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## 2258.56

by [spacedogfromspace](#)

### Summary

Scotty gets stuck in a time loop on Delta Vega.

### Notes

FebuWhump Day 11  
 Prompt: Time Loop

*Ba-dunk, thwack. Ba-dunk, thwack.*

Scotty sat huddled in his parka, bored out of his mind. He bounced the baseball—god knows where that came from—off the floor and against the wall opposite him, catching it as it rebounded, and repeating the movement over and over. At first it was to stave off boredom, but he found that the rhythm had a meditative quality to it. He liked it. It helped him think.

Keenser was not of the same mind, frequently narrowing his eyes in disapproval at all the racket Scotty was making. Scotty pretended he didn't notice, until a certain time at night when Keenser, wanting to get some sleep, would intercept the baseball and hide it somewhere. Scotty would find it again in the morning.

It was part of the routine out at the Delta Vega outpost—the place was automated, after all. Sometimes there'd be stuff to fix, but a lot of the time it was just waiting around for something to break. Which didn't happen often because nobody wanted to come back to this god-forsaken ice cube to fix something every three days. Nobody *needed* to be stationed here, but Scotty was stationed here anyways. As a literal punishment. Every day he prayed for the return of Archer's dog—preferably alive—so that he might finally see something besides snow and Keenser's oyster of a face.

*Ba-dunk, thwack. Ba-dunk, thwack. Ba-dunk...*

The baseball pinged off the wall, and Scotty blinked in surprise when it didn't return to his hand. He looked up, and saw Keenser standing there, staring at him with those weird little eyes, holding the baseball. The little alien tapped the chronometer on the wall.

2258.56.9.

"That time already?" Scotty asked, yawning.

Keenser rolled his eyes and shuffled away. This too was part of the routine.

Shutting the lights off, Scotty crawled into his hammock, not bothering to take his parka off to sleep. Delta Vega got cold enough at night that the heaters couldn't keep up. Not that they did a good job of keeping up during the daytime.

The next morning, Scotty woke up to Keenser staring down at him, silently chastising him for oversleeping.

"Yeah, yeah, because we have *so* much work to do," Scotty grumbled, but he got up anyway.

As it turned out, there *was* some work to do.

"Broken again? We just fixed it yesterday," Scotty complained when Keenser showed him the malfunctioning generator. Keenser just shook his head at him, and got to work. Scotty sighed and joined him.

Later, Scotty found his baseball wedged between the tool cabinet and the wall. He spent his free time throwing the baseball at the wall and catching it, dreaming of better things. Sandwiches, mostly. And grass. Green grass, and not a speck of snow or ice.

*Ba-dunk, thwack. Ba-dunk, thwack. Ba-dunk...*

Scotty looked up when the ball didn't return to his hand. Keenser was there, holding the ball in his small hand and glaring at Scotty in disapproval. He tapped the chronometer.

"That time already?" Scotty asked, looking at the chronometer.

2258.56.9.

He stopped short halfway through a yawn, thinking back on all the other nights Keenser had confiscated his baseball and told him to go the hell to sleep. All those times Keenser tapped the chronometer disapprovingly.

Scotty squinted. "Is the chronometer broken? I swear its been the same the last three nights, at least."

Keenser looked at the display, then turned back to Scotty, giving his head a shake.

"Huh," Scotty said, dropping into his hammock. "Guess it's just me, then. Grab the lights, will you?"

As the room plunged into darkness, Scotty couldn't help the feeling that something was off. The chronometer's red glow glared at him as he drifted to sleep.

When Scotty opened his eyes again it was morning, and by the way Keenser was glaring at him, well into it.

"Yeah yeah, because we have *so* much work to do," Scotty said, knowing this might be his new catchphrase for all he's been saying it lately. He got up, following Keenser to one of the generators, the one that had needed fixing the last two days. The little alien pointed.

"Again?" Scotty cried out in disbelief. "How has this stupid thing broken three times in as many days?"

Keenser just shook his head, rolled his eyes, and got to work.

The baseball was wedged between the tool cabinet and the wall, again.

"Must be running out of hiding places" Scotty muttered to himself as he retrieved the ball.

He sat down heavily and raised the ball over his shoulder, winding up to throw the ball at the wall when the chronometer caught his eye.

2258.56.7.

He squinted at it. It had changed from the night before. But it was still marking the same day as yesterday. And the day before. And possibly many days before that.

The chronometer was probably broken. He would have to take a look at it and see if he could repair it. But for now, he pushed the uncomfortable feelings of dread behind him and threw the ball at the wall until Keenser stopped him, just like he always did.

Scotty couldn't sleep once the lights went down. The chronometer's red glow felt ominous. He huddled down under his blankets, as if to hide from it, but he couldn't help but keep his eyes open, watching it.

2258.56.9.

2258.56.0

It was as if the day had just restarted. Scotty sighed and rolled over to face away from the glowing numbers. It was just stuck, that was all. At least, that's what he told himself to get himself to sleep.

The next day, the same part on the same generator was broken, as it had been the last three days. Keenser did most of the repair work while Scotty cursed at the damn thing for breaking again.

Later, he pulled the chronometer out of the wall and poked around at its innards, trying to coax the date into changing. It didn't seem to want to, so he just decided to leave it and see if his tweaks would allow it to tick forward at the beginning of the new day. Until then, he was going to go along with his usual routine, including hunting down the baseball Keenser had hidden from him.

He found it between the wall and the tool cabinet. Again.

As the ball rhythmically travelled from hand, to floor, to wall, and back to hand, Scotty's feelings of dread bubbled to the surface where he could no longer ignore them. Something weird was going on. The chronometer. The generator. Keenser's shite hiding spot. Other little things, like the same off-taste to ration packs. It was almost as if he was living the same day, over and over.

*Ba-dunk, thwack. Ba-dunk, thwack.*

He caught the ball and didn't throw it again as it all clicked into place. He was trapped in a bloody *time loop*. Were time loops even possible? Probably. Hell, if people could be deconstructed molecule by molecule and rebuilt again as a mode of *transport*, time loops should sure as hell be possible, too.

Scotty was about to call for Keenser to ask him about it, but he stopped himself, thinking about Keenser's actions over the last few days.

Keenser had been hiding the baseball in the same place every day, and Scotty realized that this meant Keenser was part of the loop itself. If he broached the topic of a time loop with him, he would just look at Scotty like he was crazy. Maybe it was best to keep this to himself.

In all the vids, people noticed they were in a time loop on day two, at the first sign that something was the same as the day before. But Scotty's life on Delta Vega was already so repetitive that he hadn't noticed until now. He might not have noticed at all if the generator didn't mysteriously break every day. The chronometer could just be assumed to be broken, and the baseball appearing in the same spot could just be chalked up to Keenser not giving enough of a shit to try to hide the damn thing anymore. But the generator had been broken, despite it being an easy fix that should have lasted months. The more Scotty thought about it, the more he was sure that he was caught in a time loop.

The trouble with time loops, he knew from the vids, was getting out of them. They usually had convoluted solutions, but in his case, he had no clue of what that solution might be. He thought about it for a long time, but was no closer to assembling a plan when Keenser turned the lights off for the night.

Every day after that was more painful than the last. His days were normally repetitive, but this was something else entirely. It made him feel restless and agitated, and he was seriously tempted to open the door and run out into the snow, braving the wilds of this god-forsaken planet just to get away from the monotony.

He knew he this was getting to him. Keenser was starting to give him strange looks. *Concerned* looks. Scotty found himself laughing under one of these looks, because *of course* he looked like he was going crazy. He probably *was* going crazy.

He tried to do things differently each day, trying to figure out what to do to break the loop. He even convinced Keenser not to repair the generator on one of the days, in case fixing it was somehow the catalyst for the loop. But no dice. Nothing was working. And the tight little space Scotty lived in felt smaller and smaller with each passing day, smothering him.

One day, he just couldn't take it anymore. Something broke inside him, and he found himself standing in front of the chronometer, staring it down. For hours. He didn't notice Keenser watching him worriedly, because that day, his entire world was that stupid chronometer.

He was still watching it well into the night. When it clicked from 2258.56.9 to 2258.56.0, he screamed in frustration and punched the chronometer in a fit of rage, splitting his knuckles on the hard surface.

In response, the chronometer changed, all of its numbers reeling rapidly, making it look like a slot machine. Then, as suddenly as it had started, the numbers stopped, settling.

2258.72.0

Sixteen days later. Just as it should be.

He stood there in shock for a moment, trying to figure out what this meant. Was the loop broken? No... the chronometer wouldn't have jumped sixteen days forward if that were the case, it would simply just be the next day, the day after the loop. Had the chronometer really just been glitching out for the past two weeks? That *did* seem more probable than a temporal anomaly. But the generator...

Something clicked, and Scotty walked down the narrow hall to the back of the outpost, where the generators were. He went to the workbench in the back. The shelves were stacked with boxes of spare parts and tools, but one box was left out on the bench since they had been using it so much to fix the generator. It was labelled TB-15786, the manufacturing number for the part they kept needing to replace on the generator. He picked one of the spare parts from the box, and turned it in his hands, looking for the matching number that would be engraved in tiny characters in the metal. He found it. TB-15789.

The reason the generator had been breaking down every day for over two weeks was because they kept installing a similar, but incorrect part. It was all just a case of a mislabelled box.

Scotty couldn't help it. He laughed. He laughed hard, and uncontrollably, until it all devolved into sobs. There was no time loop after all. This posting just had him at the end of his wits, that's all.

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