

150th Birthday of the Meter: What's a Meter with You?!
By Thomas van Kalken

<<we're in Guy Raz's house>> <<Guy is brushing his teeth>>

Guy: <<with toothbrush in mouth>> <<to the tune of stop in the name of love>>
Brush... if you love your teeth! And don't want no cavities! Spit it out, out, out!

<<ding dong>> <<letterbox flap flaps>> <<thud of post hitting floor>> `

Guy: <<spits out toothpaste>> Ooh, that must be the mail! Coming! <<Guy leaves the room and walks to the front door>> <<picks up mail>> Alright, let's see what we have here ... ooooh, the latest issue of micro-house monthly ... a letter from thomas fingerling ... a jar of mystery slime addressed to Mindy ... and ... <<mysterious music starts playing>> what is this? <<Guy raz blows dirt off the envelope>> It looks super old ... i wonder what it could ...

<<before he can finish the thought his doorbell rings>> <<ding dong>>

Mindy: Hey, Guy Raz! Did my slime arrive yet? They stopped letting me send it to my house.

Guy: Uh yeah, it's right here.

Mindy: Perfect, this is the last thing I need for my slip and slime?

Guy: slip and slime? Don't you mean slip and slide?

Mindy: uuuuh ... no. hey ... what you got in your hand there?

Guy: I don't know, it just arrived in the mail.

Mindy: woah ... it looks super old.

Guy: I know ... the paper is practically falling apart.

Mindy: Well, what are you waiting for Guy raz! open it open it open it!

Guy: okay okay ... <<mysterious music starts again>> <<Guy raz carefully opens the envelope and pulls out a piece of paper>>

Mindy: What does it say?

Guy: it says ... dear Guy raz ...

<<harp music>> <<transition into story time>>

posh voice: <<overlapping with Guy's dialogue>> dear Guy raz you are cordially invited to witness the signing of the convention du mètre metre convention on the twentieth of may at the palais du quai d'orsay [pa-lay doo kay dor-say], where representatives of seventeen nations shall establish a universal standard of measure. Your presence at this historic occasion would be most esteemed ... with highest regard, the bureau international des poids et mesures! international bureau of weights and measures

<<coming back to reality>>

Guy: <<overlapping with posh voice>> with highest regard, the international bureau of weights and measures ... woah! this is incredible Mindy!! an invitation to the metre convention!

Mindy: <<totally fake>> woaaaaaaah! coooooooooooooooooool.

Guy: You have no idea what this is do you?

Mindy: Not a clue.

Guy: It's the meeting that 17 countries held back in 1875 ... where they all agreed to use the metric system to measure and weigh stuff!

Mindy: The metric system aye? is that the thing that dennis' canadian cousin is always going on about? oh yeah, the metric system ... that's what they use in canada.

Guy: That's right ... but it's not just Canada Mindy ... the metric system is how about 95% of the world measures stuff.

Mindy: Huh! you mean instead of feet and inches ...

Guy: They use centimeters and meters.

Mindy: And you're getting this invitation to this meeting 150 years too late Why?

Guy: That's the mystery Mindy. I have no idea!

Mindy: Well, there's only one way to solve it!

Guy: What's that?

Mindy: We have to go to the meter party!

Guy: To the metre convention?

Mindy: Yeah! it would be rude not too Guy Raz. plus ... we need to figure out who sent that initiation to you.

Guy: I don't know Mindy.

Mindy: come on Guy raz ... What's the use of having a wow machine if you can't use it to visit 19th century France every now and then ... besides, you love France! and I love french fries!

Guy: C'est vrai ... okay Mindy, iIm in. Let's solve this metric mystery!

Mindy: That's the spirit. I got the wow machine idling in your driveway.

Guy: you do?

Mindy: yeah, i was going to take a quick trip out to the moon but this sounds much more fun.

Guy: Okay.

Mindy: follow me Guy raz! walk walk walk walk ...

<<door opens and closes>>

Guy: let me just lock the door here <<door locks>> alright, good to go!

Mindy: Great, let's go. walk walk walk walk ... oooooopeing the hatch.

<<the hatch opens and Guy and Mindy enter the wow machine>>

Mindy: watch your feet Guy raz ... lotta rouge dog toys on the ground here ...

Guy: What? <<dog toy squeak>>

<<Mindy and Guy sit down>> <<Mindy starts pressing buttons and inputting coordinates>>

Mindy: alright Guy raz ... you got those time and space coordinates for me?

Guy: yup, let me just check the invitation here <<paper sfx>> paris, france ...

Mindy: <<punching in numbers>> paaaaris ... fraaaance ...

Guy: May 20th ... 1875 ... exactly 150 years ago ...

Mindy: <<punching in numbers>> may 20 ... 1875 ... got it ... <<ding sfx>> alright all strapped in Guy raz?

Guy: strapped in with what?

Mindy: oh yeah ... i took out the seatbelts last week ... welp ... hold onto something because ... here weeeee ... goooooooooooooo!

<<Mindy and Guy travel through space and time>> <<we hear a muffled accordion outside>>

Mindy: aaahhhh safe and sound ...

Guy: Did we make it Mindy?

Mindy: only one way to find out!

<<Mindy opens the hatch>> << we're on the hustle and bustle of a busy street market>>

Mindy: Bonjour Paris!

Random: <<in distance>> bonjour!

Guy: Mindy, I didn't know you spoke French?

Mindy: I don't, in fact ... stick this in your ear ... <<Mindy wrestles with Guy>>

Guy: <<trying to fight her>> gah! Mindy! What is this?!

Mindy: it's my latest and greatest invention Guy raz ... it'll translate everything back and forth into english ...

Guy: Why does it feel like a wet marshmallow!

Mindy: oh, that's because it's half wet marshmallow <<pop>> there we go ...

Guy: <<suddenly stops squirming>> oh ... that's actually quite comfortable ... it does feel a little sticky though.

Mindy: That means it's working. come on Guy raz ... we're going to be late for the party! <<they exit the wow machine>> let me just lock up the wow machine!
<<car locking sfx>>

Guy: Okay now we just need to find out where this convention is happening Mindy.

Mindy: Do you think it could be at The French Academy of Sciences?

Guy: Maybe, why?

Mindy: Because there's a big ol' sign on that building over there that says measurements meeting this way ... and next to that it says The French Academy of Sciences!

Guy: Well that must be it Mindy ... come on ...

Mindy: coming! walk walk walk walk ... oooooopening the door ...

<<the enter the room and it's rambunctious>> <<party atmosphere>>

Guy: woah ... this is kind of a big party Mindy ...

Mindy: Yeah. ooooooh, look, they have coffee! gimmie gimmie gimmie! <<big sip>>
<<spits it out>> ugh! gross! i forgot <<spits out more>> i hate coffee.

<<tink tink tink of glass>>

Host: alright alright! settle down everyone ... It's time to get this little convention underway! <<cheers from the audience>> <<think of an apple launch event>>
<<people settle down>> okay, welcome to the first meeting of the measurements enthusiasts club of 1780!

<<crowd cheers>>

Guy: <<to Mindy>> 1780? I thought we were meant to be headed back to 1875!

Mindy: yikes ... looks like the wow machine might have overshot it a bit.

Guy: well if the metre convention was in 1875 ... then where are we?

Host: today gentlemen ... <<Mindy coughs>> uh, and lady ... we will be solving one of the biggest problems of our time ... how in the world are we meant to measure stuff ... <<crowd here heres>> ... seriously! I was at the market the other day and asked for a pound of fish and the dude pulls out a jar of grain ... I ask him, I say ... What is that? he says it's a pound ... i say it looks like a jar of grain ... he says that's what a pound is ... the weight of 7000 grains ... <<ruckus from the crowd>>

Scientist 1: <<standing up from his chair>>i had the exact same problem ... I went to get some fabric for my curtains the other day and when I asked for a yard of burlap, the dude, like, measured my chest! i asked him ... what are you doing? ... he said that a yard was officially the distance around a man's chest ... i said ... so if i had a bigger chest i'd get more fabric? and he said ... get this ... i don't make the rules ... <<more ruckuss from the crowd>>

Host: Well! luckily we do make the rules! I've gathered you all here today ... the greatest minds in France ... to come up with a new way of measuring things ... one that is based in reality ... unmoving and not simply the length of someone's body or how much 7000 grains weighs ...

<<cheering from the crowd>>

Guy: woah, Mindy ... we must have overshot the official signing in of the metric system and landed in the meeting where they invented it!

Mindy: yeah, sure looks that way ...

Host: alright ... now if i could just get my assistant to bring out the chalk board for us ... assistant! <<squeaky wheels as the chalkboard is wheeled on>> there we are... thank you Clarence ... ahem... let's get a little brainstorm going ... come on ... no bad ideas now... just yell them out ...

Scientist 2: what if we measured everything by the length of a standard cat ... like ... 'ooooh, that's only about 40 cats from here to there'

<<the room is silent>> <<cricket>>

Host: Okay ... are you listening to me at all? i said no bad ideas and then the first thing you do is yell out a bad idea ...

Mindy: He has a point.

Guy: shhhh!

Scientist 1: I have an idea ...

Host: Is it a good one?

Scientist 1: I think so ...

Host: Okay, let's hear it ...

Scientist 1: well ... what if we used ... the earth!

Mindy: the earth?!

Guy: Mindy! shhhhh!

<<commotion in the crowd>>

Host: alright, settle down ... <<to scientist 1>> explain yourself, buddy.

Scientist 1: well we were talking about something that's consistent ... <<murmurs of agreement>> and something that won't change <<murmurs of agreement>> well how about our planet! That's a lot more consistent than the size of a man's chest.

Host: okay, not bad not bad ... <<writing with chalk on board>>

Mindy: But wait ... how are they going to measure the planet?

Scientist 2: I have a question.

Host: yes, you. shoot.

Scientist 2: how are you going to measure the planet?

Mindy: Hey! That's what I said ...

Scientist 1: Well, it's not going to be easy. buuuuuuuuuut, I was kinda thinking that maybe we figure out how far it is from the north pole to the equator ... and then we split that distance up into 10 million different smaller units ...

Host: huh ... okay <<writing on chalk board>> 10 million... smaller.. alright ... yeah ... this could work ...

Scientist 1: I haven't even gotten to the best part yet ...

Host: What's that?

Scientist 1: I have a name for it!

Host: for what?

Scientist 1: for what we'd call these smaller units of measurement!

Host: okay ... what is it?

Scientist 1: gentlemen ... uh, and lady ... a drumroll please ...

<<everyone bangs they're feet>>

Scientist 1: we shall call it the meter!

Host: the meter?

Scientist 1: yes! after the greek word metron!

Guy: the greek word for measurement?

Host: the greek word for measurement?! That's so sick! I love it!

<<the crowd cheers>>

Host: all in favour of the meter?

<<the crowd jeers>>

Mindy: <<yelling over the top>> uhhhhh, excuse me!

<<the crowd calms down>>

Host: uhhhhh, yes ... m'lady?

Guy: <<through gritted teeth>> Mindy? What are you doing?

Mindy: one second Guy raz ... uh yeah ... hello, real quick question; how exactly are you going to measure from the North Pole to the Equator ... i don't know if you've ever tried that walk before but it's like a super long way.

<<murmurs from the crowd>>

Host: hmmmmmm ... that is a good question. Anyone got any ideas?

<<murmurs from the crowd>>

Scientist 2: uhhhhhh ... I do.

Host: oh no, not this Guy again ...

Scientist 2: no no no, this is a good idea this time i promise.

Host: Okay, let's hear it ...

Scientist 2: well ... i was just thinking; maybe we could measure the distance between two spots that are closer together like ... dunkirk here in france and barcelona in spain and then just expand from there to figure out the distance between the north pole and the equator ...

Mindy: how are they going to do that?

Host: uh huh ... and how exactly would we measure that?

Guy: with math!

Scientist 2: with math! trigonometry.

<<murmors in the crowd>>

Host: <<a beat>> that's actually not a bad idea.

<<crowd cheers>>

Mindy: <<interrupting>> wait a minute ... you're going to measure the length of 2 countries?!

Guy: How long is that going to take?

Host: oh, it shouldn't take that long ... right? let's see here <<aggressive chalk scratching>> yeah, see ... should only take about 7 years.

<<crowd gets aggitated>>

Mindy: 7 years! I could measure that faster with my tape measure in that amount of time!

Guy: I think that's the problem, Mindy. they don't have any tape measures ... that's what they're trying to invent.

Mindy: oh yeah ...

Guy: And if you're making something that's going to be used by everyone ... you want to make sure that it's super precise ... and the only way to make sure that it's super precise is with ...

Mindy: math?

Guy: Exactly.

Host: okay okay ... <<crowd settles down>> right so ... I'll see you all back here in like 7 years and we can suss out all the math and make that meter. How does that sound?

<<everyone cheers>>

Host: this is going to change the world!

<<everyone gets up and starts milling about>>

Guy: Come on Mindy, let's get out of here and get to the party that we were actually invited to.

Mindy: good idea Guy raz ... with all this commotion i almost forgot that we had a mystery to solve!

Guy: What?

Mindy: We still have to figure out who sent you that invitation.

Guy: oh yeah ... that's right.

Mindy: okay ... follow me Guy raz ... <<making their way through the crowd>> excuse me ... coming through ... sorry, just trying to get out of here.

<<the head outside and back onto the street>>

Mindy: I can't believe it's going to take those guys 7 years to make all those calculations.

Guy: And then a bunch more time to get everyone onboard with this new way of measuring things.

Mindy: What do you mean?

Guy: Well look at this invitation Mindy ...

Mindy: the one for the convention?

Guy: yeah, the metre convention ... It's for 1875, that's 95 years from now.

Mindy: woah ... you mean those Guys go out ... make the measurements ... invent the meter ... and then it takes them almost another 100 years to convince everyone that it's a good idea ...

Guy: That's right ...

Mindy: Wow. good thing we have a wow machine ... speaking of which ... <<car unlocking sfx>> <<hatch opening>> hop on in Guy raz ... we got a party to get to ...

Guy: That's right! next stop ... the meter convention of 1875

<<Mindy and Guy enter the wow machine>> <<Mindy and Guy sit down>>
<<button pushing>>

Mindy: okay ... tell me that date again Guy raz ...

Guy: it's May 20 ... 1875 ...

Mindy: Okay ... May 20th 1875 ... for real this time; here ... we goooooooooo!

<< the wow machine once again travels through time and space>>

Guy: Oof, did we make it? Are we in the right time period this time?

Mindy: let me just check here ... <<bleeps and bleeps>> yeah ... definitely in the right time ... now let's see if we hit the right place ...

<<Mindy opens the hatch of the wow machine>> <<the step outside>> <<interior atmos>>

Mindy: oh yeah, this seems like the place ...

Guy: woah Mindy, you actually landed in the building itself this time.

Mindy: yeah, i totally did that on purpose ... come on Guy raz, looks like the party is through here ... walk walk walk walk walk ...

Guy: coming!

<<grand doors open to reveal a party atmosphere>> <<there's a string quartet playing>> <<people mingle>>

Guy: Wow!

Mindy: Now this is a party!

<<champagne flute ding ding ding>>

New Host: hello everyone thank you for coming here today for the signing of the meter convention!

<<cheers from crowd>>

New Host: yeah! alright!

Mindy: Is that the same person as before?

Guy: it can't be Mindy ... that was almost 100 years ago.

New Host: when my great grandfather ... the first president of the measurements enthusiasts club ... first came up with the idea of the meter

Guy and Mindy: oooooooooooh ...

New Host: Everyone thought he was out of his mind ... but look at us now pop pop ... we have 17 of the world's most influential countries here to agree to use your system of measurement!

<<crowd cheers>>

New Host: it's so great to see all these countries represented here ... Spain, Argentina, Denmark ... USA ... I see you ... <<he fades out underneath Mindy as she talks>>

... Venezuela, Germany, Peru, Belgium, Brazil ...

Mindy: Wait what? the usa ... we're here?

Guy: that's right Mindy ... we were actually one of the first 17 countries to agree to start using the metric system ... though it never really caught on.

New Host: So if I could get a representative from each country to come up and sign this treaty... and then ... we'll have a little sing song ... how does that sound?

<<crowd cheers>>

New Host: alright ... Spain? We got someone from Spain. great ... Denmark ... if you could just stand here ... United States ... <<a beat>> United States? <<scoffs>> always late ... Can we get someone from the United States up here please ...

Mindy: Guy Raz! get up there!

Guy: What?

Mindy: this is probably why you were invited ... to sign the meter treaty for the United States!

Guy: I don't think ...

Mindy: <<interrupting and yelling>> this Guy's from the usa!

new host: well get on up here buddy ... Come on, don't be shy.

<<people clap>>

Guy: Miiiiiiindy!

Mindy: have fun up there! you got this ...

<<Guy walks away>> <<host keeps inviting countries up to the podium>>

New Host: ok, let's see, where were we ... Ah yes, Germany, please join us up here. Peru, you're next. there you go. Thank you. Portugal ...

Mindy: <<to self>> hey ... whats on this table here? spare invitations? don't mind if i do ... <<paper sfx>> <<to someone else>> hey buddy, mind if i borrow your quill there ...

Scientist 3: not at all ...

Mindy: thank you ... <<to self as writing>> dear ... Guy ... Razzy ... <<Mindy continues to scrawl>>

New Host: <<fading in>> aaaaaaand that is the last signature! Congratulations! and thank you all for joining us on this metric adventure!

<<the crowd cheers>>

New Host: Now, let's talk about the ways in which we can all use the new meter!

Random 1: I want to invent a footrace called, The 100 Meter Dash!

New Host: oh wow! that sounds fun! I love dashing!

Random 2: I want to measure how tall I am in meters!

New Host: great idea!

<<crowd reacts>>

Mindy: <<finishes writing>> there! aaaaaand done! <<to passer by>> uh, excuse me?

<<folding paper/sealing envelope>>

Scientist 3: yes?

Mindy: could you add this invitation to your outgoing mail?

Scientist 3: uhhhhh ...

Mindy: But could you also hold off on sending it for like 150 years?

Scientist 3: what?

Mindy: trust me ... it'll be worth it!

Scientist 3: <<walking away>> if you say so ...

New Host: ok, any more uses for the meter?! anyone?

Random 3: I want to measure how many meters it is to grandmother's house!

New Host: ooo! good one!

Random 3: And then I want to know how fast I can run to grandmother's house in meters per second!

New Host: Yes! Yes! Yes!

Guy: <<walking up>> whew! Well, that should do it, Mindy! the meter is born!

Mindy: awww, lil baby, meter... it's so cute!

Guy: The only thing left that bothers me is that mysterious invitation. Who sent it to me!?

Mindy: [obvious cheeky wink to audience] well, Guy raz... I guess we'll never know...

...

Guy: ... it was you, wasn't it.

Mindy: What?! no! it wasn't me.

Guy: Mindy...

<<fades out>>

Mindy: Guy raz! it wasn't me! It was an old British man, probably!

Guy: I know your handwriting, Mindy!

Mindy: The invitation was 150 years old! it couldn't possibly have been me!

Guy: I saw you borrow that quill just now!

Mindy: I was writing down my food order!

Guy: There's no food here, Mindy!

Mindy: I know! I'm starving!

END