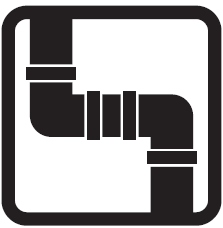
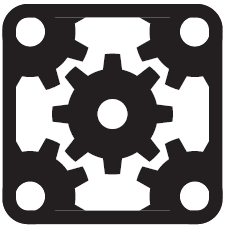
How Caelum helped and didn’t help the earth’s economy



Caelum had an interesting job. It wasn’t an ordinary job, like delivering space pizza to robot college parties or destroying incoming asteroids with no decent coffee breaks. Caelum’s job, was to harvest resources from dead alternate versions of the planet earth. Every day he would be acquainted with victims of nuclear disasters, planets lacking an atmosphere for breathing, AI taking over, global warming, etc. There were even times where he arrived at earth’s coordinates and the planet was just gone. There were several advantages to giving a person such a job. For one, there were several resources humanity would never have put their eyes upon before their inevitable destruction, that scientists could then do premature research on. There was also the advantage of learning about the potential future catastrophes that could be prevented. Then of course, there was the fact that Caelum had become nearly desensitized to all human suffering. Perhaps lack of empathy could seem like a terrible trait to have, but to the government it saved a lot of time to send out a desensitized robotic human instead of an average empathic human who would waste their time *caring* about the remains of civilization.



Caelum was on his spaceship leaning back in a couch, staring at the familiar constellations outside the window. He wondered how humanity managed to screw up this time.

In the distance he saw the familiar planet. It wasn’t all that different from what he knew. There was no visible damage at first. Caelum thought about the possibilities as he approached it. As he came closer to what was previously the United States, he saw huge buildings towering over the metallic roads. The main difference between this metropolis and the one on his own version of earth, was that a lot of the buildings had holes. What was even more remarkable was the neon lights that were turned off. It was entirely possible that the power was out but there were other uses of power. Rotating restaurants and even moving cars. Had he landed too early? Maybe the apocalypse was only due a few years from then. His mentality about that changed once he saw a metallic castle. Around it, he saw figures of creatures with many thin legs and other creatures with wings. They were human-sized but certainly not human. Caelum tilted his head to the side. They were bugs. All kinds of bugs. Moths, ants, cockroaches, bees… How did all those different bugs live together anyway? How had their history played out?

What was even more notable, was that the residents of the castle started to move outside of it. He saw an ant, waving their arms as if to get Caelum’s attention. He decided on moving down to take a proper look on the new civilization. Did the end of *human* civilization count as a dead planet? Perhaps not. He landed on the street. He hoped he hadn’t crushed anyone as he didn’t feel like getting on a mutant-bug-civilization’s bad side, but he didn’t truly care. He saw that the ant was wearing the British crown jewels. Caelum briefly pondered over the geographical and historical complications in that but had through his many jobs decided to stop questioning those things anyway.

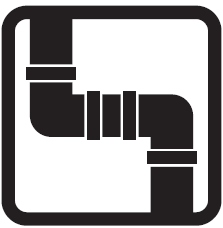
Crowds were carrying signs, some were yelling with anger, while some were watching in awe. The ant wearing the crown jewels looked excited and pointed to a sign with unreadable symbols. It pointed to itself, the crowds, Caelum and the city. It was entirely possible that the mutated bug creatures, simply thought that Caelum was an alien. A smaller ant walked out of the castle with a smaller crown. It had small wings, and Caelum remembered an old school lesson about “ant princesses”. He figured that the smaller ant was a princess, and that the one wearing the crown jewels was the queen.



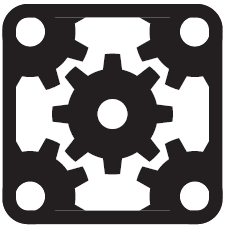
Caelum watched everything around him and started thinking about a plan to rob the planet. He didn’t want to return empty handed, and he would want to prevent bug creatures to take over the world. Well, he wouldn’t really care, but his employers would. Maybe he should consider returning either way. Civilization hadn’t entirely collapsed, and it was in his contract to leave earths, that still had a functioning society.



As Caelum was thinking about the possibilities, a cockroach turned its head to the sky. A huge scream was heard, and panic spread throughout the crowd. Caelum noticed that meteors were falling towards the planet. It was not a new sight to him, as they often fell towards his version of earth, but they weren’t a big problem there anymore. There, it seemed to be quite unusual to see a bunch of meteors darting towards the planet. That meant, that the chance of them having any way to defend themselves was slim. As several meteors had landed, an even larger rock started falling towards them. An asteroid. Those were even more deadly without the proper equipment. The princess yelled. She looked at him with begging eyes. It was clear that she was praying for any kind of hope to save their planet and their city.



Now, it was indeed possible for Caelum to destroy the asteroid. Asteroid shooters were quite common on earth, and he had the right equipment to shoot it down in his spaceship. The princess walked closer, taking off the queen’s crown jewels and showing them to Caelum. A reward for potential heroics.



Caelum grabbed the crown jewels and rushed to his spaceship. He pushed a few buttons and it was soon soaring in the air. He looked at his radar and noticed the asteroid still moving towards the planet. All he had to do, was press the “Shoot down asteroid” button, and the planet would be saved.

The problem was that saving planets was not a part of Caelum’s job description. He was supposed to interfere as little as humanely possible.

He leaned back and placed the crown jewels on his coffee table.