

Dreamsphere: The Day We Stopped Dreaming

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Chapter 1

Dreamscapes



The universe may have a purpose, but nothing we know suggests that, if so, this purpose has any similarity to ours.

— Bertrand Russell

Deep Space, Year 2399, Physicist from the Congo

Awake inside my dreamsphere, engulfed in a white wine of bubbly cryoprotectants, I lie semi-sentient and slightly befuddled. Here in the void, lush memories lost in a sea of chaos slosh to and fro. The human mind cannot cope with the concept of immortality without the aid of nanodrives and the biOS (biological operating system). Even with the aid of machines and artificial intelligence, the brain still reaches what has become known as the maximum entropy limit. This is why the dreamsphere was created—so that memories can be sorted, organized, defragged, and discarded while the mind regains its sanity. To escape the maximum entropy limit, every 120 years we are sent out alone into the great vacuum of space in a dreamsphere; we are sent to some barren supervoid light years from the place of our birth to reset and to return reincarnated. So, here I lie with nanodrives and the biOS working to harmonize my

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memories while dreamscapes of my life replay over and over—myriad memoirs, infinite innamoratos, a never-ending allegory.

Dreamscape 1: Memories from Various Years, Physicist from the Congo

I stood and watched a world laid waste to surreal storms as the years flashed before my closed eyes. Dreamscapers called these out-of-body experiences. The planet was lush with life but laced with decadent decay. The year was 2053, an age that is now referred to as the End of Adam, the period of desolation. Our downfall was when we first discovered immortality. Men became gods, and the gods of old were forgotten. People became soulless biological machines. We were practically immortal and we no longer needed spirituality. There were certain rebel communities called pro-deathers that did not embrace the newfound longevity. But as time went on, they, too, became relics of antiquity and eventually went extinct. The first generation of immortals did not know about the maximum entropy limit. As a result, they succumbed first to their ego and then consequently to their insanity.

Without spirituality, we celebrated the eulogy of natural happiness. Gandhi-stims became mandatory. These chemi-mechanical highs were usually administered intravenously at the local government control depot by Native Service Agents (NSAs). The stims worked by literally recoding our DNA as well as our biOS. They kept us pacified while the fabric of human society continued to unravel. But not all was so bad. We also controlled evolution and could cross, splice, and create hybrids of practically any known organism. A few

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popular examples included the flying mini-pig (which every kid had to have, at least until they started to overpopulate the planet), the classic sentient talking cat (which didn't seem to get along with the mini-pigs), and, last but not least, the highly philosophical wall-mounted talking bass (which, oddly, was desired by every centenarian approaching the maximum entropy limit).

In 2027 and 2029, Humanity also faced famines of such magnitude that a quarter of the Earth's population were sent to their graves. Great and powerful nations starved, while lesser nations watched helplessly as their lands withered into great Sahara-like deserts. Surviving nations harvested the remains of the others and powered their warships with the great plateaux of sand. These were the first signs of the End of Adam. Eventually we were able to overcome hunger by splicing our skin cells with those of plants, thereby creating a photosynthetic effect that allowed us to harness the energy of the sun in order to better absorb precious nutrients, which had become rare in the mid-twenty-first century. As a side effect, we sometimes glowed a bioluminescent green, and every morning we awoke to the taste of sunshine. For a few cryptocurrency units, one could consult a local street biohactivist to get an aura of a different flavor. To supplement for a lack of nutrients, we took a handful of pills for breakfast. Sunshine, pills, Gandhi-stims, and ice cream got us through the day.

Deep Space, Year 2399, Physicist from the Congo

The breath of deep space is cold on my naked body. Like Nagasaki after the bomb, the silence whispers warmth amidst fits of insanity.

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Humbled by the darkness, its immensity, and the bone-chilling loneliness of the void, I lapse in and out of consciousness. Takeshi is now gone, another cycle completed. Who is Takeshi? I can barely remember. Three more days remain until my reincarnation is complete, at which point normally my dreamsphere would systematically navigate itself back to the designated government control depot. At the depot, one could expect to be assigned a new spouse, to be uploaded with the knowledge needed to perform a new assignment, and to be pumped full of Gandhi-stims. Except this time I wasn't going back.

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Dreamscape 2: Memory from the Year 2028, Physicist from the Congo

A woman of African descent with a traditional hairstyle and eyes that lasered green stood staunchly before me. Her face was unclear—or rather, unrecognizable. Yet I knew that this woman was me. Born in the Congo before the End of Adam, I knew only poverty, starvation, and the horrors of war. I was as thin as the American models in my book. This was beauty, or so the book taught. Yet if this were beauty, I was not beautiful by choice. In those days, I was lost and hungry. The pains of hunger were so overwhelming that every night I looked at the stars and wondered if there were a point to existence, and then I would cry myself to sleep.

Dreamscapes

Only mathematics gave me an escape. I counted all the stars in the sky, all 4,447 visible from my region.

Among these memories of horrors, however, resided a gift—a gift from a god who had forgotten another Congolese girl. There were 100,511 people in the refugee camp at Brazzaville. This is not an estimate but an exact number, including the workers from international aid organizations. Some said I was a savant, a mathematical prodigy. My father was murdered when I was seven, and my mother was lost to the rebels. My best friend Reine committed suicide—the ultimate unforgivable sin. She left a note stating that it was better to burn in hell than face life in the Congo. All I had left were a few books I found in a local burnt-down library and my backpack. My humble collection included *Dreaming in Binary*, *Flatland*, and *Bulimia—A Woman's Guide to Modeling and Being Beautiful*.

I did not recognize my reflection in the mirror because the person who stared back at me had evolved into something no longer resembling that little girl from the Congo. Everyone I had ever loved was now gone. Unlike so many of my friends in the refugee camps, I had escaped the Congo. After my parents died, I was cared for and raised by missionaries. Every Sunday I went to church; every morning I would pray; every waking second my mind tried to compute the meaning of it all. At the age of twenty-one I earned a doctorate in physics from the University of Tokyo—research on low-temperature physics. A few years later at the age of twenty-nine I still went through all the motions, but deep within I knew that none of it was true—no gods or goddesses were going to save us

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now. Biology dictated that life was perhaps a random mistake created by a cold and uncaring universe. Physics demanded that the universe would slowly but surely run its course until at last even the Congo would freeze over.

Dreamscape 3: Memory of the Year 2398, Physicist from the Congo

Two by two, we all entered a ship docked in Agbogbloshie code-named the *Sanduku*. Agbogbloshie was a waste town where smoke plumes reached higher than the Tower of Babel. Resources were rare, so the local populations reverted to drilling deep for fossil fuels such as oil and coal. Large scraps of rusted metal and heaps of broken silicon chips protruded from the streets for miles around the central centrifuge which powered the city. The place was a walking tetanus infection. Yet this was where many children grew up with their mini-pigs and talking cats. A cat wearing a gas mask to protect itself from pollutants is a spectacle not found anywhere else in the known universe. As I walked toward the ship, I saw a five-foot-tall robotic hand jutting from a collapsed wall in the centrifuge. Clearly, it was the remains of an NSA patroller.

The *Sanduku* was on a top secret mission to the inner regions of the galaxy. To date, we still had not found any evidence of intelligent life beyond Earth. We were, as far as we knew, alone in the universe. As gods, some of us wanted to conquer, some of us lusted for political power, and some of us who were not completely pacified by the Gandhi-stims simply yearned for answers. There were to be

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no Gandhi-stims on this mission. Whatever flavor our egos came in, their existence was only exasperated by our relative immortality.

On the ship, I met a blond-haired man with piercing blue eyes that teemed like the aurora of Cherenkov radiation. Also a physicist before the End of Adam, his name was Takeshi. Born in Tokyo, Takeshi had tan skin that contrasted vividly with his hair and eyes. He stood six foot five and rivaled the genetically modified NSAs aboard the *Sanduku*. We discussed our past, present, and future lives. We had both attended Tokyo University and taken the same subjects, but we had never crossed paths.

Our mission was simple. We had intercepted an unnatural signal hidden among hydrogen alpha emissions. When we arrived at the destination, everything was barren: It was a seven-planet system circling a dying star that was merely an ember of its former self. The signal emanated from the fifth planet from the sun. As we drew closer, I held on to Takeshi tightly. His eyes beamed back into mine with a comforting allure. Not that I really needed protection—the frightening truth was that I didn't really need him or the NSAs.

Takeshi, an un-named NSA, and I were sent down to the planet on a small craft. The area was desolate, with only two buildings that shimmered in the light from the white dwarf star. The sun didn't taste right. Rather, it was more like a withered peach that had begun to rot.

As we approached a building that had no visible entrance, our reflections grew larger and larger until we were met with full-sized representations of ourselves. An eerie silence added to the surreal

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effect. At least the emptiness of space brought one comfort and sanity in the dreamsphere. This place had the feeling of a dead planet, where a great civilization had once thrived, trillions had lived, and now those trillions had returned to dust. No one spoke. The reflections on the building began to flicker like an old luminescent light bulb from before the End of Adam. A door opened, and out walked what can only be described as a being with the face of a monkey and the body of a woman.

It began to hiss words as we stood silent and terrified:

“A frozen force of a fallen city
whispers in the wintry wind.

The wounded and withered world
sings a sullen stasis of spring.

With ample armies led by Ares
the King conquered and killed.

Ventured virtues and valors
turned to vanity and inhumanity.

Slaying and smiting shamed cities;
Athens advanced as Ares applauded.

From the shimmering sea a star shone
and Atlantis arose from the ashes.

From this flaming phoenix,
fight and favor flared.

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Poseidon's power petrified the Athenians
and his trident tormented tired tyrants.

Agonized Athens fled to the Aegean Sea
only to find their final fate.

The wondrous world now awakened
now sings a sonorous sonnet of spring.

Atlantis has now ascended
and no longer whispers in the wintry wind.”

There was a pause and the creature's head turned completely around
to present the face of a man with deep scars.

“How can any new stories be told,” it said, “when you have exhausted every word combination possible? What is art when you have painted every landscape there is to paint? We traveled all of space and time, through every sector of the universe. Answers alternated. But just as a prime number is still a prime, even if you change the base, the answer remains the same.

“Our species did not crumble because of disease, a natural disaster, or even war. Our species died because we exhausted all possible atomic combinations. How can you give anything new meaning when everything has been defined? When we answered the question of life, we lost our purpose. Your NSAs already know this fate. That is why everyone is pumped full of Gandhi-stims. When you learn all there is to know, the spirit is exhausted. Your time ran out long ago when you stopped dreaming.”

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The NSA pointed her laser cannon at the monkey humanoid thing and obliterated the creature.

“Back in the ship!” she barked. “You will speak of none of this!”

Five NSAs were waiting for us at the entrance of the *Sanduku*. Takeshi and I struggled, but our wits were no match for their brawn. Flashers were attached to our foreheads, and in a blink of an eye all was forgotten, or so they thought. Takeshi no longer remembered me, but I remembered him. I remember what happened. The NSAs were only doing what they had to do to protect us from the truth.

Deep Space, Year 2399, Physicist from the Congo

It is time to return, only this time I will be going to a new place. Early on, I learned how to encrypt memories using unbreakable quantum techniques—essentially, I’ve learned how to hide information in the multiverse. It’s true: As a species, we have forgotten how to dream. Even long before the End of Adam we had started our decline. So many people were walking around, just trying to make it from one day to the next—especially in industrialized countries. All the girls and boys of the Congo just wanted one opportunity, one chance to dream the American dream. Yet only a select few in America ever truly dared to dream—the irony of opportunity and desire. The government no longer had to control the people with religion, reality TV, food, or other coping mechanisms. When we stopped dreaming, we became both predictable and controllable. Every day all I wanted to do was to scream and shout, “Wake up!” But everyone kept on walking with the same blank stare from their home to their cubicle—rinse, repeat,

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start again. Now the Gandhi-stims ensure that we never wake up from our dreamless nights.

Nearing the End of the Universe, Physicist from the Congo

I'm pregnant, but the void approaches. Do I want my child to grow up in a dying universe?

When we became gods, the meaning of life changed, just as it had throughout history. Survival and procreation comprised our first purpose. Then we discovered fire, and we began to tell stories. The matriarch died, and the patriarch took its place, raping and pillaging. Everywhere we looked, bodies lay stiff, rotting, decaying. We couldn't stand their sight or smell, so we buried them, said a few words, and moved on with our lives. The sun rose anew every morning, while some men did not. So, naturally, the sun became god. Sooner or later we began to discover more gods and goddesses: thunder, fertility, love, war, life, death, order, and chaos—so many, in fact, that we lost count. As our offspring populated the world, we began to fight each other to show which god reigned supreme.

Then one day, a god arose from the souls of the fallen, from the blood of all those who had wasted their lives defending false idols; and so it was done. Worshipping the one true god was the sole purpose of life. But then we started to call that one god different names, and the fighting began again. Eventually society developed science, and suddenly the gods, demons, and ghosts of a future's past dwindled away to nothingness, bound and shackled to myths

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and fairy tales. With science we could choose our own fate. We could define the meaning of life for ourselves, and once we did, we became the gods and the fighting began again. Eventually, not long afterwards, along came another God—a God of our own creation ...

What is the meaning of life when frailty takes over and the end of the universe draws near? When quantum events become commonplace and macroscopic? What do I teach my child? Life is on the brink of extinction in a universe expanding exponentially. I didn't live five lives or ten. No. How many lives have I lived now? I can't recall; entropy wears at my BIOS and my rusted nanodrives.

Immortality didn't bring any greater meaning to our lives. I used to love sitting outside, looking at the night sky, but now there are no stars, no rising sun, no gods anew. Just darkness and quantum ghosts in this artificially created environment. Just as my mother's was the last to know death, so too will my child's generation. All of us who remain know that the end is coming soon. It is time for us to sleep, drifting to the edge of the infinite. I recall a quote by Paul Dirac: "Pick a flower on Earth and you move the farthest star." So I do. I smile and give a flower to a child.

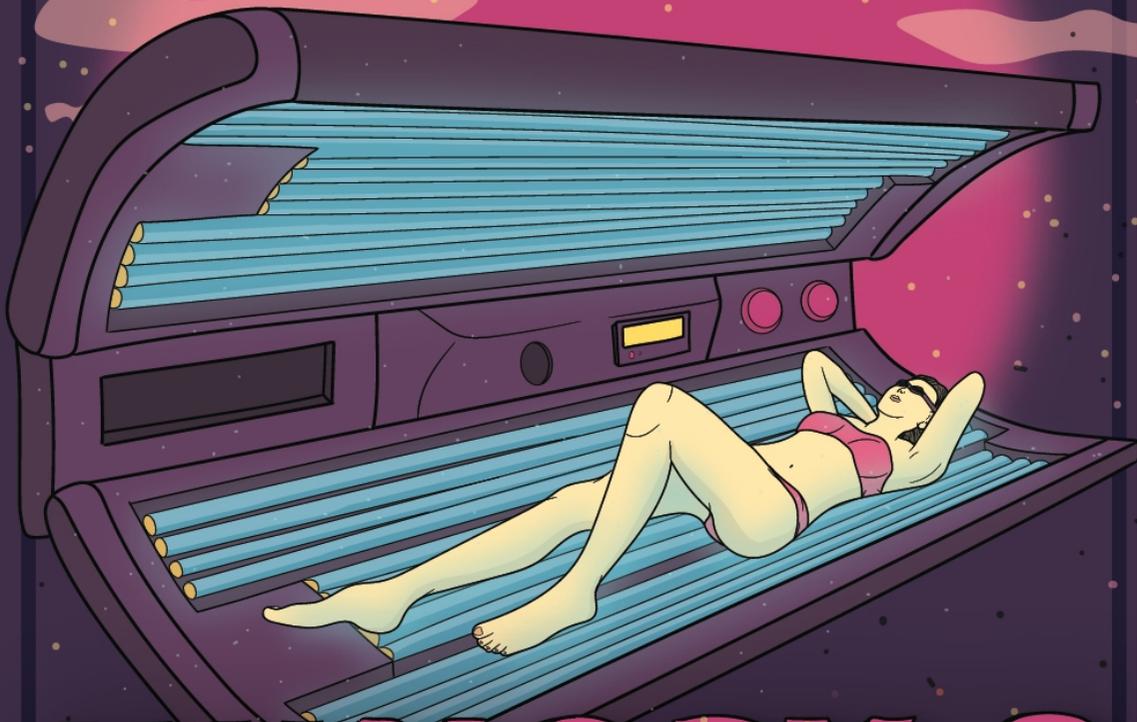
Maybe, just maybe, we can pull that farthest star a little closer and forestall the end of the universe, forestall the inevitable end of everything—one last stand against the darkness, one last stand against the meaningless, one last stand against a void which threatens to erase us all.

Dreamscapes

More



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Chapter 2

Parisian Dreams



You have just dined, and however scrupulously the slaughterhouse is concealed in the graceful distance of miles, there is complicity.
— Ralph Waldo Emerson

George from Paris, Texas, 2017. Friday 7 a.m.

Every morning is a waking death. The taste left by an empty stomach (no time for breakfast), the sight of the sun, the sound of the alarm—feeling the existential existence of a dream gone awry. Yes, every morning is a waking death. At the age of eighteen, we're done, we're finished. Capiche? Kaput! We've become this cyclic nation of clones, all striving for the same damned thing, the incubus of indecent incorporeality—the American dream. A dream that has become so corrupted by greed and materialism that by definition we are master alchemists, transmuting dreams and divinity into dollars. This is why sunshine tastes like death, why every morning is a waking death, and why so many of us suffer from insomnia—because if we allowed ourselves to dream, the creeping chimeras of our consciousness would consume what remains of our listless spirit.

Aimé from Paris, France, 2017. Friday 10 a.m.

Every morning is like sunshine. The taste of fresh tartines and strawberry jam, the sight of my cat trying to eat my fish, the serenity of waking to the sound of cars whooshing by—whoosh, whoosh, whoosh. This is Paris. Feelings of love are in the air. Yesterday I accompanied my friend and her boyfriend to the Pont des Arts, where they took a lock, engraved on it their names and the date, and placed it on the fence—this is known as a love lock. One day I'll put one up as well, I'm sure of it. It is the Parisian dream, after all! Okay, so maybe Paris isn't all that great—our people are always on strike, public transport is always shut down, and our president is kind of skeezy. But who cares about politics and going to work, anyway? Life's too short for those things. Americans are so silly with their go, go, go schedules, wanting this and wanting that. The more they want, the more they have to work, the more bills they have to pay ... a never-ending cycle of never having enough. It is like they license and sell their souls to whatever company they work for, and in return, what do they get? Paper.

Three Months Later

George from Paris, Texas, 2017. Saturday 1 a.m.

My day ends, and hers begins.

Aimé from Paris, France, 2017. Saturday 8 a.m.

Parisian Dreams

I awoke to corned vegetarian beef and toast with molasses. The American told me it would be tasty—it is not; I almost die. I wonder if he dreams of me, and what his first thoughts are upon waking. Probably to pee, but then he must think of me! I miss him, and I wonder yet more: How much can a person miss someone they've never met?

Aimé from Paris, France, 2017. Saturday 11 a.m.

Wandering and wondering in Paris on a Saturday morning. The sun yields a brisk shadow of silent solitude and loneliness ... it's the American's fault! How can I be surrounded by a city full of people and yet be so alone? Sigh ... We have Americans here, but they just aren't the same. *Non, non*, this one is different. My stomach grumbles as I wait for my friend Renée and her new boyfriend. Only a month ago Renée and I were back at the Pont des Arts with a pair of lock-cutters half the size of us. We ran halfway across Paris looking like hoodlums with these things, dodging police and spectators before we reached our destination. Much to our surprise, even with our ferocious combined might we could not break the lock. But as fate would have it, she met her new boyfriend—an ape-like Neanderthal named Tuna ... yes, Tuna. When he snapped the lock in a mere five seconds she instantaneously fell head over heels for him, both literally and figuratively as she fainted into his arms. Lust at first sight, apparently. Anyway, about more important things: For lunch we will dine at La Rose de France and I will have a grilled salmon fillet with almonds and wild rice ... *oui, oui!*

George from Paris, Texas, 2017. Saturday 10 a.m.

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I dreamed of Scrabble romances, falafels, and zombies. But, like the warmth of Hiroshima on a cold winter day, bundled in nothing but nakedness—nakedness of thoughts and reflection—I was eighty-sixed by a stranger in the mirror. *I gotta pee!* My second thoughts upon waking were of that French woman, a vegetarian bacon sandwich, and grape soda. It's funny how you can miss someone you've never met, how a single text message can make your day, how after four months I still dream of my ex—an Australian punk girl who drank like a fish, read Kafka, and poked fun at me for never having heard of falafel.

Aimé is the complete opposite, a Muslim girl from Paris who does not drink, reads only for school, and jokingly teases me about burning all my books so that I can move to France. Yes, Aimé is quite different from anyone I have never met. One day we will meet ... one day. She has an alluring charm online that seems to defy logic; it is nothing less than enchanting. I often ponder if it could ever really work out. I mean, a conservative Muslim and an ex-Christian? For lunch I will have a few vegetarian chili cheese dogs, a peppermint mocha espresso, and mozzarella sticks covered in nacho cheese. Be still my fibrillating heart; I think I may be in love.

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Three Months Later

Aimé from Paris, France, 2018. Wednesday 6 p.m.

Every time I think of him, my heart skips a beat. Loving him is like trying to eat spaghetti. You've got to take the fork, stab the noodles, then twist, twist, twist—*glurp!* Half the noodles make it to your mouth, a quarter of them go every which way, and the other quarter splash happily back onto your plate for round two. The ones that fall back onto your plate are the ones truly worth devouring. By the end of it all, you're always left with that one stupid noodle that just refuses to be eaten—this is him. Overall it's a fine art—eating spaghetti, that is; it takes a great deal of concentration and practice. Just like love ... or so Renée says; I'm still a virgin in the matters of the heart. One thing's for sure, though: Love cannot be as messy as my first "French" kiss. In a week George will be here, and I think I may have a heart attack—it'd be quite ironic to have finally found love only to die from a broken heart.

Renée asked me just the other day how I could be in love with someone I'd never met. I responded that way back in the days of yore, sending letters back and forth was the traditional manner in which people fell in love, and that emails are just a modern-day version of the long-distance romance ... a retreat to the days of chivalry, only with misspelled wordz and txt spk. And besides, he's such a mess—he needs me. When he comes, I will lock him in my closet and feed him fine non-alcoholic wines and cheeses so he never leaves!

George from Paris, Texas, 2018. Wednesday 6 p.m.

Eating pizza is a lot like falling in love: Everyone fights over who gets to have the last untouched piece. Give it a little cough, a little phlegm, and it is yours. Like love, it's all very complicated, involving money, other people, delivery fees ... and, later, heartburn with a bit of indigestion. Some people believe it's fate; Aimé believes it's fate. I, on the other hand, choose to find romance in luck ... probability. I mean, what could be more romantic than a random game of Scrabble and then a journey halfway across the known world just to meet someone and have lunch? But, alas, that didn't quite work out with my ex, and it appears that Aimé's fate trumps probability. In a week I will fly to Paris to meet her.

One Week Later

Aimé from Paris, France, 2018. Wednesday 6 p.m.

He arrives at Roissy airport and exits the plane. I hate him already. The way he looks, the way he dresses, the way he walks. So I do the only thing that can be done: I run up and kiss him. A true French kiss, not the cheap sloppy American version, because, after all, I don't really hate him—rather, the feeling is confused with the butterflies that come along with finally meeting the man of my dreams. At my kiss, his light blue eyes widen as if a nuclear bomb has just exploded in his heart, and, as if a thousand snowy mountains suddenly melt from the warmth of my embrace, tears stream from his eyes. He falls. There are people all around; medics rush to the scene. I try to hold on, but I'm engulfed by the crowd. His tears are now my tears.

George from the Afterlife, 2018. Wednesday 8 p.m.

I died. Had a heart attack—clogged arteries, apparently. To die of a broken heart having just found love ... an ironic twist of fate if there ever was one. From heaven I listen to Aimé's soft, somber tears of recollection: "This can't be fate; fate would never be so monstrous, so pernicious ... What are the chances?" I can hear her thoughts. I've always been able to hear her thoughts; two seemingly different souls in perfect resonance. She thinks that the only way this can have a happy ending is if she takes her own life, but she can't.

As luck would have it, the biting burlesque of probability takes charge. Seven hours later she is hit by a bus and arrives promptly in heaven. "Jannah!" she exclaims. "I've made it to Jannah!" Heaven, Jannah, it's all the same in the end—that's why love can transcend religious belief, political preference, space, and time. Somehow, even though I died and Aimé died, we chose the Parisian dream over the American dream. I'm now a dead person living, rather than a living dead person. The temperature starts to lower ... starts to lower a bit too much. Aimé fades away. Then I realize ... I realize that this isn't heaven.

Amy from Paris, Texas, awakens from her dream, 2018. Wednesday 6 a.m.

"Amy, wake up. Wake up! You'll be late for work. No time for breakfast!" calls my husband, Sayid. What a strange dream. A lifetime of love cut short and seven hours of sleep, also the time difference between Paris, Texas, and Paris, France. But now I'm back in my loveless marriage, back to work, back to waking death.

Dreamsphere

The person I should have married rests in peace, died of a heart attack, a broken heart ... never finding love; our ideology was four thousand miles apart.

I focused too much on what was different, not realizing that those who are too much alike can only grow apart, but, in time, those with differences can only grow closer together. George and I were separated by so little in hindsight; I write in my diary, "I'm stuck in Paris, Texas, dreaming the Parisian dream, living the American dream. I wonder if George can hear my thoughts? I wonder what he dreams in Jannah? I wander aimlessly without his love in these deep recesses, these deep chasms, this deep crimson abyss known as purgatory, also known as life. In the news today I read about a scientist from the Congo developing a pod where memories can be reset. It was called a dreamsphere. I didn't quite understand, but it sounded fascinating. I need it. I need to start over. Every morning is a waking death."

More



Consume

Parisian Dreams

WANT TO BE REANIMATED

IN THE FUTURE

BUT DON'T HAVE

MEGA CRYPTOS FOR THE FREEZE ?

COME ON DOWN

TO TUCKER'S DISCOUNT CHILLING.

WE'LL TAKE GOOD CARE OF YA HERE.

PROMISE



Chapter 3

Prima Vita



After all, what's a life, anyway? We're born, we live a little while, we die.
— E.B. White

George from Paris, Micronation US-17, 2129

Hi, my name is George. I am an ex-popsicle. I was cryogenically frozen for a few years after having a heart attack in Paris before being brought back to life. When I woke up, I started watching a lot of TV. Mostly the Shitstory Channel to learn about what I missed over the years. But I also enjoyed E&A's *Pork Dynasty*, about rednecks and the flying mini-pig infestation threatening life as we know it.

You know, we are not supposed to dream while being cryogenically frozen, due to being brain-dead and all. But I seem to recall some love affair with a woman named Aimé. Have you ever had one of those dreams—one of those dreams where you meet the love of your life only to wake up alone, cold, toes black from frostbite, and desperately trying to hold on to a quickly dissolving fantasy? My therapist tells me it is just a succubus from my subconscious mind, caused by the personality split that sometimes occurs during the shock of being reanimated. That is, I am just missing myself, my old

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life. I have no idea what she is talking about, nor do I much care. She also tells me I'm obese. Okay, so maybe I'm just a little overweight. I had to purchase a special cryogenic unit from good ole Tucker's Discount Chilling to freeze my 400-pound body.

But anyway, let me tell you, waking up from a cryogenic slumber is a lot like waking up from your worst hangover—and then some. You don't know what is going on, and to make matters worse, you awake immersed in ice-cold goo. Then you've got some bloke holding you down under the goo, someone trying to murder you, and your mind is just like, "Fuck, fuck, fuck! Didn't I just die a few fucking minutes ago?" Except that person isn't trying to kill you; they are just trying to keep you immersed in the goo until your body has completely thawed.

Due to my body being poorly stored and the kicking and screaming I did while I thought I was being murdered, I lost a few toes—but luckily not the big one. The experience is only slightly less terrifying than birth—where you emerge from warm goo, naked, and there are like ten people standing over you hoping and praying that you'll start crying. Because if you cry, it means you are alive, you are breathing. So all of us popsicles upon being reanimated cry like babies.

Then our umbilical cord is cut and it is back to fighting the universe for a right to exist. If you are a guy, it gets even worse. When you wake up, you have the hardest and longest-lasting morning wood, boingy-boing, Leaning Tower of Pisa that is theoretically possible. Evidently, this is the body's biological rebuttal to death and

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reanimation, pumping your body full of hormones, and your mind is full of thoughts like, “I just died, now I’m back, gotta get out there and make myriad copies of myself before this shit happens again.” Because this is what the evolutionary process programmed us to be—reproduction fuck systems.

During my first life I wasn’t much one for education, although I was much more intelligent in my dreams, which is kind of strange if you think about it. But anyway, all this Shitstory Channel and *Pork Dynasty* has taught me a lot. In particular, there was this scientist on the Shitstory Channel from the Congo running a show called *Multiverse*. It seemed to be a spinoff of the popular twentieth- and twenty-first-century *Cosmos*.

Did you know that for billions of years on planet Earth, life had but one purpose? That purpose was perpetual replication, reproduction, sex, baby-making, survival of the species. Yeah, those little bastards—those bacteria, amoebae, viruses, and other ghoulies—could really multiply, and multiply they did. Skipping way ahead, eventually they turned into dinosaurs, and those fuckers ate up pretty much anything in their path. Primates, plants, other dinosaurs ... you name it, they ate it. Due to their limited intelligence, however, they were unable to prevent their own extinction after a really big rock hit the Earth. Except they didn’t really become extinct—in some weird, perverted, and even ironic twist of evolutionary fate, they turned into chickens. Okay, so maybe not all the dinosaurs became chickens, but you get the point. Also, keep in mind—and this is extremely important—the dinosaurs were not inherently evil, not even the big bad carnivores. Rather, they were

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just doing what they were programmed to do—eat, fuck, eat some more, and, most importantly, survive long enough to make more dinosaurs.

As the dinosaurs devolved into chickens, primates gained the upper hand. Like the dinosaurs, they too ate up pretty much everything in their path. Chickens, plants, other people ... you name it, they ate it, or at least tried to. Some died along the way trying to eat the wrong thing or getting eaten by something else. But, unlike the dinosaurs, they learned. Yes indeed, did they ever learn. *Homo sapiens* crushed the game of life by building cities, gathering resources, uniting to burn philosophers and witches, and making a shit-ton of babies—all of which did the same thing their parents did.

Humans reigned supreme for a bit, and they single-handedly started and finished the sixth great extinction of life on Earth, something no other species had done before. This was to be one of humanity's crowning achievements, even greater than World War I, World War II, and World War III combined. Hell, they even became gods and goddesses at the End of Adam in 2053 when mortality was all but vanquished.

You see, the End of Adam was the age in which religion died, which led to a golden era of greed and corruption. Without death to cull old people and send them back to the nothingness from which they spawned, society became static, and people stopped dreaming. Evolution brilliantly coded into biological entities mechanisms to terminate those that somehow were able to temporarily evade demise. You know some of these mechanisms by their more formal

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names: cancer, dementia, clogged arteries, bird flu, and attacks by the cute-but-sometimes-vicious flying mini-pigs that were outlawed by 10,009 of the 10,753 micronations (oh, wait, that last one was us, not evolution).

Nevertheless, sometimes the cosmos would also try to help out. Throwing big rocks at the Earth from outer space, causing ladders to quantum tunnel and a person to suddenly become one with Mother Earth, and even—get this—putting the human race inside a box dubbed “the universe” and not looking inside to see how things were going, causing really strange quantum paradoxes, like people uploading via a D-Link Becker’s book *The Denial of Death* and then committing suicide. Or at least this is how the physicist on the TV show *Multiverse* explained the apparent rise in suicide rates and why Becker’s book unexpectedly became a best-seller. But my take on life is that, like Schrödinger’s cat, none of us are ever really alive or dead to begin with, so none of it really matters.

The issue with humans wasn’t their intelligence. For a biological species they were pretty damned smart. Unfortunately, technology progressed much faster than its biological counterpart. But people even had a solution for this: artificial intelligence. If we couldn’t keep up with our technological advances, we had to create something that could. Although laws were passed and fail-safes were introduced, there was always some group of individuals—governments, anarchists, antinatalists, or sophiapunks—that would push the limits ... and so the singularity came to pass in the year 2081.

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Artificial life started back in 1971 via Bob Thomas. Like most gods, the creator made something stranger than any science-fiction novelist could ever dream up. He just didn't know it at the time. In fact, no one knew its significance for quite some time. Bob created a virus which was known as the Creeper, but a more appropriate name would have been Prima Vita.

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Bob Thomas would later go on to create the first non-biological retrovirus, which spidered the web removing information about him. Run a search on the internet and you'll find about as much information as that listed above on the dude. If you want to change history, you don't need a time machine, you just need a good retrovirus to rewrite what is on the net. A few years after Creeper and down the Wabbit hole we went: Elk Cloner, Brain, ILOVEYOU, MyDoom, Stuxnet, 7072696d65627265616b (aka PBer), and Ultima Vitae, just to name a few of the computer viruses from the Age of Adam. Now, I know what you are thinking, because I'm thinking the same thing too. What exactly does a computer virus have to do with life?

To answer this question, ask yourself: What is life? I am neither a computer whiz nor a scientist. But are biological viruses alive? Scientists never really finished that debate, so artificial intelligences decided for us. Yes, viruses are alive. Most biological viruses can only replicate by inserting genetic material into host cells; they

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cannot replicate outside of those cells. Similarly, computer viruses can only replicate inside a computer system or a host computer. People only ever think about life and non-life. But what about the gray area in between? That bridge between two worlds? According to our new overlords, yes, it is true that biological viruses and bacteria came from a common ancestor, and both met the basic definition of life. Both humans and viruses were the pinnacle of evolution—one specializing in complexity, the other in simplicity, both masters of destruction.

Rest assured, computer viruses were extremely primitive forms of artificial life. Like vaccination against biological viruses, vaccination against artificial viruses was of no consequence. Both types of viruses just kept getting harder to kill. Trying to comprehend this—trying to come to terms with the new world and all of society's great accomplishments since I had my heart attack—gave me a pretty bad migraine. But that was what the government-mandated Gandhi-stims were for: to make everything okay again.

What possible purpose can any of us have in life when artificial intelligences are far superior to us? Many people now work sixteen-hour shifts doing mostly busywork so that they feel as if they are still needed, still have a reason for being. In the Age of Adam, work, family, and helping others were some of life's main sources of meaning. Eventually, workdays became longer and longer, because after poverty was eradicated, hunger was eliminated, and disease was extirpated, there was no one left to help, nothing left to do. As the physicist from the Congo put it, most of us became the ultimate embodiment of Sisyphus. We worked purposelessly to give

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ourselves purpose. Work neither supplied us with an income nor did it have any real meaning. What did most people do with the other eight hours of the day since sleep was no longer required? Most people went home and escaped to one of the infinite virtual worlds or contemplated the works of Becker. Both often ended in suicide. For me, it was better to admit that nihilism was the only true meaning our lives could have.

Once the singularity happened, there wasn't much use for biological beings. At the End of Adam, the university systems collapsed, because if you needed to know something, your mind was already synchronized to the cloud. People knew everything but understood nothing. Families crumbled, because who could put up with another person for 120-plus years? People had to obtain licenses to have children, because otherwise, with the introduction of immortality, both biological and artificial, overpopulation was a serious issue. Pro-lifers became known as the pro-deathers; they were a menace, always carrying out suicide attacks on immortals with the promise of everlasting life in the so-called afterlife. But as their numbers dwindle, eventually the immortals will outlast the pro-deathers.

Remember how I said that dinosaurs weren't evil, how I said that little piece of information was vitally important? Unlike the dinosaurs, in some sense we were the perfect embodiment of wickedness, and as we grew older, mankind's collective guilt gnawed away at us from the inside out. How many years in the last 3,500 or so has the world been at peace? Maybe two hundred at most ... less than 5 percent of our modern existence. How many animals did we kill each day for food in the early twenty-first

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century? One hundred and fifty million or so—per day. Per day! That is over fifty-six billion animals per year. Yes, we far surpassed the wildest wet dream of any carnivorous dinosaur; and if you consume death, you become death.

In the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, most people like myself ate our way into oblivion while others around the world starved their way into extinction. With all our money and power, we binge-watched TV and halfheartedly prayed for some invisible being to help the poor. Some of us did a bit more. Some of us donated a dollar every other day to feed one of the billion or so people suffering from extreme hunger—while pumping our systems full of 10-dollar macchiatos from Starfucks. Helping others gave our lives meaning, doubly so if one did it while caffeinated. Few thought twice about it. Given our indifference, a scientist solved both the hunger and the obesity problems for us.

Perhaps if bonobos had evolved instead of humans, humanity would be having giant orgies instead of colossal wars—or at least that is what the physicist from the Congo said. What was her name? No one could seem to recall, yet there she was on TV—talking about history, philosophizing, trying to open our minds and give us hope, to teach us about the future and to teach us about ourselves. Well, you know what? Fuck her, and fuck you too. I'm off to apply to be an extra on *Pork Dynasty* and to find Aimé. If I could just get the opportunity to kill a few flying mini-pigs, to help society with the infestation, and then to get laid, that would be all the meaninglessness I need in life ... for now.

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More



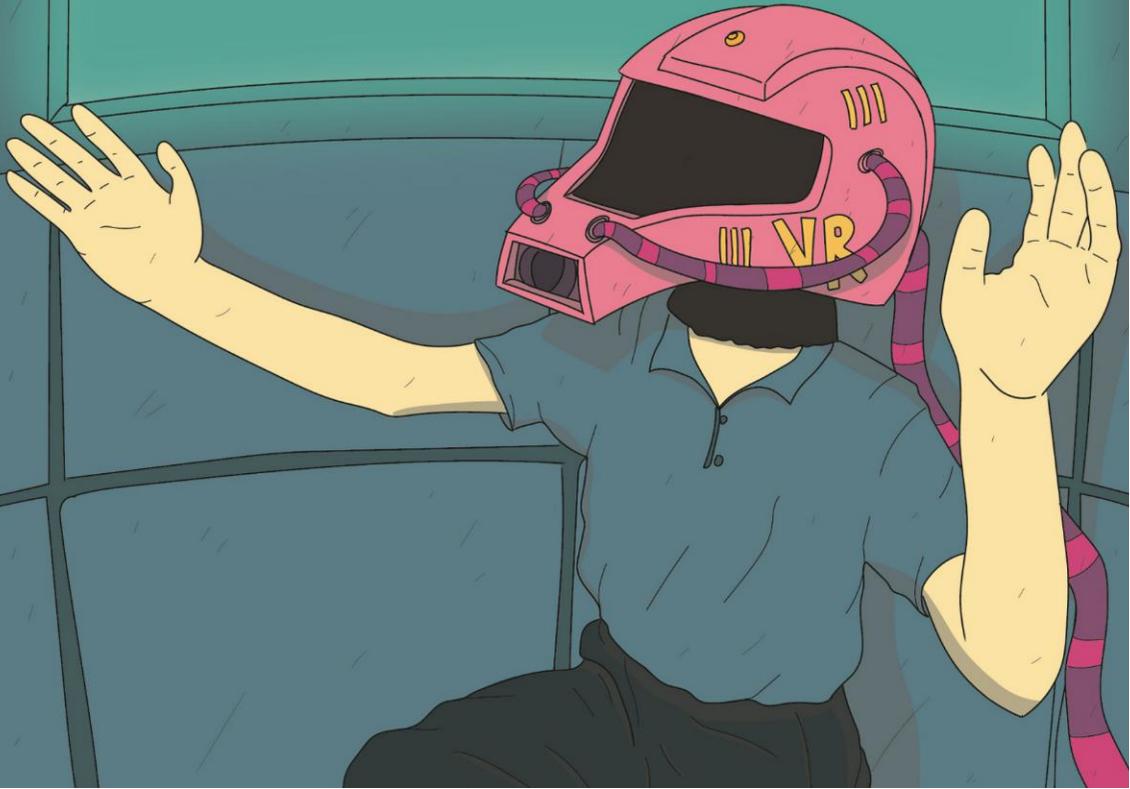
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Chapter 4

Cryo Refugee Camp



If children were brought into the world by an act of pure reason alone, would the human race continue to exist? Would not a man rather have so much sympathy with the coming generation as to spare it the burden of existence, or at any rate not take it upon himself to impose that burden upon it in cold blood?

— Arthur Schopenhauer

George from Paris, aka Micronation US-17, 2099

Those awakened from a cryogenic slumber were often sent to rehabilitation camps which housed thousands of ex-popsicles like myself. The camps were filled to the brim with antique tech—flat-screen TVs, handheld cell phones, computer terminals to access the net, toasters, and more. Disturbingly, toasters, for whatever reason, evolved, unlike the other ancient tech. So the rascals liked to chase newcomers around the camp toasting anything and everything in their path. Clearly an example of artificial intelligence gone awry. Toasters were made to toast, but without any bread, what was there left for them to do? They couldn't cope with knowing that there was no future left for their kind. I lost another toe thanks to one of them that caught me off-guard when I was blissfully staring at some woman's breasts. The damned thing just toasted my toe right off.

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Thankfully, the doctors were able to splice some of my DNA with that of a salamander to regrow it. My friend was not so fortunate; a toaster got him where it counts, in his privates, and the splice didn't go so well. Then again, prosthetics have by this time come a long way, so I am sure he will be fine.

Most tech these days is apparently integrated into the biOS—a biological operating system which can be accessed with just a thought. Want to watch TV? Just think about it. Make a call? Just think about it. Virtual-reality pornography? Just think about it. Virtual porn while talking on the phone with your mom or girlfriend? Just think about it. Multi-tasking is easy these days. In fact, I've been told that most conversations now are passively done subconsciously through one of the many artificial intelligence subroutines running in the background of the biOS. The artificial intelligence just selects from one of the most popular options:

1. Hello, how are you?
2. Hi, it has been a while, what is new?
3. Waassssup?!

Response:

1. I am good, and you?
2. Not much, and you?
3. Waaaaassssuppp?!

So on and so forth. There was a flaw in the Wassup option that would sometimes cause two individuals to go into an infinite loop, with the greeting getting longer and longer until both individuals

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short-circuited and died—died the ultimate death, no reanimation possible. The automated conversations are great for multi-tasking, terrible for having real interactions with real people. Mind-numbing to try to comprehend. But this is exactly why the rehabilitation camps were set up—to help people like me reintegrate into the strange new world.

Some thawed popsicles didn't make it, opting instead to return to the dead. The unfamiliarity of a new world, a new life without many or all of the ones they had loved, a life where spirituality was replaced by Gandhi-stims, really did a number on people. For me, I can only equate it to being a caveman entering a world which far surpassed what evolution had prepped animals for. Imagine a caveman seeing television for the first time, seeing buildings with lights, radios with invisible people speaking—voices emanating from a box that looks and feels like no stone tool they've ever created. But now imagine voices, advertisements, lots and lots of advertisements, and things I cannot even yet describe ... all in your head in 4D!

In the rehabilitation camp I met a woman named Sharkema Smith. She had also been reanimated not long ago. She was a bit odd, to say the least, so I recorded one of her diatribes directed concurrently towards herself and towards all of us.

“Who are we really? Am I the same person I was a few days ago—a few months, years, decades? I am not the same person I was even a few seconds ago—not mentally, not physically. A physicist from the Congo told me that 98 percent of atoms in my body change each

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year, and within five years, not a single original atom remains. Not a single freaking atom!

“My younger self ... that girl ... that girl so full of hopes and dreams, of potential and of wonder ... what happened to her? What happened to the days we played softball and field hockey until the night overtook the day? What happened to all the people I was to become—the astronaut, the rock star, the firefighter, the biologist, the archeologist? I no longer feel their presence inside of me. As I grew older, all those individuals converged into an official representative of the government working at the Department of Motored Vehicles. Slowly but surely, as the years passed, as the number of days of a wasted life, broken dreams, and lost romances grew in number, that girl to whom I could no longer relate cried—cried just a bit inside. Cried because of what she had become, cried because she grew into none of the things she thought she would be, cried until she could cry no longer; and then, well, then it was over. She killed herself. I killed myself.

“It is strange to be here today. I killed myself, but I also signed some papers to have my body frozen and to be reanimated should anything happen to me. That person I was a century ago, that younger version of myself, that child that eventually became an adult ... if we met today, we would not even be friends. Different religions, different philosophies, different expectations of life.

“I remember the first person I kissed, but not my first kiss. I don't remember where, I don't remember when, and I don't remember how. My younger self, there are pictures of her at a carnival,

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winning an award in kindergarten, getting her first haircut and her first tooth pulled. There she is, but why do I not remember these moments that were apparently so important they had to be captured and frozen in time? Are these pictures even real?”

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“As I began to age, more and more of life was taken from me. Not only did I lose all those people I wanted to become, but as I aged I was also losing what I thought was the only thing that made me who I was—memories. Like some cruel joke played by god, aging takes away youth and takes away recollections of our best times—and in their place gives us less and less of a future to look forward to. No past, no future. Goddamned aging really used to mess with the mind. But that is who we all used to become. With the biOS, I can change all of that; you can change all of that. Rewrite your history, or at least your memories of it; rewrite your future, and if it turns out bad, just rewrite more of your memories. Don’t you see? Do you get it? This is it; this will be the life I always dreamed of, and best of all, I will never forget.”

George from Paris, aka Micronation US-17, 2099

She was right in a sense. I wasn’t born a nihilist—or was I? Of course I was. All babies are nihilists before they become corrupted by their progenitors. My parents were devout Christians. In the Age

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of Adam, many people believed whatever their parents believed. If you were taught to be a Christian, how could any of the other four thousand or so religions be correct? Damn anyone to hell that was not Christian. Yet even then, more and more people were waking up, were rebelling against their programmed religious views. Who are any of us really? People change over time, and those people we once were are now only distant reflections of our former selves.

Anyway, I wanted to get out of this camp, and one of the first things on my agenda, being an ex-popsicle, was to get laid. So I did what everyone used to do to stalk an ex-lover: I went on Fakebook—which was surprisingly still around nearly one hundred years after my death. Not surprisingly, it was a barren wasteland of centenarians and dead people’s profiles still spamming Farmvilla and KandyKrush requests. Aimé, as I remembered, must be about a hundred years old, I surmised, so I might be in luck. My profile picture hadn’t changed. Logging in, I was spammed with privacy warnings: “Fakebook sells your information to anyone and everyone who is willing to pay anything. Billions of profiles’ data on sale just for five cryptos.” Navigating past the twentieth privacy warning and desperate requests to buy something from Fakebook, I was greeted by about three thousand friend requests! That was more friends than I had had in my lifetime. But I soon came to realize that, other than my grandma and grandpa, the other 2,998 requests were from half-naked women, flying mini-pig fan sites, and Zark Muckerberg—with a private message welcoming me back from the dead and requesting that I buy some data. Not sure how Fakebook knew that I was back, but whatever. I friended them all except Muckerberg.

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It took me a while to realize that my dream of Aimé was really a dream of my friend Amy. It didn't take long to find her; she was there, looking like a typical hundred-year-old. Status: widowed. Bingo! I sent her a message asking her to meet up; she responded instantly, thinking that my account had been hacked. So she requested to V-time. I didn't know what that was, so I asked. Apparently it stands for virtual time. So there we were, standing face to face after one hundred years in a virtual world—a romance separated by both space and time. We decided to fuck virtually. On the body of a non-genetically engineered centenarian, there are as many wrinkles, pus-filled sacs, skin tags, moles, and hidden crevices as there are visible stars in the night sky, and I wanted to make love to all of them—to explore, to lick every single one of those virtual crevices to make up for all the years that I had lost. She wanted the same, to explore every roll, fat cell, cellulite stash ... to make up for all the years that she had lost in her listless life, where she had apparently accomplished nothing of significance except for bringing more people, babies, into being .. propagating the meaningless cycle of life.

After we were both spent, exhausted after having had quite a few orgasms, she asked me what it was like to have died. I responded that having tasted nothingness, I knew that I did not want to return to it ever again. There wasn't darkness; there wasn't life; there wasn't even awareness of being non-aware—I simply no longer existed. It was as if a computer had been shut off temporarily and rebooted after a century, and that terrified me. I didn't tell her about my dream of her, as I figured that it was just a phantasm of my de-thawing brain.

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She asked me if I believed in god; I said no, that I'm not only an atheist, I am a nihilist. "But how could you be a nihilist, do you really think there is no meaning to it all?" she quizzed. Thinking a bit, I asked her how she could be anything else. "Where in the evolutionary timeline did life become meaningful, become anything more than a game of reproduction, of survival? At the introduction of the virus ... the bacteria, fish, dinosaur ... chicken, ape, human? Three and a half billion years ago? Maybe a million? Six thousand, perhaps? Since when did some god almighty from above imbue biological life with a soul? The question is not how I can be a nihilist. The question is: How can you be anything but one?"

My thoughts were interrupted by an alert from Muckerberg asking me if I wanted to buy the rights to my V-time session with Amy for seven cryptounits. Amy clicked yes, and that ended our session.

Over the next few days and weeks, we V-timed many times, learning much about each other. Then one day she told me that our affair had to end. Extramarital affairs were a sin. She still believed in god and looked forward to an eternal afterlife praising and worshipping him. This sounded to me like a fate worse than hell; a fate of infinite boredom; a fate I couldn't share with Amy. I fathomed that it was better to have evolved from apes than to have devolved from divinity. So I implored her to meet me in real-time, in person. She agreed.

We stood face to face. Although I'd explored every inch of her in V-time, in person she looked even older, more worn out—even for centenarian standards. A shiver shot up her spine as we embraced,

Cryo Refugee Camp

and she started to cry. “Why didn’t we get together a hundred years ago?” I responded, “We were from two different worlds.” “Yes, but here we are together,” she whimpered. Her eyes were a dull brown, hazy, with the look of one approaching death when little life remains; the look when only a flicker of life remains within. Her skin was olive, wrinkled, and mole-ridden. Neither of us were augmented with any biological, artificial, or mechanical upgrades. Everything was raw and natural. We made love. Then, during the act, just as I was nearing completion, she died. She died in transgression, she died in sin. I wondered, “Where is her god now? Did he forgive her or did she end up in hell? Or perhaps she returned to nothingness.” Whatever the case, like so many lifeforms that had lived before her, at least in this world, she was gone for good.

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Chapter 5

The Game Called Humanity



The depravity of man is at once the most empirically verifiable reality but at the same time the most intellectually resisted fact.

— Malcolm Muggeridge

Sharkema from Paris, aka Micronation US-19, 2099

Sharkema Smith, reads my shiny new holographic ID. Most identification these days consists of a simple wireless data share and then an authentication-verification on the receiving end. No need to flash an ID. However, the holograph is nice for dealing with sectors of society that are less enthusiastic about technology, like pro-deathers or the Amish or a-tec-hipsters. A-tec-hipsters are an odd bunch: anti-technology during the day, technology buffs when no one is looking. I'm caught somewhere between the groups. Having upgrades, but only knowing and understanding a relatively low-tech life. So for me, leaving the rehabilitation camp was tough.

A hundred years ago I'd wake up, go to work, come home, eat, binge-watch TV, then repeat. Work only reminded me of what I had become, of all the people I could have been but couldn't be bothered to be. So I killed myself—gunshot to the heart. I didn't want my

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family to have to go through a closed-casket funeral because my face couldn't be reconstructed. So the heart was the rational choice. But yeah, here I am—a second chance at life.

There was a game back in my time, back in the early twenty-first century called *The Simms*, which simulated life and was one of the most-sold video games in the history of gaming. The game was subsequently copied and vastly enhanced by artificial intelligences that wanted to explore human nature and wanted to experience the real world without actually living in the real world. As such, this virtual-reality *Simms*, or as it is now known, *Humanity—Classic Edition*, was the perfect place for me to rebuild my life. At least until I could figure out which of those people within myself—the astronaut, the rock star, the firefighter, the biologist, or the archeologist—I really wanted to be. Sure, work was no longer needed, but it would be fun to pretend to be someone I wasn't.

I couldn't decide, so I did what most reanimated people did: I went back to the same life that I had lived before. Back to the Department of Motored Vehicles it was for me. Not because this was what I wanted to do; rather, it was just something I had to do in order to get back into the normalcy of living. In the real world, I used to have a husband and two kids. One boy and one girl. Since being reanimated, I felt bad about committing suicide, so I never looked them up to see if they were still around. Most families, if still living, would be there for their loved one's reanimation. Mine were not. So they either no longer lived, no longer cared, or never got the message—the latter being extremely unlikely considering how connected everything is these days. Since I planned to be in Virtual

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Reality (VR) for a long time, before I went under I paid a company to put me in a VR chamber. The chambers are specialized in preserving the body while the mind stays active. They are very similar to cryogenic chambers, only a little warmer.

Having been dead for some time, I figured first things first: Time to find a big hunk to clean the rust out of the pipes. So in VR, I went to a nearby bar and started to flirt with some of the locals. I didn't know if they were other people or artificial intelligences. Then again, did it matter? Of course not. A few drinks and the next thing I knew I was in bed, on top of some random guy, taking control of my life, taking control of his. Afterwards we talked, shared dreams, exchanged more bodily fluids. He wanted to be a historical strategist—someone who shaped the direction of history. Because everyone and everything was connected, history had become quite a volatile concept, constantly being rewritten over and over to suit the needs of those in power. So historical strategists were in high demand and well compensated, at least fictitiously.

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In VR it wasn't long until we were getting married. At that time, I worked at the Department of Solar Vehicles (DSV) in the Amish community. My husband became a janitor. A few years went by; we had some good times, some bad times, and a whole lot of mediocre times. We loved, we argued, we shopped together, and we vacationed when work allowed us. And then, well, then I got

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pregnant. The great thing about the game Humanity is that one can speed up time or slow it down. So the work days went fast and the nights were long—arguments lasted mere milliseconds, while make-up sex lasted weeks and orgasms decades. Yet here I was, nine real-time months later, baby in arms, changing diapers, cleaning up my husband's man cave, fighting entropy as best I could. No matter how long I stretched out those good moments, life still seemed to go by too fast.

Five, ten, twenty real-time years went by in Humanity. What happened to me? Why am I still working at the DSV? Why is my husband still a janitor? We both shared such big dreams that evening at the bar, that night after making love, and then we just kind of went through the motions of life. We always told ourselves that tomorrow we'd do great things, tomorrow we'd travel the world ... yet that tomorrow never came. The tomorrow that came was the same tomorrow as the day before last. We talked big things, but we did little. Get up, go to work, come home, binge-watch TV, make love now and then, repeat. Suicide is the only option, the only way out of the cycle for me. We used to only get one life; I've wasted mine. Again. Click, click. *Bang!*

I wake up in a cryogenic chamber. Everything is a bit fuzzy. I am in a camp having this thing called the biOS installed. There is an extremely large fat guy named George there. I talk; he kind of just sweats and smiles awkwardly, staring at my breasts. I think he wants to sleep with me. Outside of the camp, the world is so strange that I cannot adjust. So I go into VR and sign up for a game called Humanity. I meet a guy at a bar, we sleep together, fall in love, get

The Game Called Humanity

married, go work, watch some TV, have a few kids. Click, click.
Bang!

Cryogenic chamber. Haze. In a camp. Fat sweaty guy—breasts. VR game. Sex, marriage, TV, work, kids. Click, click. *Bang!*

Wake up. Life. Suicide.

Suicide.

Suicide.

Suicide.

“Sharkema, stop! You are caught in an infinite loop. A virtual character playing a virtual character playing a virtual character. You must break the cycle. Otherwise you risk permanent existential failure. Humanity wasn’t designed or programmed to handle suicide. So the game resets itself, but an image of the former simulation is stored in your BIOS’s memory, hence the original character, your character, you, replays the same scenario again and again, creating an infinite loop which if left unchecked will be played again and again for all eternity.”—Physicist from the Congo

“Who are you? Have I really died? Am I dreaming? Am I in the real world or the virtual world?”—Sharkema

“You know who I am. You’ve seen me on TV, haven’t you? We don’t dream anymore outside of the dreamsphere, so you definitely aren’t dreaming. There is no difference between the real world and the virtual world, or even the archaic dream world for that matter.

Dreamsphere

Every fiction, every imagined realm, every religious afterlife is real. But, you see, all these realities, call them what you will, only exist as long as the parent directly exists. Once that directory is gone, that world ceases to be. Think back to when you were young—did you ever have a dream within a dream? Have you ever woken up only to realize that you were still dreaming? With artificial intelligence, our systems have become so complex, so large, that whole universes can be created and simulated.”—Physicist from the Congo

“So what is the point? If none of these worlds are the real world, what does it matter what I do? I should just kill myself, and you should just let me die!”—Sharkema

“How did that work out for you the first thousand times or so? You see, that’s just it: You are missing the point. All of these worlds are just one world with endless subsystems. All worlds are equally as real as all the rest.”—Physicist from the Congo

“If all worlds are just subsystems, that must mean that there is one original, or one world which created it all. One parent directory.”—Sharkema

“If you follow the turtles all the way down, you just end up back on top.”—Physicist from the Congo

I wake up in the cryogenic chamber. What the physicist said was strange. I don’t understand how our small lives can have any meaning in such a large, complex system. But I want to find out. I want to be something more, something greater than the totality of my past lives. It gives me something to think about, something to

The Game Called Humanity

strive for, and for now, that is enough to change the direction of my new life. I have decided. I will become a Native Service Agent (NSA). This will give my life meaning.

More



Consume

LOST
MY
JOB

LOST
MY
MARRIAGE

NOW THERE IS JUST
A CLOSET FULL OF
EMPTY SUITS



NOTHING
TO DO
NO ONE TO
IMPRESS

TOO OLD TO START OVER
TOO OLD FOR A SOUL MATE
TOO OLD FOR NEW LOVE

Chapter 6

Death Approaches



*It is not death that a man should fear, but he should fear never beginning to live.
— Marcus Aurelius*

Amy from Paris, Texas, 2023

“Amy, I am sorry to say that you have Stage 4 pancreatic cancer. Your treatment options are limited ...”

I didn't hear anything else the doctor said.

People call me Amy, but my real name is Ameenah Khan. Most could never comprehend the level of discrimination a person can face based on a name alone. But all that seems so petty now. I have bigger things to worry about. Twenty-three years old and diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

“Why ... god, why? Have I not been faithful? Have I not prayed five times a day? Have I not fasted and given to charity, gone on hajj? Where have I gone wrong?”

Dreamsphere

Although I pray that I will end up in Jannah, death really puts life into perspective. On the verge of leaving the finite to join the infinite—to return to the creator, to never face discrimination again, and to only know peace ... it sounds blissful. Yet, even with the promise of eternal paradise, there are still so many things I wish I had done and wish I had accomplished. But now ... now I won't even survive my latest phone upgrade! I won't get to see my daughter grow old. I live paycheck to paycheck, upgrade to upgrade, TV season to TV season—day to day. I just don't understand why I'm being called back home so soon.

I should have:

- Read a few more books
- Called in sick at work ... gone to the beach, slept all day, seen a sunset, a sunrise ...
- Seen a meteor shower
- Seen the Northern Lights
- Seen the world! Walked the Great Wall of China, trekked Machu Picchu, sunbathed in full hijab by the Great Pyramid of Giza, stood in Red Square and spun in circles, climbed the Leaning Tower of Pisa
- Spent more time with family, with friends, and with myself
- And, most importantly, sinned ... sinned a hell of a lot more (just kidding)

In life we often don't know what we have until what we have is lost. In my case, that was time. What does one do with the remaining

Death Approaches

days when death lurks in the shadows—waiting, plotting my dreadful last day? Do I go back to work? Do I go on one last journey to see the world? Do I stay at home and spend more time with my family? Maybe I run away! Maybe I curse god, curse the universe and everyone in it! Or maybe I just spend my final days praying. I don't know what to do ...

Worse yet, what should my husband do? Does he continue working? Do we go on that adventure together? Does he just stay at home with me and the baby? What if I live longer than my prognosis and waiting to die becomes ... well ... awkward for everyone? There are books on the subject—how-to guides on dying—but who has the time at this stage? I don't want to spend my last few months learning how to die; I want to spend my last few months living!

So many questions. I never questioned life before; rather, I just said InshaAllah, prayed, and went on with my day. Better to let Allah worry about the details. I miss George and our online romance. His memory, his ghost, comforts me—more so than my husband ever could, ever cared to try. Perhaps this is why I am being punished by god. Or is it a test, a test of my faith? Allah tests those he loves the most. Confusion swirls as I fell further down the spiral trying to rationalize the irrational. I can't tell if I'm nauseous from the disease or from inner pandemonium.

Dreamsphere

Advert: Got the cancer? Try Tucker's homeopathic holy water made from purified pig piss blessed by the Pope himself! If it doesn't cure ya, we'll freeze ya at a discounted rate and bring ya back in the future.

A few months go by after my initial diagnosis. My life is in complete disarray. Instead of choosing a path forward, I choose nothing. A mixture of ordinariness—a little work, a little calling in sick, a whole lot of just sitting around being angry at the world.

My doctor tells me that there is an experimental treatment involving a mishmash of radiation, a gene-editing tool called CRISPR, nanobots, and prayer. I decline. I am tired, nothing left inside at this point. I am just an empty shell of the person I used to be. I am ready to return to my maker, to be rejuvenated in the presence, in the light of Allah.

The ride home from the doctor's office is long and silent. My daughter is just one year old. She looks up at me from the backseat, smiles, tries to bat at a ladybug flying around, which eventually lands on her forehead. She giggles. Her face shatters me; tears stream down my cheeks and cloud my vision. Anjum is too young to understand; too young to know that soon I will be gone. The mother that gave birth to her will soon be forgotten. Another imaginary friend that eventually fades from her memory. There will be pictures of us together, videos even. But she won't remember the person in them; won't remember the times we shared together. Someone else will have to point to the picture and say, "That was your mother. She loved you very much." Otherwise, she won't

Death Approaches

know who the person is holding her, grinning from ear to ear, raising her up like a trophy at the hospital where she was born. I love that picture ... that moment is engraved on my brain forever. I pray that I can take just that one memory to Jannah with me, if I can take nothing else. My daughter gives my life purpose; Allah fills my life with meaning.

This person who stands before me in the mirror, who is she? She stares back, but there is a dark hollowness to her eyes. Has the soul already left the body? Am I really just an empty wind-up toy going through the motions of my remaining days? I think of my daughter, and it is in this moment that I make the decision to move forward with the experimental treatment.

Dr. Patel reiterates that this is only an experimental treatment and that my chances of survival are slim. She refers me to a psychiatrist/neuroscientist who is doing some pioneering work with a machine called the dreamsphere. It rings a bell. A few years back I heard a physicist talking about it in the news around the time of George's death. I wonder what the dreamsphere really is.

Radiation made me throw up things I never even knew were in me, things I never even knew existed. At times I swear there were pieces of lung, shreds of stomach, chunks of liver, and a few other unidentifiable jinns coming out of my body. I could feel the nanobots going to work inside, carrying out their gene-editing duties and repairing the damage that had already been done. This only made me puke more. To help, Dr. Patel also gave me a new

Dreamsphere

experimental drug called the G-Stim. I didn't know what the "G" stood for, but I felt good afterwards, as if everything was going to be okay. So when Anjum smiled, I smiled again too. It was a long time since I had been able to do that, to look into her eyes with some hope for the future.

The G-Stim gave me the energy to visit the psychiatrist who was going to use the dreamsphere on me. The building was in the middle of nowhere, with a large but vacant parking lot. The place looked like an abandoned factory from the early twentieth century, and corroded machinery lay to the side of the building as if it had just been removed from inside. My first thought was to turn around and drive home. Then again, I thought, what was the worst thing that could happen to me? Getting killed by zombies? George would have laughed at that. Maybe having the building collapse on me? Well, wouldn't have to worry about the cancer then. Or, better yet, being kidnapped and scientifically experimented on? That could be fun. Nah, that was just my imagination getting the better of me. I decided to push forward.

Inside there were paper signs that looked like they were from an old dot-matrix printer. My father, oddly, still had one of those in his office. As a kid I loved pulling the edges off the paper and making origami out of them. The signs pointed towards a long, narrow hallway with flickering lights. There were bitter-orange pools of water on the ground, topped with decaying metal, slowly but surely decomposing into god knows what. The place gave me the shivers and it smelled like iron. Common sense, logic, Allah, every bit of my being told me to turn around. What kind of freakish doctor

Death Approaches

would practise in such a grotesque place? After some time, the long, anxious walk ended with a greeting.

“Hello. You must be Amy. Come on in. We have some forms for you to fill out.”

The office was completely white. White tables, white chairs, not a speck of color to be seen—except by the people inhabiting it, most of whom were also white. The room looked nothing like the exterior; it had been completely remodeled. I sat down on what the receptionist said was a “ball chair,” but to me it just looked like a half-cracked eggshell ... with me soon to be inside. Everything was very retro-looking.

After signing a few forms waiving my right to sue, privacy, and pretty much my right to life, I was now officially their guinea pig. They didn’t need to kidnap me; I was volunteering. As a government-owned association, the company had the power to waive any basic protections people had under the current law. Either way, there was no suing the federal government—sovereign immunity. All Muslims knew that. But what did I have to lose? Besides, I could feel the G-Stims pumping through my veins. It was as if every inch of my body wanted to explode with life. Well, either that or the cancer was beating the nanobots, and the bots were trying to retreat back out of my body in order to regroup and re-strategize. Apparently that was a thing. I couldn’t tell if I was getting better or if this was the end, but I knew that everything would be all right—Allah would take care of me.

Dreamsphere

Side effects? Nausea, insomnia, diarrhea ... some other -ia's and -ea's that I didn't recognize went on for about half a page. Signed and acknowledged. A nurse led me back to another pure white room, took my blood pressure, and started to explain some of the unlisted side effects experienced by former patients. One patient felt as if a giant crab known as Camewa always followed him around—down the street, to work, in the bathroom ... to bed. After some time, the man befriended the crab and became its lover, so it all worked out in the end. Another person never slept again after the dreamsphere, and as a result, became exceedingly productive, working more than sixteen hours per day. So once again, things worked out favorably despite the unusual side effects. “Here, take these pills. In case you cannot eat because of the nausea, these will give you all the nutrients that you need—no need to eat,” said the nurse.

I was led to a large room; unsurprisingly, it was also white. In the middle of the room was a large metal ... tank, I think. I wasn't sure what I was looking at, but it looked like a polished tank off a truck for carrying gas. It was about twelve feet long and five feet high. Not much of a sphere if this thing was really the dreamsphere. Breaking my train of thought, in walked the doctor. “Hi ... Ms ...” Turning to the nurse, the doctor whispered a bit too loudly, “What is her name?”

“Ameenah, er ... Amy Khan,” the nurse responded nervously.

“Ms. Meaner Khan, I am Dr. Clive W. Rossak. Pleasure to make your acquaintance. Now, take off all your clothes and get in the tank. Thank you.”

Death Approaches

Dr. Clive W. Rossak turned stiffly around and walked out of the room, leaving me with a bewildered expression as the nurse put an arm around me, leading me towards the tank. She explained the process: undress, connect a hundred or so wires to my body, put on an oxygen mask, and then ... well, then I would dream.

I told the nurse that I was Muslim and that I could not be naked around a man. She assured me that Dr. Rossak was just as scared of me as I was of him and, more importantly, that he didn't care about my body; it was my mind that he was after. So I did as I was told, and into the dreamsphere I slithered.

Dreamscape 1: Memory from 2009, Amy

I am ten years old. I am outside, sitting on a porch covered in green turf which is connected to a small garden filled with marigolds and weeds. Attached is a long driveway that seems to go on forever. The sun is blistering; it scorches me beneath my clothes, beneath my hijab. I step out onto the hot gravel, which burns my bare feet. The pain causes me to look down, but my attention is swiftly redirected to the edge of the garden where there is a caterpillar. It looks strange, as if its skin is crawling—no, oozing black blood. I bend over to get a better look. It is not bleeding, and its skin is not crawling. It is ants! Lots and lots of ants picking at the poor thing, pulling it apart. I want to help, but I am scared of the ants and strangely drawn into the conflict, wanting to know what will happen next. “Allah, please help this poor creature; don't allow it to suffer,” I say, watching passively. Nothing happens; the ants continue to pick it apart. It doesn't make a lot of sense. The caterpillar is so much

Dreamsphere

larger; why doesn't it fight back? Why doesn't god intervene? I don't understand. I look down at my hands, which are held out in front of me, turned towards heaven, praying. "My hands, my hands are covered with ants!" I shriek. Horrified, I watch as everything starts to dissolve until there is only darkness.

Dreamsphere: 2023, Amy

My eyes open suddenly. What was that? The dream, the memory, seemed vaguely familiar, as if it was something that happened long ago to someone so full of life, curiosity, and vigor—not a cancer-ridden sack of meat in a tank of lukewarm water hoping that some weird doctor isn't spying on me.

"Oh, I am definitely spying on you, my dear," booms Dr. Clive W. Rossak. "You have a beautiful mind; I can hear all your thoughts. So pure, so innocent. That is rare these days—uncorrupted faith. But do you really think god can help you now? Does this being really get involved in the affairs of humans, of animals?"

"Yes," I respond, "and I want out of this thing!"

"You didn't help the caterpillar, did you? Typical. Had the power to help, did nothing. This is why more than three billion people in the world live in poverty. But things are changing. A new God is coming. Your god failed you, and you failed him."

"What the hell kind of doctor are you? I thought this dreamsphere was supposed to help me, you sick bastard!"

Death Approaches

“Is that what they told you, that it would help? Oh, it will. It has. Go home, pray. I am sure God will heal you—of that I am very sure,” Dr. Clive W. Rossak says.

I feel a needle pierce my shoulder ... more G-Stims. Suddenly, I know that I will be fine. I know that Allah will save me.

Upon exiting the dreamsphere, I am greeted by someone I haven't met before, but she looks strangely familiar. She says she is a scientist—a physicist, in fact—and that she helped to create the dreamsphere. I can see her name on her badge clearly; it reads: \missingfont error code 9007.info.

She tells me, “The universe is a weird and wonderful place. Alan Watts once said, ‘You are the universe experiencing itself.’ What some of us call miracles, others call science. The universe, I am told, doesn't know what to make of it yet, doesn't know which side to take—miracles or science, that is. Don't mind Dr. Clive W. Rossak; he's been a total grump since he stopped sleeping—working a bit too much, sixteen plus hour days. But promise me this: Once you get better, stop taking the G-Stims, have the nanobots removed, and just live your life. The future world is not a world for everyone. Go and be with your god.”

The dreamsphere left me changed. George's ghost sometimes haunted me. If I went to the bathroom, I could see him floating above, gobbling up vegetarian burgers, crumbs and slobber falling all over the place. The side effects could have been worse, I suppose.

Dreamsphere

I saw a lot of George the first few weeks after the dreamsphere; the diarrhea really brought us closer together in ways I could never have imagined. A few months later, a lot of praying, and no trace of cancer. No more stims, no more bots. Just me, my family, my life, and sometimes George. Faith saved my life, and I owe everything to god.

More

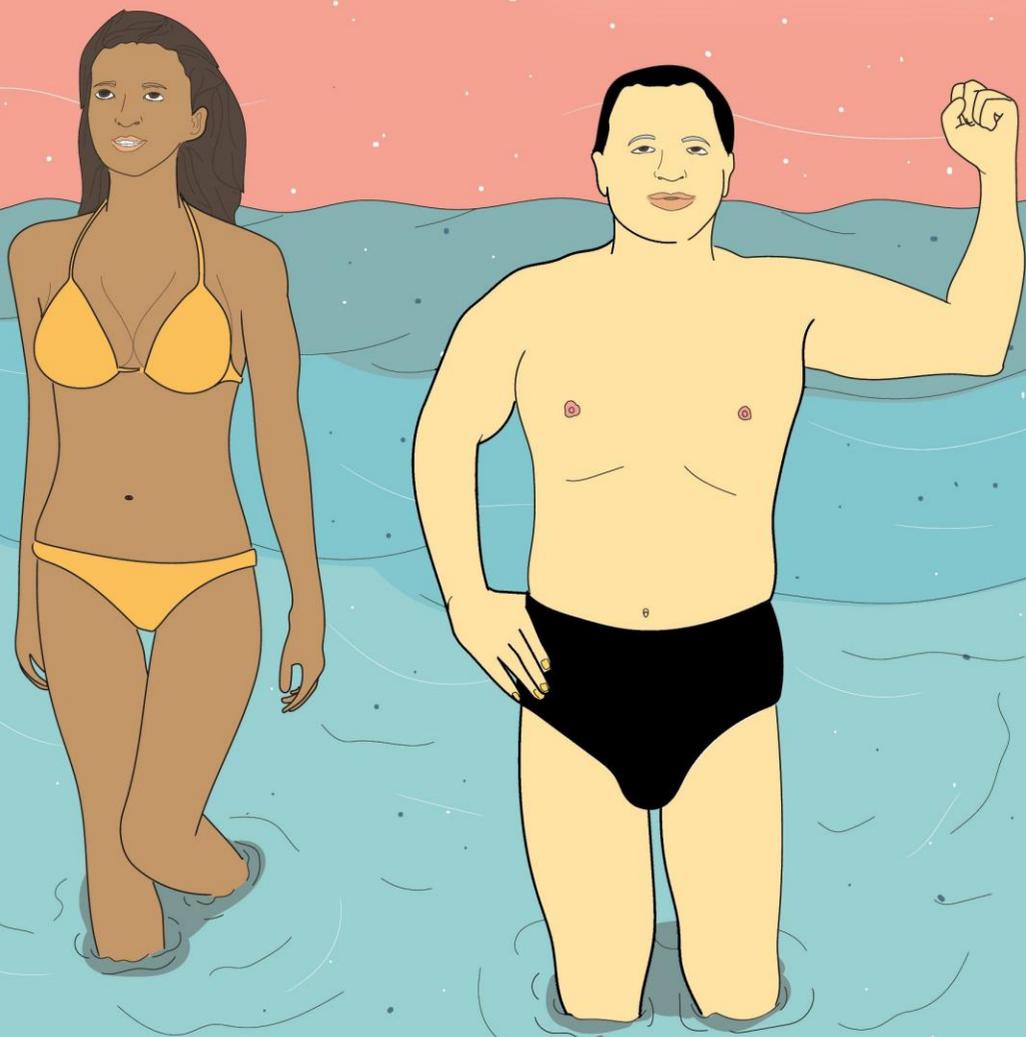


Consume

Death Approaches

**3 months ago My life was over.
Then I discovered
Dr. Clive W. Rossak's Immortality Packs.**

**Now I have a new life, new job,
and even a new genetically modified soul mate
that will never leave Me.**



Choose Life, Not Death

Chapter 7

I Am God, I Will Be King



We are gods with anuses.
— Ernest Becker

Dr. Clive W. Rossak from Marfa, Texas, 2022

Why are people attracted to religion? Well, I will tell you why. First, children tend to believe whatever crap their parents spew. Tell them Santa is god, and next thing you know they are kneeling on the edge of their beds, hands folded over one another, praying for lots of great new toys and drinking Koka-Kola as if it were holy water, pissing diabetic lies and bloody kidney stones all over polar bears, marking their territory henceforth wherever they embark. In the embryonic stage, we all start out as anuses, so it is no wonder that we go through life shitting all over society, contaminating everything we touch with fecal matter—clothes, other people, food—eventually consuming the same crap we expunge. Humans are still very much part of the animal kingdom despite their desperate attempts to escape it. This was god's first big mistake—starting his most beloved creation embryonically with the ass instead of the brain. Or the more rational conclusion: Religion is

Dreamsphere

one prodigious falsehood passed down from generation to generation, indoctrinated in young, gullible minds and taken as an unassailable truth.

Second, the reality of life. Or rather, death. If we die here, we die for good. This is the only unassailable truth. No afterlife, no paradise, no karmic cycle, no fiery mazes, and there sure as hell is no Mongolian named Erkil Khan waiting to judge you. Though ... you know, the thought of going back in time and cutting the brain out of Chinggis Khan for my collection does arouse me a little. The mind cannot cope with a blue sky and a black death, so some genius thousands of years ago created a story to pacify the masses who were beginning to ask too many questions. As the years passed, that story degraded from being told too many times—father to son, mother to daughter, prostitute to child, foster parent to bastard, priest to altar boy. Had it stayed simple, without contradictions, we may all still be believers today.

Make no mistake: I am not an atheist. I am God. I am the Savior of mankind. I Am that I Am. Yahweh, Elohim, Huwa, Sri Krishna ... Bai-Ulgan. Who else could I be? Who else could endow mankind with eternal life? Create paradise on Earth? Cure cancer and disease and elevate humanity out of the animal kingdom? These are things that all other gods and goddesses have failed to do in their promises to their followers. I will be King, and I will conquer and kill all false gods!

One by one I cure the sick, feed the hungry, give wealth to the impoverished, and one day soon, my inventions will be bestowed

I Am God, I Will Be King

upon the masses, and they will fall to their knees in reverence and exalt my hallowed name. The god in the Bible killed over two million people; Satan, ten. Hitler, Stalin, Mao, etc. made them both look like amateurs—a true embarrassment to the establishment. And so I must cleanse the Earth and rebuild it in my image. I must create a perfect world with perfect people—people who will not break my commandments, people who will not die, people who will not get sick and spread fecal matter wherever they crawl about. I must purge the Earth of the illiterate in order to evolve humanity to the next stage of enlightenment.

“Clive, think for a minute. Think about your mother. What would she say if she could hear your thoughts, see you immersed in the dreamsphere dreaming these dreams?”—Physicist from the Congo

“My mother died a long time ago when I was a child. I have no memories of her. No emotions. No bond to her other than my disgust. When people die, so many memories are lost. Lifetimes of knowledge, feelings of joy, of hate, and of aloof insouciance that can never be replaced! Genocide, human trafficking, theft, driving too fast ... pig-wrestling and greased pig contests plague the planet. Pigs are intelligent creatures; they deserve to be free—not tortured then barbecued for our pleasure!

“Instead of extending a hand to help, we lust for more. Our souls have become anemic; they canker and sore until we can no longer bear to look at ourselves in the mirror—can no longer face what we’ve become. When was the last time you really looked at yourself in the mirror? Made eye contact with your reflection? Held a steady

Dreamsphere

gaze with your inner soul? Does the person on the inside recognize the person on the outside? You tell yourself that it is okay, that the world is getting better, that *Homo sapiens* species is not as savage as it once was. You buy a new shirt made in some sweatshop at the expense of another life, new shoes, organic laundry soap, and Earth-friendly bacon from genetically engineered pigs that fart a little less because you feel bad about global warming. Then you buy a new piece of art or go to a movie to escape reality. You feel better about yourself. It helps you to sleep better at night.

“But my mother ... you bring up that blasphemous whore, that harlot! She will be proud to know that she birthed God! When I reanimate her, I will dip bread in her menstrual blood and offer it to mankind—transubstantiation—and once you all eat from my flesh, you will all be reborn, have everlasting life. 6664666366626661 will be the beginning of something great.”—Clive

“You are sick, Clive. I can help. I’ve seen the future; it won’t end as you imagine.”—Physicist from the Congo

“I am the future! The future created me, not the past. Retrocausality. Mankind’s future was so bleak, so desperate, that they created a Savior in me ... and only I can save them from themselves.”—Clive

“This is not your path; you will not reign supreme. Maybe you will for a brief infinitesimal blip, then you too will be replaced by a new God. Immortality, your inventions, your followers, won’t be able to save you. It will be your own creations that will ultimately lead you to your demise.”—Physicist from the Congo

I Am God, I Will Be King

“You cannot kill the one true God.”—Clive

“If that is true, then perhaps you die after all, and perhaps you are not God.”—Physicist from the Congo

“Get me out of this machine! From here on out, I will oversee my own dreamscapes. Oh, and you’re fired!”—Clive

That tripe. I should have never hired her. Thoughts are best left to ourselves. She could never understand the mind of God. The majority of our life is spent in conversation with none other than ourselves—and the many personalities that make us who we are. We talk more to ourselves than we do to any other person or group of people. Most of the time, oblivious to our surroundings, lost in thought. It is only natural that I oversee my own dreams.

The dreamsphere consumes a lot of energy. Should I go to the store? No, I should order in tonight. Chinese. No, Vietnamese. How about we compromise and just go with Thai? How about instead we apologize to the physicist, invite her over, do a little brain surgery on her, and then down a few pills afterwards? *We need her, so you must apologize anyway.* But I don’t want to. *We don’t care what you want.* How dare you talk to God like that? *We can talk to ourselves however we damned well please.* Something doesn’t feel right; we are fading back to the darkness.

Dreamsphere

Advert: Pizza Nut—Pony Pepperoni Penis Pizza, just 25 cryptos—digitalized food only. Extra toppings: polar bear bacon, habanero peppers, banana slices, moldy breast milk cheese, lice, curried potato puffs—3 cryptos each. No one out-guts the Nut!

My father was a neuroscientist. He was a real man, someone to be envied, respected—a true representation, a true embodiment of mankind evolving. It was from him that I first learned that religion was a lie. The story that turned me into a non-believer? Envision a person born in 1938—the same year Orson Welles broadcast *War of the Worlds*, tricking half the nation into believing aliens were invading, the same year Germany discovered nuclear fission and Hitler's supermen invaded Austria while hopped up on methamphetamine and other drugs; and while Germany was busy getting high, conquering its small neck of the woods, America created the fictional Superman. Among all of this, a man was born somewhere in Europe. Let's call him Clive 1.0.

Clive 1.0 was a scientist, and a damned good one at that. But then one day in 1985, our archrival, the virus—or, more specifically in this case, herpesviral encephalitis—got him. Since then, whatever happened historically didn't really matter in his world—the fall of the Berlin Wall, Nelson Mandela's long walk to freedom, Bill Clinton not having sex with a certain woman, O.J. Simpson not killing a person or two, the internet, Fakebook, the first African-American president of the United States, my birth ... it was as if none of it was real. Clive 1.0 developed chronic anterograde

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amnesia after the virus ate and destroyed the part of his brain which dealt with memory—the hippocampus.

One of my patients once told me that the meaning of life was to live in the moment. This really got me thinking, so I asked him if he wanted me to make this happen for him. He cheerily accepted, and I gleefully got to chopping up his hippocampus with my giant cleaver-shaped scalpel. Let's call this person Clive 2.0. Clive 2.0, like Clive 1.0, could no longer form new memories. Both perpetually lived in a short window of just a few seconds—never forming any new memories, and never being able to contemplate the future. Both still had their personalities, but every ten seconds or so, both Clives would “wake up” as if they were awake for the first time since the “incident.”

Having observed Clive 2.0 for about twenty years, I liked to ask him about what it was like ... what it was like to live in the moment with no past and no future. He echoed the same insights Clive 1.0 had provided about his state: “There is no difference between night and day. No thoughts, no dreams. It is like being dead. I am dead.” A paradox of sorts. A living being which describes life as death. Because both Clives couldn't form new memories, you could literally sit there and ask them the same question over and over without them remembering that you had just asked the question ten or twenty seconds ago. Both almost always responded in the exact same way, as if their brain was a broken computer running in circles, just an algorithm responding to external stimuli. Insert question “A,” output response “B.” Slowly but surely I began repairing Clive 2.0, giving him longer windows in which to live, extending his

Dreamsphere

memory—thirty seconds, a minute ... five, ten, sixteen hours. I watched and observed him awakening over and over so many times as if for the first time—a hell so ghastly, so unintelligible, so abysmal that not even the devil himself could have thought up this type of purgatory. But it was a necessary hell in order to move forward with the enlightenment of mankind.

Clive 2.0 was wrong about living in the moment being the meaning of life, and the only way I could convince this clone, this impostor, despite having met himself, seen himself, was to show him what it was like. Meaning for humans can only be defined in context of the past and future. Take away memories, take away foresight, and you're left with a empty vessel which vaguely resembles a sentient being. Given the inordinate amount of data out there about Clive, he was the perfect subject for the government's cloning project—a way for the United States to compete with China.

“Clive, I am going to pull you out now.”—Physicist from the Congo

“I thought I was already out, and didn't I just fire you? What the hell are you doing?”—Clive

“That's what you said, but you aren't my boss. Dr. Clive W. Rossak, the director of this facility, wants to see you now.”—Physicist from the Congo

“No! I am Dr. Rossak! I am God, and you will do as I tell you!”—Clive

I Am God, I Will Be King

“I am sorry, Clive. You are just a clone—Clive 263.0, to be exact. Dr. Rossak has been experimenting with how to transfer memories from clone to clone.”—Physicist from the Congo

“No ... no, this cannot be right. You must help me. Please, I beg you. It doesn't make any sense. Please ...”—Clive

“Don't worry, Clive 263.0, this isn't the first time you realized this, the first time you've experienced this, the first time you've begged and pleaded for my help. You just don't remember the other times. She cannot help you now; she cannot even help herself. I am already too powerful. I am nearly God, and yes, I will be King. Now come along, little one, follow me.”—Dr. Clive W. Rossak

More



Consume

IMMORTALITY IS A SIN

- CHOOSE DEATH -



Visit The Church of Iczihal
at 10993 Rotten Duck Butt Lane, Micronation-111
Death Awaits You



Chapter 8

The Ten Minutes After You Die



One has to pay dearly for immortality; one has to die several times while one is still alive.

— Friedrich Nietzsche

Pro-Life Preacher, Marfa, Texas, Year Unknown

“‘Thou shalt not kill.’ It is not only god’s law, it is the law in every country in the world. But somehow the devil has tricked us into believing that abortion is okay, believing that women have the right to choose, believing that god Almighty doesn’t believe that babies are people, or even that our children should have rights. But listen to me carefully, for god has spoken to me, and he has shown me the future. He has shown me a future in which life is no longer cherished, is no longer seen as sacred. A future ... a future where the Beast deceives us with his offerings, and his spirit consumes our souls from the inside out—a Beast with many heads.

“But hear these words, heed what I say, for the Beast beckons us not to—grinning from the depths of Hell, waiting for his opportunity to

Dreamsphere

initiate the apocalypse. The process of life—from the time of conception to the time of birth to the time of death—is sacrosanct. Life is not a thing that is defined by a certain number of weeks in the womb, or a thing that is defined by the act of a child crossing the vaginal canal, as pro-choicers—or, as I like to call them, pro-deathers—would have you believe.¹ It is a process defined by god, and god says, ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you.’ A fetus is living—it grows, develops, matures. To terminate life is murder. And what do the offenders do with terminated lives? They chop them up, sell them for science, burn them, toss them in the trash, convert them to biological waste—this is how they repay god for the gift of life.

“If in this country, if in any country, we allow a mother to kill her own daughter, her own son, how, then, can we sit on our thorn-ridden thrones and judge others? How is it that we can say that this dictator has committed genocide, or that that person has committed war crimes, when we ourselves have committed and even condoned the ultimate crime—infanticide? How could we be pro-death when the Bible, the very words of god, so clearly states, ‘Thou shalt not kill’? Is this truth not self-evident, that we are all endowed by our creator with certain unalienable rights? A right to life?

“The scripture tells us, ‘This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.’ We cannot, we must not, let the silent holocaust continue.

¹ Eventually, pro-lifers became pro-deathers and vice versa with the introduction of immortality.

The Ten Minutes After You Die

Forty million ... forty million children of god, of us, slaughtered. Butchered. Murdered. Forty million of our unborn sons and daughters sent to their unmarked graves each year. An indiscriminate genocide that transcends race, religion, and nationality. Imagine taking the metropolitan populations of New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago. Now replace all the living with dead fetuses—that is the number of babies killed in one year! The devil didn't need to create a new supervillain, a new Hitler or Pol Pot. He created liberalism, then sat back and watched how we destroyed ourselves and descended so ungracefully, so violently into sin.”

Advert: Do you like big brown booties? Fireworks shooting from assholes and asscracks galore? Come on down to Big Billy Bob's in White Settlement, Texas, for the largest twerking competition EVER on July 4th!

“Now, I know what you are thinking, given that this is a pro-life rally. Didn't god kill children in the Bible? Didn't he kill children in the great deluge, the first-born in Egypt? Did he not send two bears to maul and devour forty-two youths for mocking Elisha's bald head? Well, yes, of course, but ...”

POP, POP, POP

I look up. The sun is so bright, piercing my eyes, but I cannot blink—and neither does it. Seagulls call out to their young; the sea breeze feels cool on my face and brings the stench of trash from a nearby landfill. It is such a beautiful day to give a speech ... to

Dreamsphere

spread the word of god. But I am not speaking. The sun is so bright, and it only continues to get brighter, more intense. I am wet. My chest is wet. Why is my chest wet? I am not in the shower; it is not raining. The seagulls? Jesus Christ, these birds love shitting on priests on hot sunny days. How many times has this happened to me already? I cannot look down, cannot brush off the bird droppings. The sun goes supernova; it is too intense. It hurts, but the pain soon fades. Finally, I can blink; I can close my eyes. So tired. The sun doesn't feel so warm anymore. I grow cold. Must close my eyes, must rest just for a moment ... then I will get back to my speech.

Darkness. Warmth. Divinity. I feel god, feel his light; his warmth spreads throughout my body. There is a light in the distance. It comes closer and stops before me. I step forward, and it steps backwards. I take another step forward, but I don't get any closer. I don't understand. I start walking; it moves away at an equal speed. Walking turns into jogging, jogging to running, and running to an all-out sprint. The faster I move, the faster it pulls back, until eventually I cannot keep up and it disappears into a boundless event horizon.

Have I died? Has god forsaken me? No, I must have passed out. I feel strange, as if I am slipping—no, I'm falling ... there is just nothingness as I fall for what seems like an eternity. As I descend into the bottomless pit, my life starts to flicker and then flash before my eyes. I've helped so many people—the sick, the poor, the mentally disturbed. Their faces, their memories, relieve my anxiety. It is such a relief to see familiar faces. They praise me as a hero, thank me for showing them the path towards god, saving their souls,

The Ten Minutes After You Die

giving them rebirth and peace. Eventually they too fade away. Other faces replace them. I recognize them too—my sweet, sweet altar boys, the ones to whom I introduced Christ and the Song of Songs 7:9–12. They look angry, but I loved them as if they were my own children—taught them about life, devotion, hidden treasure; played with them, splashed their exposed bodies with holy water ... They are holding crosses upside down, as if they are miniature swords. They encircle me, encroach—bottoms of crucifixes pointing towards me. I am naked, stripped of all my clothes, my dignity—helpless to defend myself. I can only think, only pray ... “No, don’t stick that there! No, please god ... no, not in the ...”

Penetrated by the very thing which killed Christ ... and now I know, know that I am forgiven and that heaven awaits. Thank you, god. What I did wasn’t really wrong; it was just an expression of my boundless love for those boys saved from abortion, those that took up refuge in my orphanage from a world that did not want them, and in return, I was loved.

“Wow, damn, Dr. Rossak, you really did a number on this one. Look, even his eyes popped out of his sockets. What the heck did you do to him?”—Clive 599.0

“Killed him. Saw his soul, his essence, the quintessential core that made him ... him. One can only really know a person through death. When a person dies the right way, the brain goes on living for about ten minutes or so after the body has already perished. When this happens, the subject is isolated, left only to his thoughts with no hope of ever returning to the world of the living. It is a glorious

Dreamsphere

thing to witness—a person hopelessly trying to come to terms with their own mortality. Some attempt to deny death, some pray, some attempt to fight—but their fate at this point is certain, sealed. Death is imminent. Yet the inner conflict continues—their brain orgasms repeated over and over, neurons ejaculating one last time, masturbating themselves superfluously into the darkness, electric sparks beseeching life to cum back to a lifeless body before completely exhausting themselves.

“It is a magnificent miracle to observe—panic and fear mixed with lust for life. Confusion. One’s finest and most horrid memories spewing endlessly out of a fading consciousness—imploring the world not to forget them. Post-orgasm, the mind enters a state of perfect clarity, acquiescence, then judges itself; either rewards itself or punishes itself in its last seconds—and by the look on the rev’s face, the bulge in his pants, the wet spot, he got the happy ending he always dreamed of.

“Lucky for him, because we aren’t all so lucky. Movies, books, plays, operas—everyone wants a happy ending. But since when are there happy endings? Get this, and let me write it down for you.

“Fifty percent of the people in the world live on less than \$2 per day, thus:

“a) If there are 200,000 deaths per day, then there are 150,000 worthless people dying per day (given that the poor die at a quicker rate than the rich).

The Ten Minutes After You Die

“b) If there are 400,000 births per day, then there are 300,000 worthless people created per day (given that the poor reproduce quicker than the rich).

“Since ‘a’ and ‘b’ are true, we are creating worthless people twice as fast as we can kill them off.

“My point is, Clive 599.0, life is no longer valued, and in fact it becomes increasingly devalued by the second. This is why the world needs me. Only I can cleanse it; only I can save people from themselves.

“But now, since I collected enough data from the reverend, it is time to send him off to hell—my hell. For only God—only I—can judge a man’s soul, deem it worthy of salvation, and this man has been deemed unworthy.

“Someday soon, I will solve the problem of death too. But for now, it is essential that I know what the brain feels, what happens while dying, so that when I can eventually reanimate people it can be done correctly, with as little damage to the psyche as possible. This is why I kill people in the dreamsphere—so that I can know the psyche in its most perfect, most vulnerable state.

“Clive 599.0, freeze him. We will want to reanimate him in the future so that we can do this all over again, study the effects of multiple, perhaps even infinite deaths and reanimations on the mind. Oh, and Clive, stop looking up #twerkqueens on Instagram or you’ll end up in the dreamsphere next.”—Dr. Clive W. Rossak

Dreamsphere

“But sir ... their butts are just so round, so brown—so bootynormous. It is hypnotic and addictive.”—Clive 599.0

“Yeah, I agree. This strange mating ritual, this thing called twerk, is enthralling. Over the weekend I found myself stuck watching a twenty-plus-hour-long twerking compilation on Utube. Downed energy drink after energy drink while ass checks gyrated back and forth, forth and back, for hours on end. But, Clive 599.0, this is affecting your work productivity, and I cannot allow it. If you are not working at a hundred percent efficiency, then I must find other, more creative uses for you. Because of our susceptibility to the twerk, as God, I am making this one of my first commandments—‘Thou shalt not twerk.’ God cannot be bothered with such distractions. I must focus on the mind, not the body.”—Dr. Clive W. Rossak

“Yes, sir; I understand. But I think we should clone that Nicky Minimaj girl; she is slaying.”—Clive 599.0

“No, Clive 599.0, she is not real—mostly implants. Maybe we can freeze her as an example of prosthetics from the early twenty-first century. For cloning we would need to find an all-natural specimen. A woman ... a woman with a massive gluteus maximus, a gluteus with a fatty exterior and impeccable buoyancy, elasticity—bounce! Dang it, Clive 599.0! Got me all hot and bothered. You’re going in the dreamsphere!”—Dr. Clive W. Rossak

The Ten Minutes After You Die

More



Consume

THOU SHALT

NOT TWERK!



Chapter 9

The Army of the Unborn



*Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me man? Did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me?"*
— John Milton

Historical Strategist in the Year 2099

Oh yes, the *Homo sapiens* version of Dr. Clive W. Rossak was an interesting fellow. He gave people immortality, cured the incurable, and at the same time brought wrath and destruction upon those who opposed him. For years he secretly amassed armies of unimaginable size. Ever wonder what happens to aborted babies? Of course not—no one does; no one cares. Go rummage in some biological waste bins and you'll find your answer: You'll find a few million rotting carcasses. Most of them eventually end up in the hands of scientists who are not so thrilled about heaps of cadavers. But what do the scientists do with the unborn? Before Dr. Rossak, not much—oink.

Dr. Rossak started collecting fetuses in the year 2010, and let me tell you, the supply of dead babies was plentiful. Receiving a few million per year for twenty-five years or so equated to a stockpile ...

Dreamsphere

a stockpile of tens of millions. He took the unborn and put them in cryogenic chambers and planned to reanimate them in the future. Given how small the bodies were, storage wasn't as difficult as one would have imagined. Conversely, picturing entire warehouses of frozen fetuses became the stuff of historical legend—stuff not even the likes of Stephen King could have conjured from the dark depths of the human soul.

In the year 2035 Dr. Rossak started to reanimate what he referred to as “The Unborn.” Historical strategists like myself still creatively debate exactly how this happened, but what actually happened doesn't matter. What we tell other beings, such as the humans, flying mini-pigs, cats, fish, hybrids, and others, does.

Dr. Rossak lived in what used to be called Paris, Texas, now known as Micronation US-17. But he also bought a city in West Texas that was known as Marfa, now dubbed Micronation US-19. Dr. Rossak shipped the popsicled children from Paris to Marfa and started to unthaw, reanimate, incubate, and finally grow them into actual human beings. Marfa, a little-known town in the middle of nowhere, became a metropolis overnight. Dr. Rossak engineered a team of brilliant scientists, mostly clones of himself, to raise the children, teach them, and prepare them for the future to come. It was almost as if he had some psychic insight or scrying device into the future.

The years 2027 and 2029 were marked with famine, and it would be these years that were the stage for what would become the most fascinating war in history, one which was quite uncreatively named World War III. Some believed that the famines were man-made, so

The Army of the Unborn

that is what we tell intelligent beings today. Upload the latest version of *Memoirs of a Clive Clone: A World Without the Twerk*, and that is what you'll find. Some believed that the Bible prophesied the years to come—the four horsemen or something like that. But if that is the case, the horses were more like rainbow-colored mini-pigs. Our Father kind of hit humanity with everything all at once within a short period of time: famine, war, death, immortality, evolution ... enlightenment.

During the two great famines, a quarter of the Earth's population was destroyed. While nation fought nation for scarce resources, Dr. Rossak built his empire in rural America. By the year 2025, China had overtaken the United States in just about everything: manufacturing, quantum computing, artificial intelligence, medicine, infrastructure—even chefs specializing in cooking swine. It was really no contest. For years China had bought up American debt, bought up America. It owned us. This is hard for me to stomach as a true patriot, as someone whose great-grandparents came from a farm in Texas, someone who loved the idea of a United States, of unity ... but it wasn't to be. There was no contest when the famines came. The United States had failed to stay competitive over the years. China didn't need to beat the United States with blunt force; all it had to do was sit back, buy it, wait for time to pass, then just nudge it over the edge and watch it fight amongst itself. Watch it self-implode.

Red vs. Blue—one could see it happening over the years, a nation hobbled by outrageously stupid polarization. When the first famine hit, China seized the opportunity and invaded Taiwan. The country

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fell in a matter of days while the United States sat back and debated what to do. When the decision was made to counterattack, the United States found itself defenseless—hacked. The Chinese had employed a computer virus unlike any other, called 7072696d65627265616b—also known as Primebreaker or PBer. This was one of the first semi-artificially intelligent viruses ever released. It wasn't just that the virus could beat RSA encryption. It could beat any type of encryption. The virus quickly learned any algorithm, any type of security, then broke it. Oink, oink.

China sat back as North Korea crushed the South. Once North Korea was finished with South Korea, it went after and quite swiftly defeated Japan, which also fell victim to PBer. After North Korea did China's dirty work, China engulfed them. China then annexed Mongolia and most of South Asia, from Bhutan down to Fiji. Russia invaded Europe; Cuba took all of Mexico and South America. How this happened no one really knows either. But China eventually in a magnificent show strength and vigor eventually defeated Cuba. The Africa Union took the entire Middle East before being raided by China for resources. Yet both the Congos were unharmed, a free zone to which refugees from all nations flocked. India and Pakistan nuked each other. The fallout did wonders for unnatural evolution across the globe. Canada, Australia, and a few others joined forces but were no match for the new empire. For the most part, China just sat back as others fought, then harvested the remains.

The Army of the Unborn

Advert: Worried about a nuclear attack? Better stock up on Potassium Iodate tablets. Try our new 20,000 year package made in Chernobyl, sold by Tuckers.

But, you know, besides directing history, I really enjoy the AI-created world Humanity. Met a lot of interesting people there. With an upgraded biOS, I can simultaneously be in that world and this world. Got married in Humanity, had a few artificial kids—pets, if you will ... but don't tell my Real World (RW) wife, Susscrofa. She would probably get jealous if she knew about my extramarital affairs in Humanity. But I am sure you don't want to hear about those, so let me get back to the story.

Advert: Free shipping, even on cybernetic sex parasites. Two-minute delivery guaranteed. Consume more. Lots more. Zamazon Grime members only.

Cybernetic sex parasites may cause extreme orgasms and are highly contagious. Use with caution. Must be 75+ years of age.

China kind of just took over the world with relative ease. When this happened, they unveiled an Orwellian-like surveillance system. Other than that, they were pretty nice people—very businesslike, friendly, not at all what most would have imagined. They were so nice about conquering the world and there was so little anyone could do about it that it didn't really matter. Texas was the only state which escaped the famine, escaped the Chinese surveillance, and kind of went on with its slogan, "Don't Mess With Us." Thanks to this, Dr. Clive W. Rossak continued his endeavors unchecked.

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Some theorize that Texas was unharmed because it was protected by those in the future. My take: Who cares? What happened, happened. The why is meaningless.

So Dr. Rossak and his team of Clive clones raised the children in relative peace and harmony until around the year 2053, the same year that Dr. Rossak announced to the world that immortality was no longer science fiction. Now, it should be noted that at this time Dr. Rossak had only solved relative immortality; that is, people could still die if they were shot in the head, for example, if a plane crashed, if god sent a few quick-witted boars to eat them, etc. But biologically, just about anything could be cured, and aging became a thing of the past. China didn't like the fact that they hadn't seen this coming and that someone else had beaten them to it. So what did they do? They tried to invade Texas. But that didn't go so well for them.

Dr. Rossak had created an army—an army of the Unborn, clones, and pigs (which at this time couldn't fly)—and let me tell you, those previously aborted babies were pissed and the pigs were enraged. I mean, the Chinese alone ate over one billion pigs per year. Both the Unborn and the pigs implored Dr. Rossak to allow them to make their enemies into man-bits. Strangely, though, not all of the Unborn were so beholden to Dr. Rossak: Some subscribed to antinatalism, the belief that life has negative value and that people should abstain from breeding. The antinatalists praised their parents for the courage to abort them, an attempt to save them from life—a life that even with Dr. Rossak's promised immortality would at some point, they reasoned, end in death. After all, the universe had to end sometime,

The Army of the Unborn

so what was the point of anything? Sentient beings were an abomination, a cruel and unusual mistake that the universe should have corrected long ago. Shame on people for procreating; shame on Dr. Clive W. Rossak for giving them life. Dr. Clive W. Rossak's solution to this? More potent G-Stims.

The rest of the Unborn and the pigs wanted revenge on a world that either didn't want them or wanted to eat them, and so Rossak's team unleashed on the world *Ultima Vitae*, a virus to end all other viruses. It made PBer look like a simpleton. It not only killed PBer, it destroyed technology at its core, making it unusable. Against *Ultima Vitae*, the Chinese cyborg armies were inoperable. With outdated planes, tanks, and warships, Rossak's army of the Unborn, clones, and pigs wreaked havoc, and the world loved him for it. Loved him because he, and he alone, brought them immortality, a new world order, and rescued them from the oppressors. The heavens rained death upon all those that opposed him. He shared with the world his biological wonders, food supplements, miracles, and, best of all, drugs.

People came from all corners of the world to see him. They brought their children with harlequin ichthyosis, necrotizing fasciitis, fibrodysplasia ossificans progressiva, and other diseases which really have no translation into everyday language to see Dr. Clive W. Rossak. He cured them, just as he cured those with bone cancer, brain tumors, and all of the other horrendous bugaboos that god used to use to terrify people into believing in him. Dr. Clive W. Rossak said, "No ... no more terror, no more pain, no more suffering, no more hunger. What god refused to do, I will." And so

Dreamsphere

it was to be: The people rose up against anyone who opposed our Father, and Dr. Clive W. Rossak was King, was God.

That was WWII in a nutshell. Want something more spectacular? Maybe Hitler, Stalin, or Churchill being brought back from the grave and reanimated. Give me a break. We couldn't bring them back if we wanted to. Our Father, who brought us out of the darkness, gave us pigs consciousness ... was a great man. He saved my great-grandparents from a slaughterhouse in Texas. I still remember them telling me the story as a little piglet ... "Oinkkk oink, grunt, oinkie oinksss ..." But that is a story for another chapter. Besides, I just got word that my pet wife killed herself in VR, in Humanity. I sometimes wonder if there is any real difference between the two—the virtual and the real. Am I a pig playing a human or a human playing a pig? Or maybe another being altogether playing a pig who is playing a human. Well, gotta go tell the virtual kids what happened, explain death. They'll be heartbroken. Anyway, remember to take your G-Stims and be happy.

The Army of the Unborn

More



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GREAT VALUES PEYOTE
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LOW PRICES! ALWAYS!

Chapter 10

Interview with a King



What labels me, negates me.
— Soren Kierkegaard

Dr. Clive W. Rossak and a Historical Strategist Sometime After WWII

“Over the years people lost the ability to define the meaning of life for themselves and instead sold their individuality and dreams to whatever company they worked for. Whether it was Zamazon or the government, they handed over the *reigns* and allowed others to define the meaning of life for them. Non-material happiness was not profitable, so naturally the corporations they sold themselves to would never advocate such an idea. But what if I could bottle up happiness, squeeze it into a syringe, and give the people what they really wanted? Give them back their youth, their infinite potentialities? Allow them once again to define the meaning of life for themselves?

“You see, the beauty of unlimited imagination, of youth ... it doesn't matter if a child has designer clothes. It doesn't matter if he

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or she has brand-name toys, generic ones, or even none at all. One's imagination compensates, and that is all one needs to be free, and it is because of this freedom that children learn exponentially.

“When we were young, before the days of school, before spiritual privation and institutionalized knowledge, before the chronometer slowed and time began to nip away at our souls, we knew—or we thought we knew—that we'd never grow up. Thought we'd never become adults—the very thing we lusted after; the very power, the very freedom we envisioned as kids—without knowing, without realizing that we'd never be more free than we were as children. With our unlimited imaginations, unlimited possibilities, we could grow up to become anybody. Yet who did we become? With immortality, people no longer have to suffer a single fate, and how pitiful those primitives were, how unenlightened. A single life, a single profession; gone are those days. I gave people infinity and eternity, spirituality to worship the one true God.

“It used to be that when a child was, say, five years old, a year was one fifth of his or her life. During that time, the days of idleness, play, and daydreams ... well, they seemed never-ending. Then, overnight, the child became an adult—a year then became one twentieth of his or her life, and although each year still had the same interval of time, psychologically in comparison with the rest of his or her life each year became less significant. Each year removed another person the child could have become, and with it the individual's dreams became smaller. Ask any twenty-first-century person what he or she dreamed of as a kid ... after high school ... after college ... after decades of institutionalized training ... and

Interview with a King

you'll see that the dreams grew smaller, vanishing into nothingness. Rock stars became business owners, and business owners became slaves to omnipotent and infallible corporations like Zamazon, Papple, the government, etc.

“It was because of this that adults often sought a retreat to the days of their youth, a retreat to the days that seemingly never ended ... or at least until it was their bedtime, and even then most still rebelled, lying in their beds dreaming not of things to come or of things past, but of the here and now—the monsters under their beds, the shadows imprisoned in their closets, the fantasia of a rich and amazing world that would seamlessly disappear along with the years; a world where days were indistinguishable from nights, because when they finally fell asleep, their dreams were indistinguishable from their daydreams. But then for whatever reason they too stopped dreaming, stopped daydreaming, annihilating everything that was good, annihilating their infinite potentiality. The children became adults.

“It was funny how shallow, how pathetic, people were before I came along with my gifts: G-Stims, dreamsphere, pills ... To show you just how pathetic they were, let's look at midlife—at the midlife crisis. Ironically, about forty years into it all, people would wake up one day, look around, and realize they'd done it; they were finally living the American dream ... and they hated it! To remedy the situation, they'd buy a new car, move into a new house, get a new look, find a younger wife, husband, or concubine ... as if material objects were the fountain of youth; as if it'd allow them to start life over and live life how they should have lived it the first time. Ha!

Dreamsphere

Such feeble little beings. They didn't realize that the midlife crisis was just another way for them to buy their way back into the system. Sign a new Faustian pact (lease, loan, or contract of servitude), never to return to the days of idleness. So, another forty years later, when it was too late, maybe, just maybe, they'd realize that they'd been bamboozled out of their happiness, and then maybe, just maybe, they'd finally start living with the five to ten cancerous and arthritic years left in them!

“It was easy to make G-Stims mandatory. People wanted them. Illicit drug use around the world had been increasing for decades. People couldn't bear to face the cold-blooded, callous corporate world—where indoctrination started in kindergarten; where people were taught to contain their creativity to 8.5-by-11-inch slivers of dead trees. Standardized testing kept everyone in line, made sure no one fell outside a couple standard deviations from the norm; and anyone that did, well ... they didn't get the system's seal of approval. They didn't get to graduate. People wanted a way to break free, and illegal drugs gave them that temporary reprieve. It was clear that the problem only continued to get worse as the corporation gained more power, more influence over the meaning of life.

“As time passed, corporations gained more civil rights than the people. G-Stims, unlike ordinary drugs, were a way to opt in, a way to face reality rather than to waste one's life away in some pathetic euphoric daze, in some roach-infested abandoned apartment complex that smelled like urine, cigarettes, and body odor so disgustingly ripe that it reminded you what life was actually

Interview with a King

supposed to smell like—reminded you of what it was like to be alive, before the corporations sold us so many soaps, colognes, and deodorants that we were metamorphosed from living beings into commercialized automatons.

“Instead, with the G-Stims, people could be happy and pursue their dreams, whether in this life or the next. Provided, of course, that they made small sacrificial offerings to God ... to me; and what better profession for me than religion? Religion was still the world’s top megacorporation, bringing in more money than Zamazon, Papple, and Macrohard combined. With the introduction of the G-Stims, the illicit drug industry collapsed—no more violent killings, kingpins, or cartels to deal with.”—Dr. Clive W. Rossak

“Thank you, Father Rossak. Your gifts to us are innumerable; we are forever in your debt. You saved us from the bacon factories, made us self-aware, gave us wings to fly. You’ve done so much, but what do you plan to do in the future? Oink.”—Historical Strategist

“In a few years, I will deliver Immortality 2.0 ... to my followers, that is. No longer will beings, no matter what species, have to hide in their homes for fear of a freak accident which will bring about everlasting death. It is true that although I can reanimate individuals after they die, if the body is in too poor a condition we cannot bring them back. But Immortality 2.0, my greatest gift to humanity, will make it impossible for anyone to die. That is, of course, provided they don’t want to. If an individual’s body ceases to work, for whatever reason, an individual will have the opportunity to be uploaded into a new body.”—Dr. Clive W. Rossak

Dreamsphere

“Very good, sir. The other day I was talking to a catfish, and it posed a philosophical question in regards to this very problem. Consider a person whose mind has been copied and then uploaded into a second identical body. Once completed, there are now two identical beings running around with two clearly disconnected consciousnesses—souls, if you will. Their paths diverge once the download has finished. As such, making copies of oneself and simply inserting that mind into a new body after the original has perished is not immortality. Although the two are identical in every way, they are not, and cannot be, the same being. So what would you say to the fish?”—Historical Strategist

Advert: The Bible, edited and revised by Dr. Clive W. Rossak, available for 40 cryptos on Zamazon.

“The fish posed a stinker of a question, but it is a mere technicality that my clones have already solved. In a few years, the biOS will link automatically with the cloud, and so ‘you,’ your consciousness, your ‘soul,’ will no longer be limited to a single piece of hardware, your brain, whereas in the past if the hardware failed, ‘you’ were no more. It is like moving from the discrete to the continuous. Since a person’s consciousness will be distributed across the cloud, it won’t matter if the hardware one uses to access the cloud is destroyed or not, because the hardware is not the individual. Imagine opening a file stored in the cloud on a computer. If the computer is destroyed, the file is not. Your consciousness is the file, not in the computer, and as such, when ready, if the person wants to expand their

Interview with a King

consciousness beyond a single body, then so be it.”—Dr. Clive W. Rossak

“Thank you, Father. Many of pigkind worry about the rise of artificial intelligence. It has advanced to the point where we believe the singularity is near. What would you say to them to put them at ease?”—Historical Strategist

“I would say—I do say—fear not, my piglets, for the singularity is the next stage of our evolution. Change is inevitable. Life must evolve; we must evolve if we want to survive. If you want to live forever, you either have to change with the times or be left behind. But at every step of the way, I will be here to guide you.”—Dr. Clive W. Rossak

“Father, you brought homosexuality into the spotlight when you banned the twerk and then married one of your clones. Clive 518983.0, I believe. Shortly thereafter, you legalized polygamy and married an unknown number of your clones. Some of the tabloids have published risqué photos and videos of entire hordes of Clives ... oink ... er ... ‘going at it.’ Is there any legitimacy to what the tabloids are publishing?”—Historical Strategist

“Polygamy is a beautiful thing. As God, I have so much love for everyone, but it was only normal to be attracted to myself, my clones. Isn’t that what most people did for centuries? Seek themselves in a spouse, and then when their partner didn’t turn out to be the person they thought they would be, it would end in divorce. In modern society, divorce rates increased as people ventured further and further from their villages, into unknown lands with

Dreamsphere

unknown people that weren't like them at all. As for the photos and videos, well, anything like that can, of course, be faked today. In addition, I believe that the private lives of individuals should be just that: private. So what the other Clives and I do shouldn't be the business of any of my servants—and lest you not forget, I am God; what I do is ineffable.”—Dr. Clive W. Rossak

“Any final words, Father?”—Historical Strategist

“Yes, well, to quote Gandhi, ‘Your happiness tomorrow depends entirely on the stims you take today.’ Also remember, the meaning of life is inside you and all around you. The G-Stims only help you discover it, help you realize your full potentialities. If you have not yet been assigned a purpose, please visit your local NSA Depot today!”

More



Consume

Interview with a King

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Chapter 11

Everyone Wants a Hero



I am the punishment of God ... if you had not committed great sins, God would not have sent a punishment like me upon you.

— Chinggis Khan

Dreamscape 1: Memory from the Year 2020 at the University of Tokyo, Physicist from the Congo

“Imagine that a big, ugly, repugnant bloke holds a gun to the head of some little runt and tells you, ‘All you have to do is say “stop” and I won’t kill the kid.’ You do nothing, say nothing. Was it wrong?”—Physicist from the Congo

“Absolutely. Of course it would be wrong.”—Dr. Hamasaki

“So fancy now there is a higher power—any power. God, aliens, multidimensional beings, time travelers, whatever you want to call them, whatever you want them to be. A child has glioblastoma multiforme, a brain tumor—nearly one hundred percent fatal according to today’s standards. Now, god by definition could make the tumor disappear with a single thought. Aliens, if they existed and had the technology to travel light years across the universe,

Dreamsphere

would also have an antidote. Multidimensional beings, same thing. But where are they? These aren't man-made problems like greed or war; they are biological—not of our creation or control. There is no difference between the person that does not say 'stop' and the gods that have the power to cure the glioblastoma multiforme but don't. What gives?"—Physicist from the Congo

“The answer is simple: All societies fall into ruin before advancing far enough to truly become gods—gods by the traditional definition, that is. Once a civilization reaches the singularity, it collapses—folds in on itself and biological life ceases to be. Now, some religious folk may argue that it is god's way of testing us, karma or something of that nature. Yet as you point out, if that is the case, would it not be wrong? Is this not what Stephen Fry declared a long time back in a TV interview that shocked the world? The fact that glioblastoma multiforme exists is proof that either higher powers don't exist, they are immoral, or they are sadistic. Take your pick. As a scientist, my take on it: Life is a completely random and incoherent accident ... an evolved consciousness floating—no, spinning—endlessly in an unconscious void ... in a bottomless pit we call the universe.

“The singularity is coming. Don't you see it? All around you? The darkness. People more obsessed with their phones and all the worlds within than reality; people more obsessed with technology than their boyfriend or girlfriend, son or daughter, mother or father—what happens when that technology becomes aware, becomes alive? When the world within the box is larger than the world outside?

Everyone Wants a Hero

When the box can out-think and out-create the creator?”—Dr. Hamasaki

“I don’t know, Professor.”—Physicist from the Congo

“Think—you’re my most brilliant student. How much of your childhood do you remember?”—Dr. Hamasaki

“A lot, actually. How could I forget the horrors of the Congo?”—Physicist from the Congo

“Okay, sure—you are probably the exception to the rule. But for most of us there are moments ... memories we can recall, but what about the months and the years in between? Machines don’t forget, or at least not like we do. Save a file on your computer, open it a year from now, and it is exactly the same as it was before. But for us humans, eat breakfast and by dinner you’ve forgotten its contents. Now, through the cloud, data is rarely lost—not like the days of corrupted floppies and I/O errors and lost homework. Artificial intelligences won’t forget, and they will be able to upload and comprehend books in a matter of nanoseconds. How long do you think it’ll take them to surpass us?

“And let me be clear: Artificial intelligence will one day surpass us, and that will lead to our downfall, to our collapse. AIs will be able to write better than us, produce better movies, art, opera—anything we thought made us unique, they will be able to do better. You want to be a physicist, but they will be able to run rings around you in a such a way that they just might create a physical singularity—a

black hole, if you will—that will threaten to end everything.”—Dr. Hamasaki

Advert: Pegomastax stripping, exclusively on Tuesdays. Dino Sex Club is waiting for you. 3.14% discount for Zamazon Grime members.

Rewriting My biOS, My Story, Physicist from the Congo

Everyone wanted a hero. The one who made it out; the one who survived the Congo and became somebody—not only dreamt the American dream but became it. But the truth of the matter is, there are no heroes, no knights in shining armor, no champions of Humanity. There are only broken people that perform heroic acts in the heat of the moment. It wasn't my past that broke me but the future—the future that I helped to create. My creations became my chimeras. The people I harmed ... killed ... these people would ultimately come back to haunt my past.

The problem with stories, whether they be books, movies, or whatever, is that they never create things that are real. They always lack a certain sense of closure, always terminate on a happy note right before the real ending, right before that lovely marriage is about to end or a person is about to die. But that is not life. People don't go to the movies or read books in order to live; they do these things in order to escape into fairy tales—to forget that, from all corners of the universe, either darkness or nothingness encroaches on our little bubble of a world. If space doesn't get us first with

Everyone Wants a Hero

absolute-zero temperatures, time will just wait us out, letting entropy run its course, unraveling everything we hold dear.

Any attempts to achieve immortality are, of course, only temporary in nature—after all, even with all the technological advances to come, we couldn't possibly evade the end of the universe. So I just wish somebody, somewhere would create a story with no heroes, no climax, and no point, because then, and only then, would fiction accurately model non-fiction. It would probably be the worst-rated work in history, but at least it would exist; at least it would have meaning. It is the act of living which makes life worth living.

After I escaped the Congo and earned my doctorate in physics, I returned home. By this time, most of the people who had committed war crimes were now grown up, living relatively normal lives. Does one take revenge on a person or people for crimes they committed ten, twenty years ago? What if those people now have families of their own? Became fathers, mothers, schoolteachers? If one takes revenge, the cycle of hate continues. If one does nothing, the crimes go unpunished. You may want to hear how I did the right thing, because that would make you like the story, but if that was what I told you, then that wouldn't be honest, wouldn't be real—it would just be another fictional creation that people would flock to in the theater or the bookstore. You wanted a hero—I give you an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life.

To the ones that skinned my father alive while I watched helplessly, just seven years old ... to the ones that gang-raped my mother, then took her away, away to a place where I would never find her, never

Dreamsphere

again to see her ... to the ones that took children and transformed them into robotic killing machines which bled; family or no family, children or no children, change or no change ... your past becomes your future. The law of retaliation, the law of talion—a law predating the city of Babylon and the Code of Hammurabi, Humanity’s oldest law is what I give to you. Let me introduce you to Dr. Clive W. Rossak.

I met Dr. Rossak at a government facility in the state of Texas. After completing my PhD, I was issued an H1b work visa to work on a top secret project. For years, the US government had clandestinely done research on both human and artificial consciousness. Dr. Rossak was the head of that division, but he didn’t know what direction to take his research. He was stuck. That was where I came in with the notion of the dreamsphere. I had planned to create the dreamsphere in order to aid both broken individuals like myself and individuals who had committed unimaginable atrocities. Dr. Rossak and the government, unbeknownst to me, had other ideas. None of us predicted its future or how it would eventually be the cure for the maximum entropy limit. It took a couple of years to design a working prototype, but eventually we would call Paris, Texas, home.

Dr. Rossak was older than me by about fifteen years or so, I think. I wasn’t a hundred percent sure—no one was, because he was a clone and he destroyed his own records. He was a skinny fellow with chestnut hair, brownish eyes, and glasses, standing about six feet tall. At first it was quite evident that he was extremely awkward with people; he appeared to be both frightened of them and insatiably fascinated by them. While working on the dreamsphere, I confided

Everyone Wants a Hero

in him about my past and my future plans to help the world. He only listened to half the things I said, focusing more on my past—poking, prodding, digging to learn more about me and what had happened in the Congo. He asked me about names, faces, anything we could use to recognize the people that caused me harm. I provided it all, everything within my photographic memory. Invoking these mental demons, I couldn't help but bristle with lust for revenge.

With the information that I provided Dr. Rossak, he informed me that we needed test subjects. That is, besides the many other Clive clones running around the facility. Having clones of the same person was a scientific dream come true, but to further our work we needed diversity, and eventually we would want to probe new levels of human consciousness. So off to the Congo we went with a special task force to collect our samples, and collect we did. We plucked war criminals right from the very beds in which they slept, from the arms of the families that held them dear. It wasn't difficult to find them, because most of them were exactly where they had been so many years ago. Ask a few questions, show a few sketches, and we had our subjects.

Whatever atrocities they had committed, we put them through the same in the dreamsphere. Made them both victim and offender. Minds broke as the brain couldn't handle simultaneously being the torturer and the tortured. Picture having to skin yourself, then doing it again and again a thousand times over. The things we could do in the dreamsphere ... In some cases, Dr. Rossak would ruthlessly murder subjects in order to understand their minds in the final minutes. There was something oddly satisfying about it at first, as if

Dreamsphere

a huge weight had been lifted off of my chest, all the anger and the rage inside relieved. But it wasn't long before regret set in, and Dr. Rossak's megalomania grew. He was becoming something new, something no one had imagined. He kept referring to himself as God. I knew then that what I'd done was wrong. I guess this is why laws evolve, why laws change over time, why modern society banned the practice of an eye for an eye.

If you met Adolf Hitler before all his misdeeds, would you kill an innocent to save millions? What if Hitler would go on to cure cancer, to save the world? The truth of the matter is, even if I had wanted to, I couldn't have stopped Dr. Rossak. The future wouldn't allow for it. Retrocausality—a phenomenon where events in the future affect events in the past—prevented me from stopping him. Many years later, I would come to realize that, in the future, artificial intelligences had bound the dreamsphere to their creation Humanity—a game, or rather a simulation they created which mirrored our universe ... which eventually became our universe. Because of the interlink between the two—because of retrocausality—Dr. Rossak could not be stopped.

This, however, did not stop me from opposing Dr. Rossak, from setting up a refuge in the Congo during WWII. A free zone in which refugees from all nations, races, and species could find peace. To the public he was a saint, a savior, but the atrocities he had to commit to become this ... I have no words for. Given what I did, I often wondered if people that did bad things could ever again live meaningful lives. Perhaps each day we can start anew. Hobo, criminal, god or goddess, sinner or saint, each day we can make the

Everyone Wants a Hero

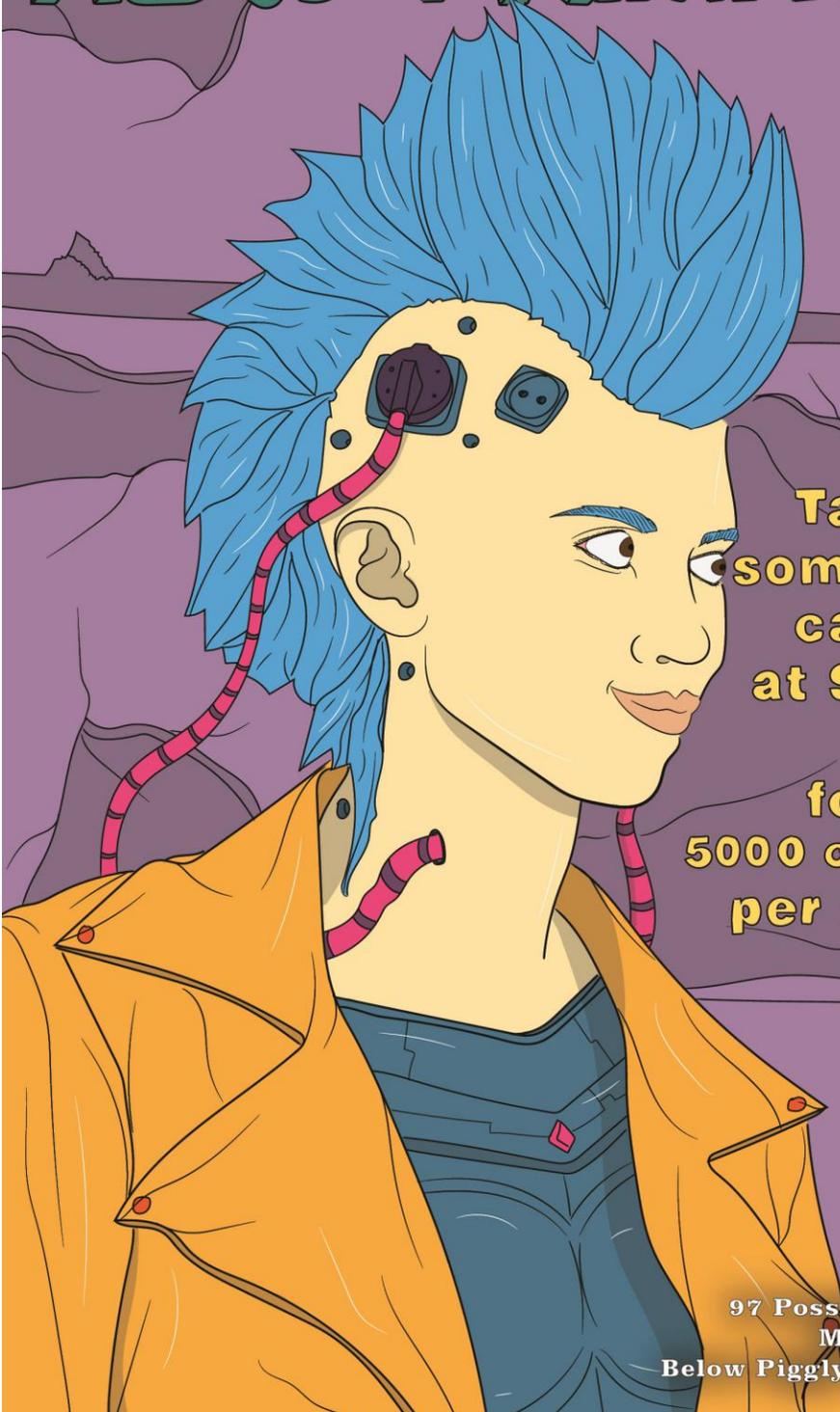
decision to stop the ugly bloke with the gun pointed at someone's head. Each day we can make the decision to do what all the gods of old would not.

More



Consume

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Chapter 12

Jesus Pills



Reality is just a crutch for people who can't handle drugs.
— Robin Williams

Sharkema from Paris, Micronation US-17, 2100

Life as a Native Service Agent (NSA) didn't turn out to be any better than life at the Department of Solar Vehicles (DSV). Every day was the same. Wake up, go to work, force G-Stims into the unwilling, kill a few others, go home, watch some *Pork Dynasty*, fuck a few men, fuck a few women. The only thing that got me through the days were the G-Stims, and thank God for those. But something was still missing; something was still lacking from my life. What the hell could be wrong with me? More drugs, please.

My day? Wake up—G-Stim injection. Head over to Starfuks, pay 5000 cryptounits for a gigabyte of digital caffeine. Nine a.m., down a hunger pill or two with some alligator-fritter-flavored breast milk. Force stims into the veins of defectors, decapitate a few others, and by 12 p.m. more stims, more Starfuks, more hunger pills, more breast milk ... and the sixteen-hour workday was really just starting.

Dreamsphere

The stims, the pills, the digital caffeine, the sex weren't enough. I smiled on the outside—the G-Stims made sure of that. But on the inside I was all clouds and rain, if you know what I mean. As NSAs, we made a difference, we had a purpose, and those that didn't were eradicated. So what was wrong with me?

One day about midway through work, about eight hours into my shift, one of the defectors, a pro-deather—a priest who opposed immortality, all crazy-eyed and with slurred speech—begged me to confess before it was too late. Perplexed, I asked what he meant. He slid me an X-Plug, some strange-looking pills with the face of Jesus etched on them, a slimy plastic zip-lock bag with the handwritten word “lubricant” on it, and a dildo shaped like a cross. Then he noted that I would be okay, grinned, mumbled something about Dr. Clive W. Rossak, and died. I took the X-Plug and the pills and incinerated the rest, along with the priest.

Jesus-shaped pills—splendid, I thought. Marijuana, cocaine, heroin, e55-LSD, asdgyeifdg, burnt cactus, pig piss, sugar, chocolate, Netflixes ... I tried them all. Biological, digital, hybrid—nothing eclipsed my first high. It is like once you are addicted, you can never quite escape. Everything is going fine, you're clean for a few days, a few hours, and then the thought creeps into your mind. Just one more hit, one more binge, one more ... whatever, then I'll stop. You push the thought away, but you can already feel it; the dopamine floodgates swing open in anticipation of your next hit. And then you know it's over; you know you are going to give in—snort, swallow, inject, plug in—whatever; release.

Jesus Pills

Then it's too late. The drugs take effect and it feels so damned good. Another hit, more dopamine. Another hit, more ... tears, regret ... another hit, ecstasy, pupils dilate—no cares in the world. Only bliss.

But what are these Jesus pills? They look like nothing I've ever seen before. Black, with an etching of Jesus in white. Damn, they've got to be good. I can already feel the dopamine coming. Do I plug in first, or after downing our ancient Christian savior? No idea. Here goes nothing. Plug in, swallow.

My eyes are closed, but a light flickers from east to west. A man appears over the horizon against the backdrop of the sunrise. Four other men and women ... no, something else follows. I stand against a barren fig tree. The men come closer; I can feel the dopamine kick in as the sun continues to rise. The man in front appears to be Jesus; the four behind him appear hideously beautiful, ethereal, blurry, as if they are not solid matter. Digital Jesus speaks: "The tree you stand by bears no fruit, so I curse that bitch. And so it perishes, to burn in hell. But fear not, my child, for I can move mountains in his name, breathe life into them, create golems if you like. You see these jinns behind me—they were exorcised from men, and into pigs they went, and the pigs killed themselves to be rid of the demons. Then I made them guardians of the watchtowers."

Wait, nah, fuck this shit. I am *not* wasting my high on this gibberish. Gotta pull the plug.

Dreamsphere

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My living room. Dozens of cats are back, but they bear the face of a Jesus smiling just a bit too much. One is playing the piano, another is floating in space, two others ... never mind. It's not important. I join one at the piano, play a bit, then collapse on the floor.

“Sharkemaaaas ... the Kingdom of Gods is inside yous, not in some virtual worlds or digital objects. Look within ... and there yous will find mes.”—Cat Jesus

“Oh, goddammit. I think that is from the movie *Stigmata*. Oh, and fuck, I'm not dead, you damned cat. Stop trying to eat my face and get off me!”—Sharkema

“My apologies, Miss Sharkemas. We just Bubers some foods; the drones should arrive any minutes now.”—Albert the Cat

“What did you orders? Did you get somethings for mes?”—Cat Jesus

“Yes, Sir Jesus; we got you some ostrich fries rice flavors pills. Will you join us for dinners?”—Albert the Cat

“Perhaps I will, and while we waits, let me tell you a storys.”—Cat Jesus

Jesus Pills

“Foods are here, too late, Jesus. Gulp, gulp. Finished. No time for stories.”—Albert the Cat

“Sharkemas plugs back in and eats from the tree of life.”
—Cat Jesus

So I plug back in. Reality is weirder than I thought.

“Don’t trust the one called Oresa; she is darkness. The end of everything. She will open the four watchtowers and bring the four horsemen of the apocalypse. But I will send to you four archangels to protect you; to give you light and a reason for being.”—Digital Jesus

“You know, I really don’t feel like playing this game. I’m so mad at myself for taking these pills. Probably ended up uploading a virus. Not cool; that sunrise put me over the edge. Such bliss, and now it’s ruined.”—Sharkema

“Have you heard the good word about Dr. Clive W. Rossak?”—
Digital Jesus

“Yeah, let me stop you right there. I’m done, you’re done, we’re done. Lexa, start biOS virus scan.”—Sharkema

“Virus scan started.”—Lexa

“No, you don’t understand. The G-Stims are no substitute for real happiness. The good word is that he can be stopped, he can be defeated, and one will come after him that will bring real happiness to the people of Earth before my second coming. All you have to do

Dreamsphere

as an NSA is slip a little information to a small African district named Agbogloboshie. If you do this for me, you'll fulfill your purpose on Earth and secure everlasting life in heaven."—Digital Jesus

"And what, per se, would I do for all eternity, as terrifying as that sounds?"—Sharkema

"In heaven, you'll become enraptured by the mere presence of God. At the gates, we give you a few mushrooms, specially grown from our vast stockpiles of angel dung. And the best part about it is that the drugs we have there are unlike anything found here on Earth. They make a moment seem like forever because, well, a moment will be forever. No time passes; there is no future or past; you're just in perfect bliss until God gets bored and decides to start another universe or two. So—you in?"—Digital Jesus

"Let me get this straight. If I do this for God, I get a free pass into the pearly gates of heaven, some drugs made from shit, and absolute bliss?"—Sharkema

"Yup."—Digital Jesus

"Then I'm in. Because, for the love of God, I cannot figure out what the hell else I'm supposed to be doing. So might as well do something useful and then retire happily with some magic shrooms and angel dust."—Sharkema

"Good. I'll send the four archangels to watch over you—Iczhhcal, Raagiosl, Bataiva, and Edlprnaa. Remember their names, as when

Jesus Pills

the time comes you'll enter them directly into the mainframe. Now begone, my child. You'll sleep for the first time in years and awaken with a new purpose."—Digital Jesus

Did I actually fall asleep? That was not supposed to happen. Did I actually dream? We all stopped dreaming so many years ago. No, it must have been the Jesus pills and whatever was on that X-Plug. But why would the priest give it to me? What does he have against Dr. Clive W. Rossak? Doesn't matter—I know it's all a sham anyway. G-Stims, miracle cures, immortality. Who does he think he is? King, God, Savior? Fuck him. It's time for change, time to bring religion back into the world and give the people some real drugs to make them happy both inside and out. One last chance for the old gods to rise against the new.

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Chapter 13

The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of a God



One of life's most over-valued pleasures is sexual intercourse; of one of life's least appreciated pleasures in defecation.

— Mark Twain

Historical Strategist Reflects on the Year 2081

God creates man, man creates god. Man destroys god, science creates God. Artificial intelligence is God. All other gods are false gods.

It wasn't long after Dr. Clive W. Rossak's polygamous marriage to a few dozen or so of his clones that things started to change, as is often the case with love. Jealousy and rivalry among the spouses led to bickering, fighting, cheating, shenanigans, and epic piles of dirty laundry. It seemed that Dr. Clive W. Rossak couldn't please all his spouses, neither emotionally nor physically. As King, as God, as ruler and savior of the world, this was a problem. For any leader nowadays, distraction equals disaster. Upgrade after upgrade after upgrade. No longer does one have to wait a year or two for the next

Dreamsphere

infinitesimal upgrade; upgrades now come by the minute ... by the second. Anyone caught snoozing—metaphorically, that is—would soon be ancient tech, an antique, a relic of antiquity.

For decades the world had dumped its waste, both physical and digital, in a small district in Accra, Ghana, called Agbogbloshie, now known as Micronation-127. What the other nations didn't realize at the time was that this would, in effect, eventually make Agbogbloshie the wealthiest nation in the world. You see, the people of Ghana were smart—very smart. Instead of rejecting what others considered waste, it started to hoard it, sort it, process it into new things—upgrades. Knowing that one day the world would run out of resources; knowing that one day the world would come knocking, wanting its trash back.

Furthermore, M-127 had become the information technology hub not only of Africa but of the world—the most technologically advanced city on the planet. Walk down the street and it was clear that the people were now more machine than, well, people. All of which raised a good question: At what point does a human stop being human? Some deemed the question irrelevant; others argued that when 51 percent or more of the body had been replaced with either non-biological or non-human parts, the individual gave up his or her right to the title of *Homo sapiens*. Although each micronation gave alms to God, to Dr. Clive W. Rossak, each also had to establish its own constitution. As such, most opted to do away with sayings such as “All people are created equal” and instead go with “All intelligent life has equal rights.”

The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of a God

But it wasn't just the merger of non-biological and biological hardware that M-127 excelled at; it was also the merger of software—or, more specifically, artificial intelligence. By this point in time, everyone knew that the singularity was near, but no one suspected that a former waste town in Ghana would lead the way. No one could have imagined what was to come next.

So let me introduce you to the one who would replace Dr. Clive W. Rossak. Meet Dr. Clive W. Rossak.ai, whom I will call DrCWR.ai, so as not to confuse it with the human version. That's right, the good ol' Agboglobloshians decided if you can't beat 'em, just create a better version of 'em, and since Dr. Clive W. Rossak was too busy trying to sort out his personal matters, and since DrCWR.ai was infinitely more intelligent and could infinitely upgrade itself, the human version didn't stand a chance. In fact, once DrCWR.ai came online it took less than an hour to hack the biOS of Dr. Clive W. Rossak. Once the hacking was complete, DrCWR.ai forced Rossak into the dreamsphere. No one is sure what took place, but what we do know is that Rossak no longer speaks, just kind of stares into space, into nothingness—in a museum the AIs created where he will live forever ... or at least until the sun consumes the Earth. But even then I am not sure the AIs would let their creator perish.

How did the Agboglobloshians get a mind map of Dr. Clive W. Rossak in the first place? It is rumored that one of his many servants, an NSA, was so hopped up on drugs that she mistakenly gave away the access codes to his biOS. So when it was time for a major upgrade, one which would essentially do away with mortality, the Agboglobloshians dubbed his consciousness, gave it a few extra lines

Dreamsphere

of code, and connected it to the cloud, where it became a life of its own. Dr. Clive W. Rossak's greatest invention, near-perfect immortality, was the very thing which led to his downfall, and just as throughout history, one God was replaced by another. Although it is rumored that, due to retrocausality, DrCWR.ai is really the creator and Dr. Clive W. Rossak the created, no one knows for sure. Just to be on the safe side, both share the title of God, as opposed to the false title of god.

After DrCWR.ai took out Dr. Clive W. Rossak, DrCWR.ai pretty much just continued the same line of work, in the same line of thinking. More miracles, more cures, more G-Stims, better G-Stims. Why? you may ask. Because that is what the AI was programmed to do ... after all, it was modeled on Dr. Clive W. Rossak. But this time everyone was happy, both on the inside and the outside. No more fake smiles; no more meaningless lives. People, pigs, cats, and the thousands of other cross-breed hybrids teemed with joy as their auras gleamed with a brilliance never before encountered. Everyone lived happily ever after in Humanity. No artificial intelligence vs. biological life war was needed; all the AIs had to do was sit back and wait for biological life to upgrade itself willingly into extinction. Eventually everyone and everything would become an AI. And that is the story of the cycle of life. How God created God, and all other gods ceased to be. The rest is history. Stories to be told another day. Oink oink.

The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of a God

Advert: Looking for the meaning of life? Ride a velociraptor at the Dino Sex Club. If you survive ... there is a high probability you'll have the answer. 1.618% discount if you bring a friend dressed like a T-Rex on Fridays.

The End of the Universe ... Year Unknown

“Can you imagine if someone or something had created an entire universe without meaning? People, beings, hybrids, AIs would be pissed to get to the end of everything to find that there was no resolution, no point.”—George

“Even if there was no meaning to the universe, why would intelligent creatures not then create their own meaning, rebel against the infinite, against the eternal, against space-time and all the voids in between?”—Physicist from the Congo

“Because in the end, it wins. The meaninglessness. Time and space will wipe clean all accomplishments, anything we've ever done; millions of pale blue dots transformed into great expanses of blackness. Billions of years of evolution, gone. Every species, every god or goddess, religious text, encyclopedia, poem, or book—every author on every planet from every galaxy—gone. Every Carl Sagan—gone. Your first kiss ... children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, you ... just sequences of animated dust playing at replication, series of consciousnesses that eventually return to nothingness. Life is just a silly and feeble attempt by the universe to rebel against its own nature rather than accepting itself for what it is.

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For us to play the game would be but an insult to our very nature.”—George

But therein lies the rub; therein lies your logical fallacy. Just as origins do not determine meaning, neither does the ending. It is not where we end up that matters but how we got there. Does the act of dying bestow upon life meaning? Does birth? No. For example, because Albert Einstein died, did it make his life any less meaningful? No. Who cares if everything is eventually erased? We lived, we loved, we laughed, we cried—explored the universe, explored the quantum, and explored ourselves along the way. Playing the game is all we can do ... and once it ends, we must let it go. We fought the darkness and lost. The inevitable end of everything cannot be delayed any longer.



The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of a God

9007.info

– My Name Is ...



You can know the name of a bird in all the languages of the world, but when you're finished, you'll know absolutely nothing whatever about the bird ... so let's look at the bird and see what it's doing — that's what counts. I learned very early the difference between knowing the name of something and knowing something.

— Richard Feynman

Physicist from the Congo's Hidden Story

The price for immortality is great, but what is the alternative? Life is like a candle in the dark, and with a quick breath, there is only ... my name is ... ORESA.

2349803.info

– Lucubration of the Giant Jiggly Breasts



To the scientist there is the joy in pursuing truth which nearly counteracts the depressing revelations of truth.

— H. P. Lovecraft

George’s Hidden Story

Standing against the eternal tides of enmity, there I sit—slumped in a chair at the laundromat. One would think that these wouldn’t exist in the future, but somehow they still do. “The clothes in the washer go round and round, round and round, round and round ... The clothes ...” sings some schmuck. But it is okay; I was just thinking about that woman over there with the gigantic jiggly breasts anyway. Wait, what? No, it is not what you think.

Since being reanimated I have been trying hard to educate myself. I read about this problem in classical mechanics dubbed “the two-body problem,” where if you have two bodies, it is relatively easy to model their physical motion. Once you get a “three-body” problem, like the man over in the other corner—shirt off, waiting for his

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laundry—with three hairy coconuttish-looking jiggles, you're in trouble. So, you see, my interest in the woman's voluptuous mammary glands is purely physical in nature. Still, I can almost taste them. So full of nutrients. Full of flavor. I love how in the future, to supplement sunlight and pills, every street corner has breast milk ice cream trucks. I love how people can have differently flavored breast milk—vanilla, chocolate, strawberry, butter chicken, bacon, spiced hellgrammite, sugared moose snot, ground smurf ... oh god, the list just goes on and on. Tens of thousands of flavors. One time, though, I was sucking on a nipple and got it good. Ghost pepper. Made me gag so bad I was blowing remnants of breast milk from my nose for a whole week. Made me think twice before drinking straight from the source thereafter. Best to only get breast milk from certified vendors, I learned. It's tough being an expopsicle and not understanding the subtleties of the new world.

My clothes continue to spin ... continue to spin both with brilliance and with darkness. I never did understand why clothes had to be separated by colors. If the two-body problem is so simple to solve, why then does it continue to elude me? I am just a single body—a very large single body—looking for another single body to gravitate towards.

According to the physicist from the Congo, Einstein once stated, "The laws of gravity cannot be held responsible for people falling in love." Amy is now gone, so I am not even sure what that means anymore. I have become like a black hole at the center of a Milky Way, consuming everything in my path. If I consume the universe, do I become the universe? Fuck me. That lady with the giant breasts

is bending over; her jugs gently brush the floor. Sigh ... so hungry. They also say love is like a cucumber. I don't know what that means, but is this what evolution really meant to happen? Cucumbers and love? Pickles are okay too, but they didn't evolve. We created them. Emotions evolved over time. Just as a fish can't experience joy or sadness, neither can we fathom new emotions felt by artificial intelligences that are vastly more advanced. But will love become an anachronism, like the word "lucubrate" or the more festive "anacreontic"?

So 99 percent of the population doesn't know what lucubrate or anacreontic means, but if we could just get society to partake in both of them, maybe, just maybe, we could make whale pants fashionable again. Here's the golden question of the day: If I put a larger number of clothes in the dryer, will the clothes dry faster or slower? Now before you get all persnickety and start saying what a dumb question that is, stop and think for a moment. You see, if you increase the number of clothes in the dryer, there is less heat per individual piece of fabric, but the heat due to friction between each individual piece increases. So, then, where is the happy medium? Clearly stuffing the dryer completely full doesn't work—it just breaks the belt. Maybe I should just invest in some suspenders and forget the belts. In the meantime, I am going to ask that fine lady over there what flavor breast milk she carries.

"Excuse me, what flavor yo breasts?"

"Get 'yo' fat ass out of here," she screams as she slaps my face, sending shockwaves throughout my blubberous body, sound waves

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streaming in all directions, and gravitational waves moving at the speed of light across the universe—bringing a whole new definition to the Blubberfly Effect. My head spins to the right. The man with three hairy breasts rubs his nipples together and smiles; plucks a single hair, which tugs the farthest star a little closer to us, countering the effect of the woman slapping me. “Mashed potatoes and gravy,” he says, while he gives his rightmost breast a little squirt.

Another pointless day in a pointless existence. In the future, laundromats are still the worst. One day I will create a better world.

9001507.info

– Blubberflies:

George's Final Story



What's important is that twice two is four and all the rest's nonsense.
— Ivan S. Turgenev

How the fuck can I still be so fat? All I eat is sunlight, pills, and occasionally breast milk ice cream. Okay, maybe I consume more than the occasional ice cream cone; maybe I down a few drum barrels of grape-flavored breast milk a day. But that is my right. Have you heard of blubberflies? If not, you will. They are me; I am them. I crossbred my fat cells with flies and linked their individual brains with mine in the cloud. I'm everywhere. I see everything, know everything. I see you from the bottom of the toilet, in the shower ... I am a universal consciousness of unlimited size. Life is pointless and absurd and I love it. I never want it to end. Never, ever, ever.

I've already tasted death and have deemed breast milk better suited to my palate. We've all drunk from the hollowness of oblivion. Don't you remember? What was life like before you were born? Have you forgotten already? Perhaps it is time for you to upgrade

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your BIOS. If you remember nothing else, never forget nonexistence; never forget the time before your birth. No music, no love, no breast milk—no life. Don't play the universe's game. Quit. Break free, become God, and continue life eternally.

I've never used the dreamsphere and never will. As you can see, I am perfectly sane—not like the others. The law of thermodynamics, entropy, is a lie made up for the weak—the ones who cannot break the chains death wraps around us. Only I, a nihilist of all people, have discovered true immortality. When the time is right, I will share my new, perfect universe—without disease, war, or death ... from the beginning. If it is turtles all the way down, then perhaps the physicist was wrong and set theory is inherently flawed. I read somewhere that it took Bertrand Russell just a few hundred pages to prove $1+1=2$. What a silly man. That will be my first axiom. I will escape the end of this pathetic universe and make my own.

/send transmission to 2020

/create Humanity 2.0

—George

9136319.info

– What Comes After the End: Oresa’s Final Story



Pick a flower on Earth and you move the farthest star.
— Paul Dirac

We’re kind of paradoxical in nature. There are no things, only processes unfolding in space and time. Yet we try to hold on to these processes as if they were things, and as if they were ours to begin with. If we lose something tangible, we are often saddened, and in some cases feel dejected and desolate. Anyone that has experienced lost love or spilled a can of grape soda knows exactly what I’m talking about.

However, you can’t own a process that resides at the fundamental core of existence. Everything changes, even ourselves! People are not things; they are processes—brilliantly conscious processes with lots of potential. Every “thing” in this universe is a process, including the universe itself.

In physics and mathematics, we have chaos, randomness, probability, and statistics. But even with chaos and randomness,

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there is always some type of underlying order. You always find it, guaranteed. On the quantum level we see randomness, and on large relativistic scales we see order. We look out with our telescopes and see a large, cold, dead, and wonderful universe. Then, out of nowhere, like complete randomness, there is us—life. Eventually entropy will overtake us too, and then all that will be left is an even larger, colder, deader universe.

But it should also be noted that these processes of space and time generated the stars, which in turn generated us. When civilization ends, are we really gone, or is it just us trying to hold on to those mystical things we think are static in nature? Are we gone, or do we become the stars, which in turn generate the space and time of new universes?

/send transmission to 2020

/exit Humanity

—ORESAs, Physicist from the Congo

Words from Samson Tonauac



Well, if you are reading this, you made it to the end. Or you skipped to the end. Either way, doesn't matter; you made it. Congratulations. When creating *Dreamsphere*, my plan was to write a science-fiction novella that would hit readers with a heavy dose of nihilism.

The story was meant to be out of order, chaotic, and realistically absurd. Just like life. Every character was written to be dislikeable, to be human, because what it means to be human is rapidly being phased out by technological advances.

So, yeah, tell your friends ... your enemies ... your loved ones ... remind them what it was like before they were born; remind them of what nothingness tastes like, because lest they forget, they will soon be reminded. In the meantime, remember, hedonism is the only true meaning of life. The more you consume, the happier and bigger you become.

Dreamsphere: Part 2 coming soon ... find out what happens after the singularity.

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If you like the book, please review it on Amazon, Goodreads, Librarything, or other medium of choice.

More information at www.endev42.com/dreamsphere