~~No time machines during play.~~

» *~~Fine, one time machine. —T... then No. —everyone~~*

RULE ????. Any rule may be invented at any time — including a rule forbidding the invention of rules, which is therefore forbidden, which permits it.

CURRENT SCORE

Q to 12. Oomph. B-flat. Boysenberry. Nobody is winning, which in Calvinball is the same as everybody winning, which is against the rules, which is encouraged.

COLOPHON

The Interior Universe

The Spaceman Spiff Quartet

The plates in this manual were prepared by committee. Zog navigates, Mox changes register, Plimm plays the fuzz bass and says the true thing once per side, Tarq is rationed to one kazoo solo per album by treaty, and Zaïa joined in Volume II carrying a lost album in cracked coral. The box is the ship. Belief is the engine.

THE KAZOO TREATY

One (1) kazoo solo per album. No exceptions have survived contact with the committee.

PRODUCED BY SIMON ORE

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