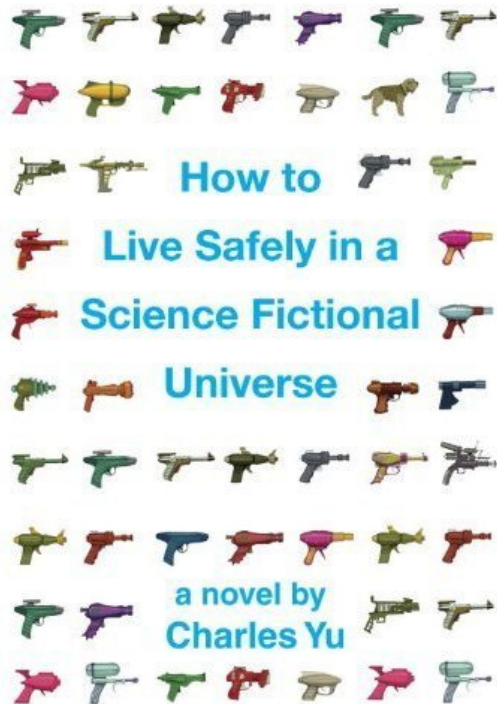


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How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe (Enhanced Edition): A Novel



Par Charles Yu
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Par Charles Yu : **How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe (Enhanced Edition): A Novel** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe (Enhanced Edition): A Novel:

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Description :

Presentation de l'auteur This enhanced eBook includes video, audio, photographic, and linked content, as well as a bonus short story. Hear TAMMY talk. Learn the origins of Minor Universe 31. See the TM-31. Take a trip in it. Photos and illustrations appear as hyperlinked endnotes. Video and audio are embedded directly in text. *Video and audio may not play on all readers. Check your user manual for details. National Book Foundation 5 Under 35 Award winner Charles Yu delivers his debut novel, a razor-sharp, ridiculously funny, and utterly touching story of a son searching for his father . . . through quantum spacetime. Minor Universe 31 is a vast story-space on the outskirts of fiction, where paradox fluctuates like the stock market, lonely sexbots beckon failed protagonists, and time travel is serious business. Every day, people get into time machines and try to do the one thing they should never do: change the past. That's where Charles Yu, time travel technician/part counselor, part gadget repair man steps in. He helps save people from themselves. Literally. When he's not taking client calls or consoling his boss, Phil, who could really use an upgrade, Yu visits his mother (stuck in a one-hour cycle of time, she makes dinner over and over and over) and searches for his father, who invented time travel and then vanished. Accompanied by TAMMY, an operating system with low self-esteem, and Ed, a nonexistent but ontologically valid dog, Yu sets out, and back, and beyond, in order to find the one day where he and his father can meet in memory. He learns that the key may be found in a book he got from his future self. It's called How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe, and he's the author. And somewhere inside it is the information that could help him in fact it may even save

his life. Wildly new and adventurous, Yus debut is certain to send shock waves of wonder through literary spacetime. There is just enough space inside here for one person to live indefinitely, or at least that's what the operation manual says. User can survive inside the TM-31 Recreational Time Travel Device, in isolation, for an indefinite period of time. I am not totally sure what that means. Maybe it doesn't actually mean anything, which would be fine, which would be okay by me, because that's what I've been doing: living in here, indefinitely. The Tense Operator has been set to Present-Indefinite for I don't know how long some time now and although I still pick up the occasional job from Dispatch, they seem to come less frequently these days and so, when I'm not working, I like to wedge the gearshift in P-I and just sort of cruise. My gums hurt. It's hard to focus. There must be some kind of internal time distortion effect in here, because when I look at myself in the little mirror above my sink, what I see is my father's face, my face turning into his. I am beginning to feel how the man looked, especially how he looked on those nights he came home so tired he couldn't even make it through dinner without nodding off, sitting there with his bowl of soup cooling in front of him, a rich pork-and-winter-melon-saturated broth that, moment by moment, was losing or giving up its tiny quantum of heat into the vast average temperature of the universe. The base model TM-31 runs on state-of-the-art chronodiegetic technology: a six-cylinder grammar drive built on a quad-core physics engine, which features an applied temporal linguistics architecture allowing for free-form navigation within a rendered environment, such as, for instance, a story space and, in particular, a science-fictional universe. Or, as Mom used to say: it's a box. You get into it. You push some buttons. It takes you to other places, different times. Hit this switch for the past, pull up that lever for the future. You get out and hope the world has changed. Or at least maybe you have. I don't get out much these days. At least I have a dog, sort of. He was retconned out of some space western. It was the usual deal: hero, on his way up, has a trusty canine sidekick, then hero gets famous and important and all of that and by the time season two rolls around, hero doesn't feel like sharing the spotlight anymore, not with a scruffy-looking mutt. So they put the little guy in a trash pod and sent him off. I found him just as he was about to drift into a black hole. He had a face like soft clay, and haunches that were bald in spots where he'd been chewing off his own fur. I don't think anyone has ever been as happy to see anything as this dog was to see me. He licked my face and that was that. I asked him what he wanted his name to be. He didn't say anything so I named him Ed. The smell of Ed is pretty powerful in here, but I'm okay with that. He's a good dog, sleeps a lot, sometimes licks his paw to comfort himself. Doesn't need food or water. I'm pretty sure he doesn't even know that he doesn't exist. Ed is just this weird ontological entity that produces unconditional slobbery loyal affection. Superfluous. Gratuitous. He must violate some kind of conservation law. Something from nothing: all of this saliva. And, I guess, love. Love from the abandoned heart of a non-existent dog. . . . Because I work in the time travel industry, everyone assumes I must be a scientist. Which is sort of correct. I was studying for my masters in applied science fiction. I wanted to be a structural engineer like my father and then the whole situation with Mom got worse, and with my dad missing I had to do what made sense, and then things got even worse, and this job came along, and I took it. Now I fix time machines for a living. To be more specific, I am a certified network technician for T-Class personal-use chronogrammatical vehicles, and an approved independent affiliate contractor for Time Warner Time, which owns and operates this universe as a spatio-temporal structure and entertainment complex zoned for retail, commercial, and residential use. The job is pretty chill for the most part, although right this moment I'm not loving it because I think my Tense Operator might be breaking down. It's happening now. Or maybe not. Maybe it was earlier today. Or yesterday. Maybe it broke down a long time ago. Maybe that's the point: if it is broken and my transmission has been shifting randomly in and out of gears, then how would I ever know when it happened? Maybe I'm the one who broke it, trying to fool myself, thinking I could live like this, thinking I could stay out here forever. . . . The red indicator light just came on. I'm looking at the run-time error report. It's like a mathematically precise way of saying, This is not how you do this, man. Meaning life, I suppose. It's computer for Hey, buddy, you are massively bungling this up. I know it. I know it better than anyone. I don't need silicon wafers with a slightly neurotic interface to tell me that. That would be TAMMY, by the way. The TM-31's computer UI comes in one of two personality skins: TIM or TAMMY. You can only choose once, the first time you boot up, and you're stuck with your choice forever. I'm not going to lie. I chose the girl one. Is TAMMY's curvilinear pixel configuration kind of sexy? Yes it is. Does she have chestnut-colored hair and dark brown eyes behind pixelated librarian glasses and a voice like a cartoon princess? Yes and yes and yes. Have I ever, in all my time in this unit, ever done you know what to a screenshot of you know who? I'm not going to answer that. All I will say is that at a certain point, you lose the capacity for embarrassment. I'm not there yet, but I'm not far from it. Let's see. I've got a nontrivial

thinning situation going on with the hair. I am, rounding to the nearest, oh, about ve nine, 185. Plus or minus. Mostly plus. I might be hiding from history in here, but Im not hiding from biology. Or gravity. So yeah, I went with TAMMY. Do you want to know the rst thing she ever said to me? enter password. Okay, yeah, that was the rst thing. Do you know the second thing? i am incapable of lying to you. The third thing she said to me was im sorry. Sorry for what? I said. Im not a very good computer program, she said. Ive never met software with low self-esteem. Ill try hard, though, she said. I really want to do a good job for you. TAMMY always thinks everything is about to go to hell. Always telling me how bad things could get. So yeah, it hasnt been what I expected. Do I regret it sometimes? Sure I do. Would I choose TAMMY again? Sure I would. What do you want me to say? Im lonely. Shes nice. She lets me irt with her. I have a thing for my operating system. There. I said it. Ive never been married. I never got married. The woman I didnt marry is named Marie. Technically, she doesnt exist. Just like Ed. Except that she does. A little paradox, you might think, but really, The Woman I Never Married is a perfectly valid ontological entity. Or class of entities. I suppose technically you could make the argument that every woman is The Woman I Never Married. So why not call her Marie, that was my thinking. This is how we never met: One ne spring day, Marie went to the park in the center of town, near the middle school and the old bakery that is now a furniture warehouse. Im assuming. She must have, right? Someone like her must have done something like this at some point in time. Marie packed her lunch and a paperback and walked the half mile to the park from the house where she lived or never lived. She sat on a worn, wooden bench, and read her book, and nibbled on her sandwich. The air was warm syrup, was literally thick with pollen and dandelion clocks and photons moving at the speed of light. An hour passed, then two. I never arrived at the park, wearing the only suit I never had, the one with a hole in the side pocket that no one ever saw. I never noticed her that rst time, never saw her looking at the tops of the eucalyptus trees, running her thumb over the worn page corners of the book open, faceup, on her lap. I never did catch her eye while tripping over my own foot, never made her laugh that rst time. I never asked what her name was. She never told me that it was Marie. A week later, I did not call her. A year later, we did not get married in a little white church on a hill overlooking the park where, on that rst afternoon, we shared a bench, asked polite questions, tried hard not to stare at each other while we imagined the perfect life we were never going to have together, a life we never even lost, a life that would have started, right at that moment, and never did. I wake up to the sound of TAMMY crying. How do you even know how to do that? I ask her. I wish I could be more sensitive, but I just dont understand why they would program her to have such depressive tendencies. Like, where in your code are you getting this from? This makes her cry even harder, to the point where she starts to do that warbly gasping heaving sobbing thing that little kids do, which makes no sense, because its not like TAMMY has a mouth, or vocal cords, or lungs. I generally like to think of myself as pretty empathetic, but for some reason my reaction to crying has always been like this. Its hard for me to watch and just generally stresses me out so much that my initial response is to get mad, and then of course I feel like a monster, which is immediately followed by guilt, oh, the guilt. I feel guilty, I feel like a terrible person. I am a terrible person. Im a 185-pound sack of guilt. Or maybe Im not. Maybe its just that Im not the person I was going to be. Whatever that means. Maybe thats what messing with the Tense Operator does to you. You cant even say things that mean anything anymore. I would ask TAMMY what shes crying about, but it almost doesnt matter. My mother would do this, too, all that liquid emotion just lling her up, right up to the top of her tank, a heavy, sloshing volume, which at any moment could be tipped over, emptied out into the world. I tell TAMMY it will be all right. She says what will be all right? I say whatever you are crying about. She says that is exactly what shes crying about. That everything is all right. That the world isnt ending. That well never tell each other how we really feel because everything is okay. Okay enough to just sit around, being okay. Okay enough that we forget that we dont have long, that its late, late in this universe, and at some point in the future, its not going to be okay. Sometimes at night I worry about TAMMY. I worry that she might get tired of it all. Tired of running at sixty-six terahertz, tired of all those processing cycles, every second of every hour of every day. I worry that one of these cycles she might just halt her own subroutine and commit software suicide. And then I would have to do an error report, and I dont know how I would even begin to explain that to Microsoft.

Revue de presse"Glittering layers of gorgeous and playful meta-science-fiction. . . . Like [Douglas] Adams, Yu is very funny, usually proportional to the wildness of his inventions, but Yu's sound and fury conceal (and construct) this novel's dense, tragic, all-too-human heart. . . . Yu is a superhero of rendering human consciousness and emotion in the language of engineering and science. . . . A complex, brainy, genre-hopping joyride of a story, far more than the sum of its component parts, and smart and tragic enough to engage all regions of the brain and

body."The New York Times Book "Compulsively rereadable. . . . Hilarious. . . . Yu has a crisp, intermittently lyrical prose style, one that's comfortable with both math and sadness, moving seamlessly from delirious metafiction to the straight-faced prose of instruction-manual entries. . . . [The book itself] is like Steve Jobs' ultimate hardware fetish, a dreamlike amalgam of functionality and predetermination."Los Angeles Times "Douglas Adams and Philip K. Dick are touchstones, but Yu's sense of humor and narrative splashes of colorespecially when dealing with a pretty solitary life and the bittersweet search for his father, a time travel pioneer who disappearedset him apart within the narrative spaces of his own horizontal design. . . . A clever little story that will be looped in your head for days. No doubt it will be made into a movie, but let's hope that doesn't take away the heart."--Austin Chronicle "If How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe contented itself with exploring that classic chestnut of speculative fiction, the time paradox, it would likely make for an enjoyable sci-fi yarn. But Yu's novel is a good deal more ambitious, and ultimately more satisfying, than that. It's about time travel and cosmology, yes, but it's also about language and narrative the more we learn about Minor Universe 31, the more it resembles the story space of the novel we're reading, which is full of diagrams, footnotes, pages left intentionally (and meaningfully) blank and brief chapters from the owner's manual of our narrator's time machine. . . . Yu grafts the laws of theoretical physics onto the yearnings of the human heart so thoroughly and deftly that the book's technical language and mathematical proofs take on a sense of urgency."--NPR "How to Live Safely is a book likely to generate a lot of discussion, within science fiction and outside, infuriating some readers while delighting many others."--San Francisco Chronicle "A great Calvino-esque thrill ride of a book."--The Stranger "Science and metaphor get nice and cozy in Charles Yu's How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe. The novel joins the likes of Gary Shteyngart's Super Sad True Love Story and Jillian Weise's The Colony, fiction that borrows the tropes of sci-fi to tell high-tech self-actualization narratives."--Portland Mercury "A brainy reverie of sexbots, rayguns, time travel and Buddhist zombie mothers. . . . Packed with deft emotional insight."--The Economist "A funny, funny book, and its a good thing, too; because at its heart its a book about loneliness, regret, and the all-too-human desire to change the past."--Tor.com "A keenly perceptive satire. . . . Yus novel is also a meditation on the essentials of human life at its innermost point. . . . Campy allusions to the original Star Wars trilogy, a cityscape worthy of the directors cut of Blade Runner and a semi-coherent vocabulary of techno-jargon cement these disparate elements into a brilliant send-up of science fiction. . . . Perhaps it would be better to think of the instructional units of How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe in terms of the chapters of social commentary which John Steinbeck placed into the plot structure of The Grapes of Wrath."--California Literary "How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe is the rare book I pick up to read the first several pages, then decide to drop everything and finish at once. Emotionally resonant, funny, and as clever as any book I have read all year, this debut novel heralds the arrival of a talented young writer unafraid to take chances."--largehearted boy "A wild and inventive first novel . . . has been compared to the novels of Kurt Vonnegut Jr. and Jonathan Lethem, and the fact that such comparisons are not out of line says everything necessary about Yu's talent and future."--Portland Oregonian "Bends the rules of time and literary convention."--Seattle Weekly "Getting stuck with Yu in his time loop is like watching an episode of Doctor Who as written by the young Philip Roth. Even when recalling his most painful childhood moments, Yu makes fun of himself or pulls you into a silly description of fake physics experiments. In this way, he delivers one of the most clear-eyed descriptions of consciousness I've seen in literature: It's full of self-mockery and self-deception, and yet somehow manages to keep its hands on the wheel, driving us forward into an unknowable future. How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe is intellectually demanding, but also emotionally rich and funny. . . . It's clearly the work of a scifi geek who knows how to twist pop culture tropes into melancholy meditations on the nature of consciousness."io9 "Funny [and] moving. . . . Charles Yu's first novel is getting ready for lift-off, and it more than surpasses expectations which couldnt be any higher after he was given the 5 Under 35 Award . . . How to Live Safely in a Science Fiction Universe is one of the trippiest and most thoughtful novels I've read all year, one that begs for a single sit-down experience even if you're left with a major head rush after the fact for having gulped down so many ideas in a solitary swoop. . . . Yu's literary pyrotechnics come in a marvelously entertaining and accessible package, featuring a reluctant, time machine-operating hero on a continual quest to discover what really happened to his missing father, a mysterious book possibly answering all, and a computer with the most idiosyncratic personality since HAL or Deep Thought. . . . Like the work of Richard Powers . . . How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe fuses the scientific and the emotional in ways that bring about something new.Sarah Weinman, The Daily Beast One of the best

novels of 2010. . . . It is a wonderfully stunning, brilliant work of science fiction that goes to the heart of self-realization, happiness and connections. . . . Yu has accomplished something remarkable in this book, blending science fiction universes with his own, alternative self's life, in a way, breaking past the bonds of the page and bringing the reader right into the action. . . . Simply, this is one of the absolute best time travel stories . . . even compared to works such as *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells or the *Doctor Who* television series. SF Signal "Within a few pages I was hooked. . . . There are times when he starts off a paragraph about chronodiegetics that just sounds like pseudo-scientific gibberish meant to fill in some space. And then you realize that what hes saying actually makes sense, that hes actually figured out something really fascinating about the way time works, about the way fiction works, and the Aha! switch in your brain gets flipped. That happened more than once for me. There are so many sections here and there that I found myself wanting to share with somebody: Hereread this paragraph! Look at this sentence! Ok, now check this out!GeekDad, Wired.com" In this debut novel, Charles Yu continues his ambitious exploration of the fantastic with a whimsical yet sincere tribute to old-school science fiction and quantum physics. . . . A fascinating, philosophical and disorienting thriller about life and the context that gives it meaning." Kirkus, starred review "With Star Wars allusions, glimpses of a future world, and journeys to the past, as well as hilarious and poignant explanations of chronodiegetics, or the theory of the nature and function of time within a narrative space, Yu, winner of the National Book Foundations 5 under 35 Award, constructs a clever, fluently metaphorical tale. A funny, brain-teasing, and wise take on archetypal father-and-son issues, the mysteries of time and memory, emotional inertia, and one sweet but bumbling misfits attempts to escape a legacy of sadness and isolation." Booklist "This book is cool as hell. If I could go back in time and read it earlier, I would." Colson Whitehead, author of *Sag Harbor* "Charles Yu is a tremendously clever writer, and *How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe* is marvelously written, sweetly geeky, good clean time-bending fun." Audrey Niffenegger, author of *Her Fearful Symmetry* and *The Time Traveler's Wife* "Funny, touching, and weirdly beautiful. This book is awesome." Nick Harkaway, author of *The Gone-Away World* "How to Live Safely in a Science Fictional Universe is that rare thinga truly original novel. Charles Yu has built a strange, beautiful, intricate machine, with a pulse that carries as much blood as it does electricity." Kevin Brockmeier, author of *The View from the Seventh Layer* and *The Brief History of the Dead* "Poignant, hilarious, and electrically original. Bends time, mind, and genre." David Eagleman, author of

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