



The Planiverse: Computer Contact with a Two-Dimensional World

A.K. Dewdney

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The year is 1981, and in the computer lab of a large university a group of graduate students and their professor are hard at work on their mainframe, graphically modeling an imaginary two-dimensional world. The project is going well, extraordinarily well, when one student suddenly notices that the world they are building with their graphics program is . . . inhabited! So begins A.K. Dewdney's newly republished 1984 tale of trans-dimensional discovery and communication. The students and their professor find, to their astonishment, that they are communicating with Yendred, their only contact in the 2D world of Arde. At first disbelieving, they are soon entranced by a universe in which astonishing tiny creatures—indeed an entire astonishing world—exist solely on an x-y plane. This book, following in the footsteps Edward Abbot's nineteenth century classic *Flatland*, is a cult favorite among mathematicians and computer scientists. As a kind of mental puzzle or brain-teaser, it challenges and delights, inviting readers to imagine just how a two-dimensional world might work. But the book is also a parable, serving as a cautionary tale about the difficulties of communication from one totally alien world to another, and suggesting that it is not only two-dimensional Ardeans who fail to see beyond the the obvious world before their eyes.

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