





Test to Train-Stationary

by Katlego Tjeane

Next month marks the 64th annual test to board Train-Stationary - an underwater train that moves on a stationary track, rendering it the safest and virtually only route to Yusebalitee. Everyone's dream is to leave the slums of Rhodaytawn, searching for prosperity and honour for their family. Millions of processes relish the chance to become Yusebal. Their citizens are said to enjoy local delicacies such as inférenz and concluxin. Yusebalitee is said to elevate processes into higher beings, a transcendence into information.

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The test is an extremely thorough process, despite Minister A. Smit's admission that it may not always be a hundred per cent accurate. Regardless of age, every process can only attempt the test once. Minister A.D. Fuller has made great strides in the schooling policy, allowing processes with varying lags to undergo the test.

Twenty-year-old Al-Rasheeda feels nervous about the test as she chews her pencil in a preparatory class. She peers into the other classroom, and the MA students ooze a delusional calm about them.

They are generally deemed fit to board Train-Stationary, viewing the test as a simple formality unto their generational claim to Yusebalitee.

“I’d like to see how they’d handle a phimosome or two”, said Minister A.D. Fuller.

Al-Rasheeda nervously laughs in envy of young Ra’s naivety. His family line traditionally passed the test at a young age, with one lag. She does not possess the same gusto as he does, nor the prospect of meeting her family in Yusebalitee.

“Elementary school wasn’t fun, was it?” she whispers.

Ra frustratedly snaps, “Al, I just hate how we had to do the PACF analysis”, unaware of his increased volume in the auditorium.

They feel the sharp gaze of the teacher in his total irritation. The pair focus their attention back on the presentation. They catch the ending: “... and remember, there’s nothing wrong with the ARIMA, IMA, and ARI classes. It’s better than a random walk”.

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Amidst all the snickering and giggling-induced commotion, Al-Rasheeda’s heart sinks. She decides to walk the long path home, around the disintegrating live wire, between the soggy sheets of littered wrappers, and away from the mouldy rat-infested storm drains. She only now notices the loneliness of her life, her independence since she was twelve. She thinks of her fortitude, a testament to her will, in preparation for life and the coveted test to Train-Stationary. She unpacks her bag on the single rustic wooden table she uses for ironing, working, and eating. She feels alone.

She’s heard of processes that have undergone the surgical process of Differencing, her mother included. She chooses not to think of her very much. She was “too bothered fending for my own life to think about that”. She didn’t believe her own lie; she learnt the hard way. Her father found a proxy to test his eligibility unto Train-Stationary, through a black-market group who called themselves “TheG raphT itle”. Though unethical, his succeeding conspicuous celebrations in the local pub made his actions obvious. “Spirits rain from the

heavens in Yusebalitee, and heaven knows I love the spirits”, he would announce to the concerned bartender. He did this for weeks preceding his final test. In the decisive moment, he had lost his essence. He did not pass his test. He did not realise that his ethanol consumption, biologically tempered with his thetosome, had grown undesirably. He was no longer invertible. He abandoned his wife, his aspirations, and ultimately himself. His withered body turned up on the blackened shore months later. He drowned in the infinite sea of data. He is the story used to steer younglings toward parsimony and away from substance abuse. That fabled bedtime story of the “Drunkard’s Walk” is about Al-Rasheeda’s father.

“Too much thinking for tonight”, she sighs, waking in the middle of the night.

The day before the final test, Al-Rasheeda stabilises. She finalises her health test, and they are normal upon examining her sweaty residuals. A huge sigh of relief ensues as she heads back home for what could be her last night in this city. Red. Blue. Green. Red. Red. Orange. The festivities commence as she hears the crackling and sees the colours of the fireworks. It’s only 04:20, but the atmosphere is filled with excitement. The local ladies clutter their wooden heels on the ground, singing in a high pitch and letting their flowy red cocktail dresses accentuate their movements. The men beat their drums, stomping on the cracking concrete with their black boots, and repeat after the ladies like loud shadows. The children complete the sriracha dance, cheering on the year’s participants. Soon enough, Al joins the locals and heads to the SAS gates.

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She can smell the refreshingly cool air blowing from the Annaly Seas. *Step, step, wait.* The ARIMA, IMA, and ARI classes are first as their final test is different. The few processes that are sent back from the gates look distraught. *Step, step, wait.* The MA class snickers as they are called up next. They maintain a hundred per cent success rate and board the platform. She heads up with the ARMA class. *Step, step, wait.* She can see the train’s velvet interior. She is getting closer and closer to leaving her home. *Step, step, step, step.* The line moves unnervingly faster.

“No, try again! I wasn’t prepared! I didn’t warm up. I thought there’d be a *burn-in* period!” screams Al-Roberto III.

He is escorted away; however, she feels as if it is her dreams that are disappearing. She realises that it is not about likelihood, but in this very instant, that her world can change; it is simply a method of moments. Her results are immediately printed out, and she musters the courage to steal a glance.

The administrator’s look of confusion immediately sends a shiver down her spine. She identifies her time plots’ noticeable variation in relation to the others.

She takes the liberty to read his name tag, shudders, packs her bag, and says, “Mr u19264560, thank you for the opportunity anyway”.

He does not respond and examines the rest of the test. “Ma’am, the results are conclusive. I have enough evidence to tell you that you do not have any unit roots.” He further says, “Hey, you’re weakly stationary. You’re Yusebal”.

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Her jaw drops! She eagerly jumps on the train, already fantasising about her new life.

“This is your pilot. We’ll reach our destination in n days.”

It paid off! She believed in herself. She didn’t allow the past to completely steer her life. She used her own phimosomes. She knew where she was expected to be and did not depend on her predecessors. She had set her own path, never varied from it, always catching herself. She never knew that her phimosome was an undesirable 0.94. She also did not know what her R^2 meant all her life. She had no idea that she was the most determined process.

At this moment, she doesn’t know that she will realise her dream of being a forecaster. She has always been in control of her story.

