

## Looking Back

Tyler Folsom

Zelda: It's so hot today!

Lilly: Hot enough to wilt a lily.

Ash: What is it, 103?

Zelda: That's about right.

Lilly: At least it's not 110.

Zelda: Yeah, I think it's been a couple years since we've had 110.

Lilly: Right. The scientists say the average temperatures are going back down.

Ash: My grandmother told me that Fahrenheit was set up so that 0 is the coldest in the year and 100 is the hottest.

Zelda: I wish.

Ash: Why are temperatures going back down?

Lilly: The response to climate change was way too late and we'll never get back to how things were in the old days. It took us too long to stop burning dinosaur juice, but getting off the stuff is having an effect.

Zelda: Some of the worst fossil fuel users were in transportation.

Ash: Right. Getting to electric vehicles helped.

Zelda: It's more than that. The first electric vehicles were dinosaurs. They used to use a 4000-pound pod to haul a single person.

Ash: That makes no sense.

Lilly: Right, but it's surprising how long it took them to figure that out.

Ash: Seems like keeping the vehicle weight less than the riders is a no-brainer.

Lilly: Right, but people can be dense.

Zelda: Getting rid of pod pilots helped.

Ash: Can you imagine spending your time telling a pod where to go? Such a waste!

Lilly: It seems so obvious: call for a pod and it takes you where you want to go.

Zelda: The old pods didn't cooperate with each other. They didn't even talk to each other.

Ash: Duh. You mean they didn't even text each other?

Zelda: Right. It took a while to develop the technology.

Lilly: Actually, the issue was more about deploying it.

Zelda: Right. It took way too long to get everything in place.

Lilly: People were just building vehicles. They hadn't appreciated the need for systems design.

Zelda: Yeah. Systems are the key. There were all these loose pods running around. If one of them had to stop, everyone else had to stop.

Ash (laughing): Weird.

Zelda: It gets worse. They couldn't all start at the same time. The first one starts, then the second, then the third.

Ash: What a mess!

Lilly: Uncoordinated pods produced shock waves. It wasn't like today when all the pods move in one coordinated platoon. If one pod slowed down, you would get this effect where it disrupted everything and you get the whole system breaking down and just moving at a crawl.

Zelda: Right. In the old days people not only wasted time piloting pods, but they spent a lot of time just sitting still when the system broke down.

Ash: That's one part of the old days that I don't miss.

Lilly: Not only that, but the pods didn't even couple to each other. They were all driving with big gaps between them.

Ash: You mean like the gaps between different platoons?

Lilly: Yeah. And people would buy bigger pods than they needed because they wanted a single pod to be able to haul the maximum people and gear load.

Zelda: Those old electric clunkers wasted a lot of resources.

Ash: No wonder they weighed so much.

Zelda: And the old pods killed a lot of people because they were so badly managed. The pods had to armor themselves so that people could survive when they crashed into each other.

Ash: Thank God that doesn't happen anymore.

Lilly: The standard pod used to be twice as wide and twice as long as today's. Since they didn't couple, they took up lots more room on the roads.

Zelda: That resulted in lots of pavement where there should have been trees. All that pavement contributed to the city getting hot.

Ash: I don't know how I would tolerate this heat without trees to shade me.

Lilly: It will take another 100 years for the trees to get to their proper size, but we're on the right path.

Ash: Let's hope that we keep cooling off in the years to come.

Zelda: I'll drink to that!

