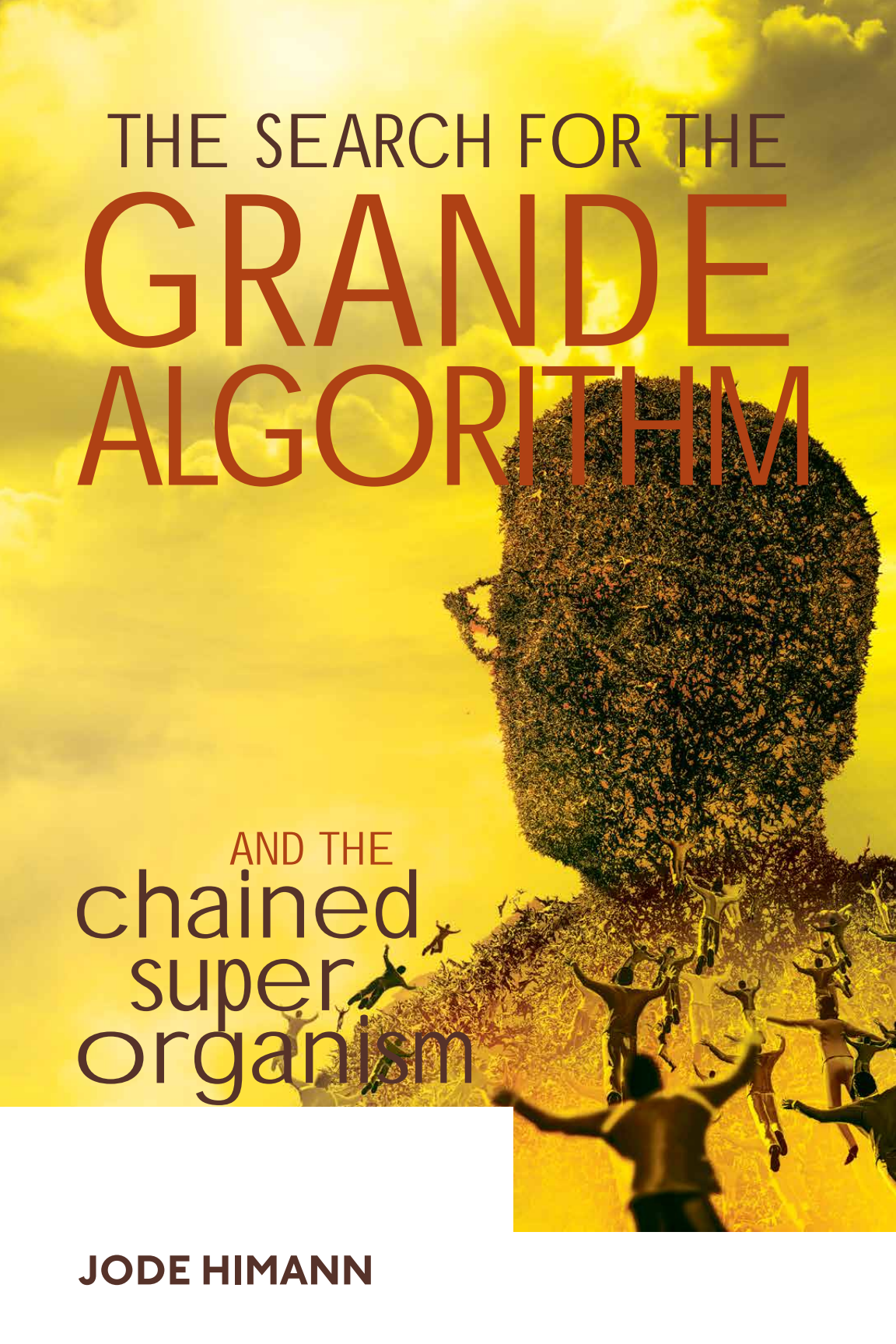


THE SEARCH FOR THE GRANDE ALGORITHM

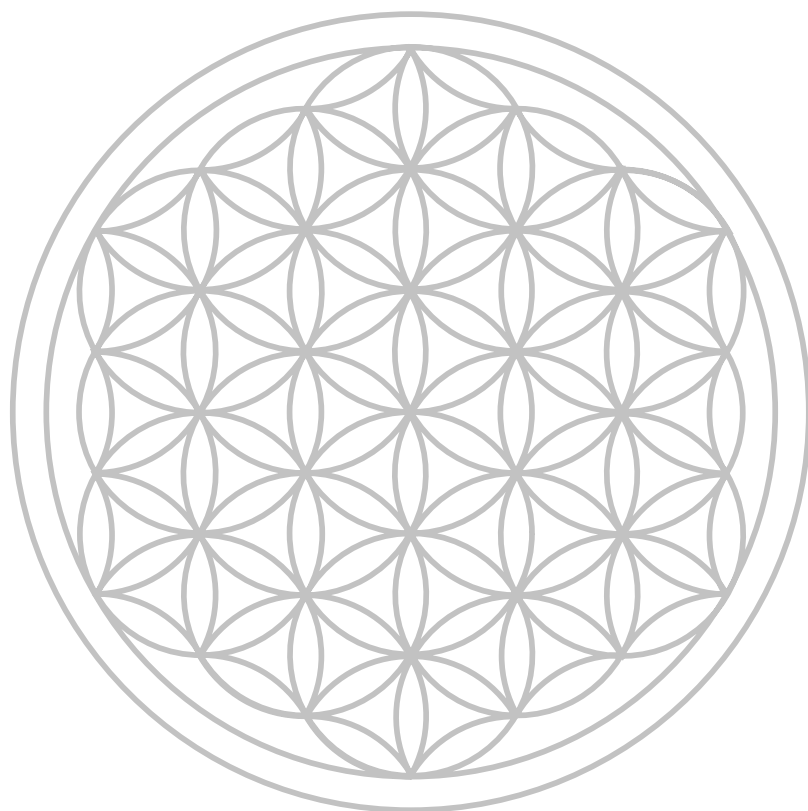


AND THE
chained
super
organism

JODE HIMANN

The search for the
GRANDE ALGORITHM

‡ the Chained Super Organism



Jode Himann

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First Edition

This book is dedicated to those brave souls who live by their hearts, and who trust their intuitions to light their dark path. My admiration goes out to the individuals who feel a burning passion to share their intuitive knowledge for the greater good yet struggle against all odds to express your truth.

To know something deeply of this world, and to convey that knowledge are two separate things. And to those who cannot well combine the two, Society can exact cruel punishment upon those with an inability to articulate their treasured, intuitive knowledge. What can be lonelier than a heart yearning to share and contribute, only to be misunderstood and cast out? Only those with the strongest constitution can survive the subsequent burden of inner strife, confusion, judgment, dismissal or disdain. How many have wandered through life looking for a sympathetic ear have died bankrupted, taking their untold treasures to their graves? Written history is littered with many such lives, and in unwritten history, lost forever to time.

Once a person has intuitively grasped a part of nature's expansive untold story with unwavering certainty, as if a secret whispered into one's ears, nothing else matters. One is seized with an overpowering force propelling one to follow the arc that all great thinkers, inventors, scientists have followed. This drive to tell nature's untold story takes on a life of its own and becomes one's raison d'être. Those men and women I admire the most, who have been privileged to partake in nature's secret revelations, have had their lives fatefully and permanently altered. They only knew relief when that story can be told.

No man is an island. We are, each and every one of us beings, and from the moment of birth, our very survival is dependent on our social bonds with others. This odyssey is a life milestone and it could not have come about without the support of an entire network of people. While I make special mention of these few who put in exceptional effort and creativity in this short acknowledgement, those many others who helped greatly on this journey know who you are, and you are highly valued.

To my brother Jonathon Himann, words cannot express the depth of my gratitude for his craftsmanship, patience and persistence in not only communicating a story, but his efforts in communicating with me. Writing a book to bring a bold new idea out of the darkness and into the light requires tremendous fortitude on the part of all those involved. If this book achieves its goal to speak to the world, then it can only be because I provided the breath and Jonathon provided the speech organ that articulated it into coherent words. Although the first draft of this book was written solely by me, most of the final book was crafted in Jon's voice.

In the investigative part of the journey, I bestow deep gratitude to my close collaborator, Dr. Brett Teeple, whose utterly unique gift and intimate mathematical dialogue with nature can tease out the subtlest patterns hidden from the human mind. Brett provided the mathematical firepower to back up the intuitive knowledge.

For the understanding and investigative research into the deep philosophy, cultural context and social impact, I am grateful for the support of James (Gien) Wong. Without his combined abilities of understanding and articulations I fear that I may have been one of the unfortunate ones to take my jewels-in-the-rough to the grave, awaiting the story to unfold in some future time.

Lastly, I wish to thank Brad Fincaryk, who has been an essential but silent supporter of this project. He is like the ever-present parent supporting their children playing at a soccer match. Like them, Brad was consistently there in the background to provide firm support and practical guidance to keep the project on track. Without his significant patience, belief and trust in the face of frequent adversity, this book would not have seen the light of day. Thank you, Brad, for your support in me and in bringing to fruition a lifelong dream.

Prologue: Voices from The Shadows

I had a little notebook that I used to write in when I was a kid. It was stained with mud and god knows what else. I'd write about the world outside, like those berries over there. I'd end with questions like, why are these berries circular? Or what are these branches doing in that pattern? Why did the bees dance like that? Why are there spirals inside watermelon? Why do spider webs look like that? I didn't really know it then, but that tendency was going to get me into trouble, later. Poking your nose everywhere is going to get you into trouble. In fact, it seems that you are looking for something.

Some do not like that you are looking, because they are hiding something. Our society pretends we live in a hard world, that will never change. A rock is just a rock, a stone is just a stone. Oxygen is only oxygen. We are physical creatures first and foremost, and everything else is distraction.

This world view is wrong. I know this because, I have seen this world view used as a weapon to control us, in school, at work, and in relationships. To stop questions, to prevent discussion, to create wars. In fact, it is merely, but a weapon used to control you. You do not live in a world that is the way your school describes it. There is something infinitely stranger at the heart of everything.

And you are not supposed to know what this secret is.

The Beginning



GRANDPA'S HOUSE

My first formative event happened in my grandpa's house. I distinctly remember that everything on the old dresser in grandpa's room, beside the stripped bed, was covered with a patina of dust. I wondered at the air vectors pushing the dust, and what laws governed how the specks settled to the bed. The sun slanted in the window, and motes danced in the rays hitting the ground. One old jacket hung in the open closet.

The world had even hidden the house with a layer of silence, with another layer of grime on the windows and dead flies on the bed. No one had been in the attic for a while.

I took a few steps towards the boxes in the corner of the room and sighed, shaking my head, when my eyes chanced upon the bookshelf. His book, where he described all his equations, was still wrapped in elastics with papers and notes sticking out of it. Squares and hypotenuses were scrawled all over it. Stamps were stuck to the cover, some peeling at the edges.

That single worn book laid flat on the bookshelf. One could see a few faded words written on the thin leather cover. "The Search for The Grande Algorithm," it said. The first pages detailed how he had looked the world over for the mathematical patterns connecting all of us together, and the last pages mentioned how he'd mourned never finding the right math. It was wrapped in memories just as tightly as the elastics.

My eyebrows rose, and I picked it up. It felt smooth the leather rubbed into a veneer of shiny brown. Large enough to just fit in two hands, it left a hole, a lack of presence, on the bookshelf. It was practically irresistible for a 12 year old kid like me. Not to mention the whispers that were too quiet to hear.

Grandpa always believed that things had souls and that if you listen close enough, you'd hear what they had to say. He was especially enamored of the souls the mountains had to have, the giant, open world encompassing souls. I wasn't looking for those. This small book had stories enough to last me a lifetime. I really wanted to hear what this one had to say again. I wanted to listen to his voice one more time.

In my hands, some of the rubber bands broke from age, and I opened the book to the first page. The spine cracked, flakes of age falling to the floor.

Just as I was about to open the first page, brittle with age, my mom yelled, "Son, are you ready?"

"Yes, Ma!"

I put down the notebook, as my mom had never approved of grandpa's hobbies. My fingers lingered on the rough, really loved spine. My feet disturbed the dust for the last time in that house on the way down the stairs. That bungalow was sold soon after, and soon after that, knocked down.

I'd never see it again, but that was alright as his handwriting was burned into my brain. His search for The Grande Algorithm had become mine.

Together with my memories of my grandpa, a chamber opened in my mind. Something that I need a pen and paper to open the door to.

It took me back to a place where the stories were thrilling once again.

He'd tell me about his job, about the lectures he gave to his students. *I wish I had had a chance to take one of those classes. He told me about his research trips on the ocean and the migration routes of the crabs. He told stories of his dives in the biological whirlwind of the herring. He told me of the possible geometry of biological time. He said that there was an invisible connection between all dogs, all eagles, and all dolphins. He then put my hand on his chest and asked, "Can you feel my heartbeat? Every animal on the planet has the same number of heartbeats. This is a fantastic truth, and is called newton's laws of biology, which Kleiber later built on."*

Those words still echo in my head today.

Three years later, when I was twelve, we took a vacation to British Columbia. I just fell in love with the ocean and spent all of my time on the beach. I must have been drawn there, drawn to this beach. It was a rocky beach with stones of all sizes, one that was even the size of a house. Trees on the edges of it, protecting the homes from the salt spray. Lots of places to go hunting for things, illicit and interesting. Lots of privacy. Perfect for me. On that day, I was sitting up on the top of one of these boulders.

I could see the patterns of the waves pushing up onto the beach. I knew there was math for that. I could feel the molecules of the rocks being washed out to sea one at a time. The noise in the background was just my parents arguing at each other. White noise by now.

We'd been here before, so there wasn't much mystery anymore. I'd even figured out how long it would take the trees to grow one more bud in the summer. Boring now. But there was a flash of white between those rocks that I'd never seen before. I slid down the face of that rock and scrambled past that one. And I stopped in shock. It was a skeleton of a seal. I nearly squealed, it was so cool. Bit of flesh still stuck to it; a whole flipper and some muscles were visible. The entire body was full of life. From the cracks in its' skull to the little flippers, from bacteria already growing on its flippers to the wasps dancing on its face.

As focused on patterns as I always had been, I could see in the little circles on the face. The wasps had been walking, dancing, on its face for a while. A crowd of other insects was watching. I sat down patiently to watch. I

saw their antennae twitch, and their legs move. I could, if I listened hard enough, hear them spray their pheromones. It was super fascinating.

This time, though, the stars must have lined up just right. I started being able to understand their communication. The words they used were just burned into the inside of my skull "The body is two kilometers that way." Then the second wasp, by moving its mandibles up and down said, "The hive is over there." Over the rest of the afternoon, I kept on hearing these words, "Larva need food", "Good food", and "Sex". I had no idea what happened that afternoon, still don't. Wish I did.

What equations governed those questions? At that point, I only had an inkling what my experience could possibly mean. Just a bit of the algorithm had begun opening in my mind. It would take decades before I figured it all out.

Can insects ask questions? Does their body, mandibles, and thorax allow them to ask questions? I've been wondering that ever since. They might be able to move past our dimensions of space and time and touch the quantum realm somehow, but no one's proven that they can ask questions.

Still, I'm convinced that I heard one there – quite directly ask me, "Who are you?"

I froze. The world was this strange? My tongue went dry in my mouth. I didn't even think about how to respond. What patterns in our lives hide the angels, the secrets, the demons?

I nearly jumped out of my skin when my dad put his hand on my shoulder and said, "time to go." The holes in the seals' skin were pulling apart, like an elastic. The eyes were almost entirely eaten, wasps chewing at them. I pulled away from my dad, ignoring his voice. I crept closer, looking into the bits of the body. There was still fat, stringy like spaghetti, attached to the bones. My forefinger prodded the body. The fat was hard and tough, not slimy at all. I frowned, the skin between my eyes carving deep furrows. After my father came and got me, he didn't understand. He was confused, and because he was confused, angry. He didn't like me showing him how much of the world he didn't understand. God, I was yelled at a lot that night.

The other formative event in my childhood was in the children's hospital. Not out in the wild, where animals were alive and free, but rather in a mechanical and broken place. This hospital smelled like antiseptic and bleach. It had pale green walls and worn chromed bannisters. Not a single wasp lived in this place, let alone green trees or healthy loam.

As I entered the shrink's office, I saw an orange shag carpet, fibers falling all over themselves. I remember seeing big orange sofas worn thin. I remember the nurse, with her intense voice. I remember the brown paint on the walls, dreary and lackluster. Exactly what I still think a children's hospital looks like.

I distinctly remember the feeling of the squeaky leather of the psychiatrist's armchair underneath my jeans. It felt alien. I remember the noise it made too; it was a really annoying squeak like it was protesting my weight.

My mom in a floral something was sitting next to me. Her hands were wringing themselves tightly. Her face was tight. When I grew up and read about this afternoon in my little book, it says something about

them being white at the knuckles. Was I that difficult a kid?

The doctor sitting across from me was an old guy. He had a grey beard and spectacles. I think they were reading glasses. Thick black rims. Fat as an elephant. His back was straight like an iron rod. Her name was Dr. Ankia Muller. That's enough, right? You get the picture? She was a stuck up, biased idiot. I even remember that now, no need to reference the little notebook.

"So, tell me what seems to be the problem?" Dr. Ankia Muller said, glancing at us.

"Well, he is talking about his crazy ideas again," My mother began. The flickering fluorescent lights of his office were typical. Old and partially damaged.

"I don't think he's been handling the ..." My poor mom, she had no idea how to handle this kid. Even up to her death I exasperated her.

"Actually, if it's alright with you," The doc interrupted. "I would like to speak to him."

Mom must have missed what she said, because my mom said, "I didn't raise a stupid son."

"He's always out of the house, poking into the dirt and trying to figure out how things grow. He stares at the fish in the tank for hours, sketching in that little book of his."

"Mrs. Teeple, we really need to hear from your son," she said in that nasally, whiny voice. My mom's face dropped, and her hands landed in her lap. She was lost, I could tell even then.

The docs' face turned to me, and she said, "What's wrong?" I just shrugged. I still didn't like doing this, talking to others about the specifics of my brain, my life. After all, it was my life to feel the way I wanted to about it. s" So, what's wrong?" she repeated as if he honestly expected me to reply with the truth. "Your parents tell me you have a habit, a distracting habit?"

"Yes."

"Please tell me about it."

"Are you sure that this won't result in bad things?"

"We promise that you will be just fine." Spoiler, she lied. My life was to be truly defined by this mistaken woman.

"The universe has a voice. It talks to us."

"Yes, please do go on."

I stopped for a moment and looked at her. I stared long enough for her to be uncomfortable. And then just before she opened her mouth, I responded.

"If you look in the right places you can find answers to all the questions the universe has."

"Like?"

"In those shadows over there, you can see a pattern."

"Which pattern?"

"The light falls just so from these two flickering lights

making the reality of the wall just exactly right.”

“The reality of the wall?”

“Oh, yes, listen to your heart or intuition or whatever you want to call it, it can see the solutions to the world outside us.”

“Oh, ummm, hmmm.”

The subtle glee of the doctor, from her turned down mouth and eyebrow raise was hard to understand as a kid. As an adult, I still think she was a dick. Especially since her glee contrasted so well with the horror of my Mom’s reaction.

“Well Mrs. Teeple, it does look like your son needs to be tested,” Calmly and deliberately she said this. Confident even. “We need to see if he is on the autistic spectrum.”

I looked at my mom, and her smile was back. She sat up in her chair and nearly clapped.

“Are there drugs, doctor?”, she said. And that brought the free part of my life crashing down.

I learned to hate that label, autistic spectrum. Still do. I am not just that, I am so much more. Can’t you tell only by looking at me? At the patterns of my hair or just the wrinkles on my face? I can. Even these days, after those terrible post Muller experiences, I can tell.

After that year, I learned to stay away from others. I started living in my math textbooks and loving my jigsaw puzzles. Those didn’t tell me what to do. They didn’t tell me how to live my life. They didn’t tell me that I was deficient or broken. They didn’t berate me when I tried to understand the world around me.

In elementary school, I was known as that kid on the autistic spectrum that could solve all the puzzles in the library.

Under the influence of that doctor’s drugs, I managed to graduate university with honors in my masters and doctorate degrees. Math was easy to read and a fantastic lens to pattern the world with. Other students used to call me the “Legend.” I thought it might be because I was so good, but more likely it was because I was a little off. Maybe it was because somehow, I just knew the answers, it’s like I could connect to a deeper source of awareness.

I even managed to figure out how to make a living in the real world. Designing things that don’t tell you what to do was an invigorating experience. Living at home with my parents and working on my computer was the perfect way for me to escape those hospitals. I played some video games, and I had a lot of food delivered. I had fallen so far down the rabbit hole, I nearly pulled the lid down with me. It got to the point that I could pretend that I was entirely alone.

I wasn’t alone. There were many others down that rabbit hole with me, hiding from the knowledge that would free them, that would force them to blossom into what they wanted to be.

The Search for the Grande Algorithm



MY HOUSE IN SPRING BANK, CALGARY

Those experiences had left me with a sense of a profound duality. On the one side, the institutions of the world demanded that we fall in line, that you accept their truths. On the other side, the world outside with its sunshine and rain thrust its reality in your face, a chaotic, unusual fact. One whose pearls of wisdom were ignored by our institutions!

I’d spent 25 years growing up in this bipolar world, struggling to figure out where I fit. And this morning was the day I started to find out where the universe wanted me to fit.

I was sleeping in my bedroom, with its popcorn ceiling, pale white walls with accidental marks on it, and clothes strewn on the ground. It felt comfortable, like home.

That morning my phone rang like a bell. My eyes still full of sleep, I picked up the phone.

“What?” I mumbled. I’d told work not to phone me this early. Static hissed over the phone line.

“Don’t go into work this week.”

“Why not?”

“You’ll die.”

“What?”

“Stay home.”

“Why?”

“You are in danger – serious danger.”

“Who will kill me? I’m not valuable,” I shrugged it all off. I had different things to focus on. I muttered after she hung up. I looked at the clock on the bedside table. The red numbers glowed 7:00 AM. I blinked. I sighed and fell back into bed. Dammit, too many work calls lately.

I managed to make it to the bathroom where the sink’s rust red water broke the beams of sunlight, coughing and sputtering its way to the porcelain. It splashed on the parabolic walls of the tub, leaving a few drops on the floor tiles. I looked at them, my slowly waking up mind trying to make sense of

the pattern. What the pattern meant, I couldn't really tell you. It seemed to hint at a larger equation, one that controlled things.

My face still stared back at me through the mirror. My black hair was still messed up from sleeping and my brown eyes were still bloodshot. A week's worth of stubble needed to be shaved off before work tomorrow. My head was cut off by the top of the mirror because I was so tall, and my nose was still too big. I've been told that when I smile, my whole face lights up.

But dammit, I was up, might as well start in on the work. I wandered to the kitchen. A pale blue room with white trim and an old broken fan. At least the cupboards were new. I put on a pot of coffee in the gleaming new machine. Once that was steaming in a cup, I pulled out my phone and ordered some breakfast on my app. I was starving!

After a quick shower and a quick brush through my hair, I opened the laptop and started thinking.

"Remove Obstacles," was the company's tag line. "Our specialization, coupled with courageous culture, is disrupting conventional thinking, redefining industry norms, improving outcomes and reducing costs" was our pitch. We designed solutions to problems that other companies didn't have the expertise to solve. We'd grown from a small lighting and tech company to a large problem solving company, looking into any engineering issue possible.

I checked to see that my computer hadn't been hacked yet for the valuable information on it. Almost no one had thought you could mathematically map the entirety of global civilization. Now our math for all types of human activity was disjointed and chaotic, but I planned to make a simple algorithm to predict most everything.

That's why I was so relieved that the firewall and the encryption hadn't been touched yet. No-one was probably looking yet, right? Not valuable, at least that's what all the venture capitalists said. All they had to do was wait and buy it for pennies. I opened the security program. Nothing on the firewall counter. No-one had attacked my computer.

"Food's here!" the food delivery guy yelled from the front door.

"Doors open, Logan," I yelled from the kitchen table.

"You're trusting."

"You've been here before."

"Yeah, how's the morning been, Chris?"

"This part of the superorganism up too damn early."

"Yeah, I can tell – you don't order this early often."

"Thanks."

"How much?"

"Twenty-nine bucks."

"Here's thirty."

"You should really clean up in here," he teased me. My house is normally spotless.

"Ha, funny."

"Enjoy your sausages!"

Half an hour later, my plate was empty of everything but grease. The remains left a random pattern of yellow-orange dots on the pale white plate. Another beautiful pattern.

For most of the day, I was on my computer working on the equations. Our math almost worked perfectly, and I just couldn't find the exact place where the equation was broken. It was beyond understanding, like the answer was outside of this universe somehow.

My phone rang again. I saw Gurdeep's name on the phone. I'd been working with him for years, after I moved to this company. He spent whole weekends at the gym and looked the part. His ties were immaculate, and his face was clean shaven. His mind was also sharp. I could talk to him about almost any physics at the drop of a hat, but most of all he took good care of me.

"Hey dude," I said.

"There's a problem!" he said.

"What?"

"They want us to present tomorrow afternoon."

"Tomorrow afternoon?"

"Can you be ready?"

"I was going to be ready for Wednesday, not Monday afternoon."

"It's our only chance."

"Yes, dammit, I can be ready, I think."

"Shit, excellent, see you at work tomorrow morning."

Flat eyed, I stared at the equation, drawn in colored markers, tacked on the kitchen wall. I'd run all of the permutations and variations through every industry suggested cross check I could think of. None of the programs I'd tried to help me worked. No advice, no hardware worked, logically, testing wise, nothing seemed to solve my problem.

My fingers settled onto the laptop and relaxed at the same time my mind did. After all the work I'd put in, now I was reduced to guessing as to which change would work the best? I typed, my fingers flying. I never even glanced at the clock. For all I knew its hands whirred in a circle draining the world.

Somehow the day disappeared out from under me. And I only stopped thinking when Gurdeep messaged me. On the screen, his message floated. "Go to bed, you need to be rested for tomorrow."

I slept. And in my dreams, I saw a field of flowers, magenta, yellows, and blues in the sunshine. They were lovely. They were so eye-catching, I zoomed in on the petals, oblongs with irregular edges. As I got closer, I saw the insects crawling on the leaves. Some grasshoppers were chewing the petals – their mandibles chewing in a hypnotizing geometric pattern. A mosquito landing on a mouse's back, without the mouse noticing.

I heard the wind, the fair wind and I listened to the bees' wings cut the air, leaving eddies in the air. I slowly focused on them as they grew closer to me. I heard the buzzing grow in intensity, I heard it lower and then I something terrible happened.

I heard them speaking to me, "Save us, Save us."

"What?" I blurted out in my surprise.

"Our veins are being squeezed tight, and it's killing us."

"What's killing you?"

"You will figure that out. Your heart will guide you."

I saw images of bees dying, falling to the ground and dying. As they fell, their corpses formed a skull on the ground in between the blooming flowers.

And I woke up, burned out and worried, the clock burning crimson numbers into my brain. It was 7 AM, again. I sucked down that first cup of coffee like an addict.



IN THE OFFICE – DOWNTOWN CALGARY

The office foyer hadn't changed much while I was working from home. Still full of chrome and confusing, tall abstract paintings. Marble on the walls and the tiles on the floor. I guess they wanted guests to think we were an imposing and profound corporation, a player in the industry.

Still I stood there wondering how that painting was chosen. Who told who that buying it was a good decision? Who had the final vote on it? And I kept on wondering that until Gurdeep met me in the foyer with a large cup of coffee. I was terrible in the morning without coffee.

He was dressed in a beautiful suit, and had shoes polished to the nines. His tie was a soft blue, and his glasses had thin brown frames on them.

"Thanks a lot, Gurdeep."

"No worries. You are a pain without caffeine."

"We still have to walk past that every day?" I pointed at the painting.

As we started up the escalator to the office he said "Yeah, always thought it kind of looked like someone throwing up."

"Something seems off today."

"Oh, is your Spidey sense tingling?" Deep smirked.

"So, what's the group presentation about?"

"Rumor's that we got a new client."

"A new client?"

"That's as much as I know."

"They still think they need my advice?"

"Oh, believe me, they are starving for it."

"Why do they need it?"

"You are the smart one, that's why."

"I'm not."

"Everybody here thinks that you can solve their problems."

"How the hell did that happen?"

"You know. You solved those problems back on old man Hiller's project, amazingly enough, and your track record since then has been fantastic."

I just muttered negative things under my breath. I still didn't want any responsibility or authority.

As we passed the first glass doors Arya caught my eye, as if to prove Gurdeep right, "I need your advice on this."

I sighed and then said, "You got five minutes."

"I can't quite put my finger on it, but this code looks wrong. I've worked very, very hard at this, and it never gets any better. It's like the world is broken."

I glanced at them, my mind working in overtime for a bit. A couple of seconds later I told her, "Yeah the code is missing a fair amount Buffer Overflow. The Graphic User Interface won't work without it."

"Thanks! I really needed a second opinion."

Gurdeep had waited for a moment. "See, you are valuable here. Everyone here is influenced by your opinion." And to prove Gurdeep right once again, Johnson put up his hand, as we walked by his office.

"I'll see you in there 'Deep!"

"Right." he said

Johnson asked, "Got a moment to talk today?"

"Sure, what do you need?"

"This program here." He lifted his laptop and pointed at the screen, "is broken. Can you help?"

"Exactly, see these little numbers, they are in the wrong notation, so the computer just might crash from the extra cycles it goes through."

"Oh my god, how did I miss that?"

"It's no problem."

I walked past the next display area, reminiscing as I saw all the blueprints on display. Blueprints for machines, buildings, and vehicles all lined the hallway. The latest machines that we had in production were on the walls. A prototype of a vector magnetograph, that measured magnetic fields remotely, hanging a little crooked on the wall. We worked hard on that one, using it to solve a particularly difficult problem once. I walked over and straightened it. Beauty should be appreciated.

Outside the meeting room there was an intimidating sign. Only the letters IMC were visible. White letters on a black background. I saw someone else shiver as she approached. Purple chains crossed the sign below the three letters. My soul's hackles rose and growled at me.

"That sign looks intimidating to me."

"Just your imagination." Deep replied.

"I'm not too sure."

"We should go in," he said, "Let's find out when they tell us, and then react after we have the information." I think he was ignoring his gut, and I was unsure because my intuition was afraid. Still I followed him into the room and sat down. The seats were spread in a pattern, almost geometric, spiraling out from a common core. Like a whelk seashell, building out from a pillar, growing larger and larger. The walls were painted in a dark brown, matching the curtains behind the stage.

"See that?" I said.

"See what?"

"The chairs are in a golden ratio?" The blood coloured chairs spread out in a striking curve, each set just back from the others. My gut flinched, my breakfast roiled.

"Yeah, neat, eh?" Gurdeep said, "Now, let's pay attention." His back was straight, and he seemed to be confident enough to get through this presentation in one piece. Three people walked on stage. One was another of our company partners, Gene Lee. He was wearing a tie and a blue shirt. I saw him slowly open his mouth, the moment full of importance.

My imagination saw a whole new world burst in front of me. I saw two paths that I could take, one full of light and mystery, a bright seed growing and spiraling into powerful ideas. Another full of darkness and decay, mushrooms growing on loam, worms writhing in the dirt. I shook my head, confused for a moment. Then I was distracted by Gene beginning his speech.

"Wait with your questions until later." He paused for a second, "This is Wallace." He pointed at the seven-foot-tall giant. Everything Wallace wore was starched, straight and even like a ruler. "This is Tara, she visited us recently." She was considerably shorter, black hair running down her face. Her face was open, and she smiled with cherry-red lipstick. But she was empty, no empathy shining through those teeth. "They are from the analytics company we are partnering with, the Investment Management Corporation. They

may purchase our company. They find us valuable because we can help them transition their industry applications into real world solutions."

Her words echoed with loam and mushrooms, "Thank you, Gene." Her smile didn't reach her eyes, "We are here to apply our logical and mathematical methods to save your company. We have tons of relevant experience in dealing with these types of problems. Every time we come into a new company, we evaluate performances and come out with better processes."

Then she, in her French accent, became blunt like a hammer. "Your company is in financial difficulty," she paused for a second. "Those rumors are true". More silence. She continued, "To start the process, we need to see your products in the pipeline." I'd never seen graveyards this quiet; no one had even dared to shift.

Tara and Wallace spoke for another hour, in a monotone drone, with no-one else interrupting them. I kept quiet, imagining the lights dimming around and behind them. The two obviously represented one of the futures I could choose. But who in the room represented the other?

An hour later, I was sitting in a chair in my boss's huge office. Gene had the curtains drawn, and his office was dark. He was an intimidating giant of a man behind his large oak desk. The bookshelves on the south wall had the books clearly ordered and easily accessible. Everything was dusted within an inch of their lives every night. The coffee table had a few pictures standing on it, his wife and kids smiling in the photos on the wall. The wide window was looking down on downtown.

He didn't even look up when I came in. "Why don't you want to do it?" he asked without even meeting my eyes. Distant, confident. He followed his own conclusions, and rarely consulted with others.

"We had an agreement, Gene. I got to work from home with little human contact, you know how hard that is for me."

"You are the only one."

"What, why?"

"You have the confidence, the mathematics expertise, and the project knowledge. No-one else can speak for this project and get the IMC on board."

"This doesn't feel right. My intuition says not to do it," I said, weakly. My voice was flat in that place, absorbed into the books.

He just said, "Grab the folder – read." He paused. "We leave in an hour."

"Yes, sir."

My mind quickly flashed back to a different office. My psychologist had once said "own your actions" with renewed confidence I grabbed the folder. Lifting the folder caused dust swirls on the desk, the dust currents flowing under the dying fluorescent bulbs. The cicada trapped in the glass paperweight didn't mind. I shook the matchbox of dead locusts sitting beside it. That box had always made me smile as I marveled at the fact that some locusts only come out of the ground every 17 years. Some

part of my mind wondered what instincts governed their migration.

The report had a purple octagonal header on it. The first line was

The minds of the planet are ours for the taking. Math is the key.

The shudder grew outwards, past my kidneys and through my stomach. Acid burned its way up my throat. They were using my philosophy, my foundational ideas.

“No,” I whispered.

We can already map insect communities perfectly, like, bees, ants, and wasps are easily understood. Human society can be easily understood just like ants. Mapping us is possible and extremely useful.

“Shit,” I subvocalized, the rebellion reverberating in my stomach. Then Gene stuck his head in. That hour had gone too quickly, like the rules of the world had just bent around me. I had no time to react or come up with a plan.

“We need to get going.” He insisted, before I could even think up a protest.

And I managed to choke out, “Where?”

He responded with, “I’m driving.”

We took the elevator down to his truck. He just asked me one question on the way,

“Are you ready?”

“I suppose,” I said half-heartedly.

The sunshine met us, refracting lines decorating the garage door. A half-remembered quotation came to mind, “Even the gallows had been met with a sunrise.”

Choices to be made



AN INDUSTRIAL PARK IN THE SOUTHEAST OF CALGARY

Gene's car was smooth and cool, the due to the air conditioning. It was new enough that I could still smell the plastic and leather. When we got to our destination, the parking lot was quiet. But the building was intimidating, a completely flat black.

“We are going in there?” I asked.

“Yeah, that’s where they have their headquarters.”

“Who has what headquarters?”

“The Investment Corp.”

“They do the local pension funds, publicly funded?”

“Yes, that’s them.”

“That’s an intimidating building for a crown corporation.”

“I don’t ask questions.”

I shut up for a moment.

“How do I act?”

“Just be yourself. Make sure you answer their questions as best you can.”

“Why haven’t I had more time?”

“That is confidential.”

As I stepped out of the car, my boots hit the smooth tiles of the plaza. The grey and quartz marble in huge blocks spread out across the courtyard. It was so smooth that the trees reflected into it, showing an upside-down mirror world. I wondered what the insects would be like living in the mirror world. What patterns would govern their behavior?

My loafers slipped on the millimeter of water, sliding over the images of that tower, disturbing the edifice’s engineering.

The front doors stood out like everything else and were a little extra heavy. Everything felt important, like I was a child entering an adult place. There were purple chains decorating the inside of the building, too. probably a subtle nod to their philosophy.

The guard just grunted at us when Gene said, "We're here for..."

The guard just held out a plastic pass. "Elevator 3," he said. We walked across the foyer, our footsteps the only sound on the tiled floors.

"How?" I said.

"Just press it against the panel," Gene said.

The chromed doors of the elevator opened and we stepped in. Still silent except for the elevator's motors.

"I'm not the best person for this," I sighed.

"You are the only person for this."

"What are they going to ask?"

"About the math?"

"You are not sure?"

"No guarantees on this one, kid – it's a risk."

"Dammit," I muttered under my breath.

The elevator doors opened on a purple foyer. The carpet was maroon, and the lights had purple shades on them. The company's logo, Investment Management Corporation, was sinister, bold and black with more purple chains.

"Which way?" I said.

"Just follow me, Gene replied.

He tapped the pass card against the foyer door's sensor. It turned green on the third tap. Big and metal, it swung open silently. Eerie. Eerie enough that I imagined smoke slowly wafting out the door, just covering the floor.

Three steps into the hallway we met our host. She seemed calm and professional, but she unnerved me. Tall and slender, hair perfect. A practiced smile.

"Gene, nice to see you again," she said. She was all of 6 feet tall, with grey blonde hair and blue eyes. She walked towards me, hand outstretched.

"And who is this?"

"He's our on-board tech specialist." Gene had to elbow me in the ribs to respond.

"Say hello, Chris," he whispered.

"Oh, hey, hello, how are you?" I mumbled, accepting her handshake.

"Ready?" She said.

"As much as I can be, I guess?"

The corridor was just as intimidating as the elevators. A single strip of light ran down the middle of the hallway, casting warm white. The carpet was a silvery grey. Etheric, really otherworldly. Had I entered a wizard's castle?

She and Gene exchanged polite nothings. "No, the people aren't the opportunity, they are the solution," I told myself. I muttered

it a couple more times. "People are the solution."

"We are here," she said. They were both looking at me strangely.

"Where?"

"The meeting room," as they gestured to the open door.

"Oh, Oh. I'll just go right in then," For a second I thought my feet had taken root. Then I took a few deep breaths and moved towards the chair.

The chair was one of those modern ones that are super comfortable and flexible. That I could appreciate. The room wasn't too large, with only a glass table and a dozen chairs around it. A few paintings on the walls and a giant corporate logo. One more door, at the opposite side of the room, locked and heavy. Gene and our hostess were at the table, the chairs moving on their wheels silently, like ghosts.

"The others will be here soon," she said to me, and the two of them went back to talking.

My phone buzzed, like an overexcited grasshopper. I flipped the phone over and off the table and into my pocket. As I did, I read the text, "Get out of there, get out. NOW." The number didn't even show up. Just white text on a blue bubble. What did that mean?

I frowned. "What?" I muttered. I had no time to react before the door opened. And my intuition awoke again, blasting a vision across my sight. I briefly saw a vast cavern with stalactites reaching down from the ceiling and things crawling across the slimy floor.

The metal door creaked open. I caught a flash of a large bookcase and a big oak desk. Then the chairman stepped through, the door sliding closed behind him. I knew him. I was sure of it. Maybe the chairman of our power company?

Our hostess said, "Hey Steve, how are you?"

"Not doing so terrible, not today – today's going to be great, right?"

"Absolutely – we are going to put the final touches on our plans," said Gene.

Three more filed in from the corridor. Tara was first, her shoes whispering along the carpet. Wallace was second, his face as blank as concrete. And a second man, who I didn't recognize. Short, powerfully built and expressive.

"Nice to see you, Jim," said the boss, Steve.

Those around the table murmured in agreement, quiet welcomes bouncing off the walls.

A huge LCD screen whirred down from the roof and lit up.

Our hostess cleared her throat and said, "You all have your package and understand the significance of what we are going to hear here today. Today we are making the final decision to go ahead with the exploration of this new reality."

She waited for any responses. There were none. "Remember that secrecy is our only rule. The only thing we ask of you here and now. You all know the consequences of violating this."

No one even stirred. I moved my eyes and felt like my muscles were making as much noise as rusty chains. What had Gene gotten me into?

Gene started up, "We have been investigating colony psychology through the metaphors of, ants, bees, and wasps. Specifically, their actions and reactions can be predicted through the laws that Kleiber gave us, what some are calling Newton's Laws of Biology. An exponential curve that simulates their biological reactions was our primary method of exploration. Our contention is this can be mapped on to individuals and the networks they use."

"Ready, Chris?"

"I'll do my best." I stood up, the chair as silent as before. The marker worked well on the whiteboard. I just wrote down one word. "Prediction"

"There is a flaw in our most fundamental assumptions about knowledge and data. Acting on this bad data can have untold consequences. But if we reexamine our fundamental knowledge, we can find useful patterns hidden in all that data which can help businesses increase their bottom line. Acting on data that will allow these companies to engage with customers more effectively, or tweak machines or system operations that will result in performance increases will increase profits substantially for potentially little or no extra cost."

"For example, we believe that we can predict an individual's behavior to a degree never previously seen. We can do this through the exponential curve of a $3/4$ power law."

I drew a rough line on the smart monitor, curving up the side of the x and y axis.

"Energy needed is here. Output is here."

"And the line in the middle is?" Asked a member of the audience I was unfamiliar with.

"Emotional reactions. Predicted emotional reactions. We have field tested these, and come close to accurate. If we prescribe and combine different emotional experiences and their quantified value, we can change a person's worldviews and beliefs."

"How did you measure the emotions?"

"Through an EKG, measuring alpha waves, pupil dilation, etc. We have solid data."

"Let's see that data?"

"I'll have to reconstruct it from memory. Is that O.K. Gene?"

"If we have to, we must."

"We found that emotional intensity follows this curved metric too. The numbers we plotted ended up on this scale, which ended up similar to memory, and memory is not linear."

I scrawled on the monitor, reducing emotions to mere numbers

or values. A tiny reconstruction of a human mind.

"As you can see, we did make this work. We can predict a human's emotional response in exact amount or quality."

"Oh, that's interesting" Said Wallace flatly. "But I think something is missing. Are you sure you followed this line of reasoning to the end?"

"Yes, what other work have you put into these ideas?" Steve, the grey-haired boss said.

"You are looking at everything I have done so far. I haven't had any more time."

"How much more work do you need to do?"

"What do you mean?"

"You have some insight, but you need to finish it before it's really useful."

"Oh."

Then they froze, still like a frozen river. They didn't give away anything, even their hair didn't move for a long second. "Excuse us for a second."

They all stood up and huddled in the corner of the room, whispering. I heard a few scraps of conversation escape the huddle.

"Search for the correct?"

"Symmetry through another lens."

"Powerful equations?"

And then Grey-haired Steve looked at me calculatingly, like a piece of bloody meat. I went pale, all my blood draining from my face. They broke up the huddle, and the hostess walked over to Gene and shook his hand. "We can truly get behind this."

Gene said, "You all know what that means."

"Yes, we truly do," Steve responded.

"Thanks for coming Gene, if anybody needs more information, we can get a hold of you at the usual number?"

"Of course, of course, the package will be sent out this afternoon."

"Let's finish this meeting in the usual way, then," Steve said.

The seven-foot-tall giant cleared his throat, and they all looked at the man with the grey hair. He took off his rimless glasses and sat forward in his chair. He smiled and said,

"We are going to be successful. This new data will ensure our plans will never be broken by our competitors. Your data will be an excellent adaptation to our current working model. Remember that this is a sacred choice, for we are the guardians of the human race."

To me that was ominous. I was starting to get afraid, sitting here with people like this.

Our blonde hostess continued, "Additionally, those who invest at the start will get rich. Those in this room, they are ready to walk down this road?"

She looked everyone in the eyes. I didn't react well. I blushed and looked down at the floor. Sweat started pouring off my forehead.

This seemed ridiculous. I should have felt ashamed with giving these people my secrets, with giving them all an insight into how my mind worked. Yet, I was squirming in my chair, feeling empty.

As we exited the room Gene asked me, "Chris, are you alright?" I shook my head. I blinked.

"I'm sorry, I didn't think that would be so difficult for you."

I wiped the sweat off my head and said, "That's alright,"

"It'll be fine Chris. You are fine, right?"

"Yes, Gene, I will be fine."

"I'll still need you to go back to the office today, we need to brief the team on what to expect."

I am sure that tears pooled at the corners of my eyes. "I really don't want to." My voice broke, and I nearly did.

"We have to get the support of the rest of the team, get them on board as fast as possible. I trust you implicitly to get this done, as I have seen how capable you are in the past. I know you are a truly capable wonder."

Investment Management Corporation



IN A SECRET LOCATION

On a laptop screen, a cursor blinked on the screen. The keyboard clicks echoed. Everything else is silent. An equation is slowly typed on the screen. Before the equation is finished, we see the individual hairs on the programmer's arm stand up. Sweat drips down his cheek. It's obvious that he is thinking furiously.

"This one will work," he mutters. His fingers noisily fly over the keyboard. "He's reinforced our work. Modified Kleiber was the way to go."

The door handle turns, loud in the silence, time slows down. No keyboard keys click.

"Is it ready?" Asked a professional and serious woman. Blonde hair cascaded down her shoulders. The man frowned. He held up a hand for silence.

Hesitantly "Yes, the laws do apply to the mind. We have the beginning of a complete lockdown."

"Are you sure?"

He flicks on a switch, and the monitors show people in padded cells moaning, or making barking noises. "We managed to change their consciousness with his numbers."

She glances at the displays of people doing unusual things. "Were the fractal muon designs helpful?"

"Yes, but actually, adding two more directions of time was ..."

She cuts him off, "Shut up right now. The demonstration is ready, right?"

"Yes, the demonstration is important. The Heavy Higgs particle discovery will shake predictive science to its core."

She shut him up, "That's not my concern, Is IT DONE? They are waiting."

"Yes," he replied quietly.

The woman led the programmer out of the office. All the monitors in the office outside flickered. The pair walked past many computers whirring by themselves through the door, past more wires and lights, through buzzing electricity and silent and dark computers.

They entered a brightly lit room with a dozen suits standing in it. The suits' conversation continued, but at a whisper now, like they were keeping secrets.

"Is it possible to override society like this?" The computer programmer whispered under his breath.

She cut into his sentence with, "Your job is not to worry, just do it!"

He smiled broadly and nervously. Stuttering a little, he replied, "Of, of, of course, it's done, it will work."

She started the presentation with, "Gentlemen!"

Behind the Curtains



OFFICE, DOWNTOWN CALGARY

I'd just put the boxes from my desk on the floor when Arya, one of my colleagues at work, came in to complain about something again. 'Why don't they just leave me alone?' I thought as I picked up my coffee and discovered it was cold. I barely heard her say something about the buzzing in her office. 'Not again,' I thought. She'd been telling me, and everyone else who would listen that there were insects in her office for months. No one really believed her.

She said, "You've got to call the exterminators." I said, "What is it this time?"

"Ants crawling all over my desk."

Wearily I replied, "I'll go take a look."

"Thank you, boss."

"I don't want to be your boss."

I walked the two minutes to her office and found a half dozen ants wandering on her desk, the reason immediately apparent. Her desk was a mess, food crumbs all over it. The ants were just collectively collecting food. I liked insects. I probably had too many of them at home doing the same thing.

"Do you know what a superorganism is, Arya?"

"A superorganism?"

"Yes, a superorganism."

"No."

"It's a bunch of smaller animals, in this case ants, acting together. They act together so well that they can be modelled as one single organism. Ant colonies do this, as do wasps. Some are even saying that humans are starting to act as a superorganism. These ants here are collecting food for their friends and family, and they are working in concert. So, we can call them a superorganism."

"What?"

"Essentially, together the ants' superorganism has agreed that your desk is a good source of food, and together they are collecting it."

"Oh?"

"So, you have to convince the superorganism that it isn't a good source of food."

"How do I do that?" she said plaintively.

"You got google, don't you?"

Before she could start ranting on something else, I spooled up a website in front of her and simply found one that would show her how to get rid of the ants. Hopefully, that was the last I'd hear of that after the superorganism had been reeducated. But probably not. She'd talk to me about it again, hopefully when I was behind a couple of kilometers of cable at home.

Then someone else e-mailed me about a crashed laptop, panicked that he might not be able to save his work. I walked over to his office, as he'd never come to mine. His screen was black, and it wouldn't turn on.

Maybe it's just my colleagues who are flailing around for help. Maybe they've never really looked at the world in a way that is positive, where they can solve their own problems. They've always thought they are trapped inside the world the way it is. I bet just a change of perspective would free them.

After my brief thoughts, I confirmed that everything had been backed up last night. Then, I just told him to go down to Gurdeep. "Gurdeep's dependable, he'll fix it."

Gurdeep phoned a few minutes later and said, "Jesse needs a new computer."

"What?"

"His motherboard is just fried - no bloody coherent lines on the motherboard anymore - something about extra heat and manufacturing defects."

"How'd that happen?"

"He was trying out a new operating system."

"What the hell, can't he stick with ours?"

"Order him another one?"

"Yeah, and express it."

"You are the boss."

"No, I am not."

I lost so much productivity when I came into work - too damn many people asking too many questions. Nothing else got done that day. And by three o'clock I was totally exhausted. How'd Gene keep up this speed of activity?

I barely had an hour to work on my own program. The numbers flashed up on the screen, and I modified a few more, unsuccessfully running it through the algorithms' test program. Just frustration as a result.

But, finally, after an eternity, the alarm went off on my phone. A face with

a wide smile on it appeared, beside a countdown timer. Five minutes till my appointment with my shrink. I always enjoyed these appointments.

I locked my stuff up and walked up the two flights of stairs it took to get to my psychologist's office. I opened the stairwell door and walked past the three offices it took to get to my doctor's office. Luckily the doctor shared the same high-rise office building as the business I worked for. I knocked and right away, she responded with, "Come on in." Cheerful and upbeat. Like the world hadn't been turned into a dark mystery. Like the world was peaceful and calm all around her.

She had a beautiful halo of red hair and loved red lipstick. Her clothes were always simple and yet elegant. Fashionable jeans were her favorite, and simple patterned t-shirts were a passion of hers. Just being in her presence cheered me up.

"Hey, what have you been up to?" I said, cheerfully noticing a band aid on the back of her hand.

"Fine and dandy, catching up on some news right now."

"MSN?"

"Nah, it's the CBC."

"CBC, the good old crown corporation?"

"Sure, my dad used to listen, it's comforting."

"Even without oversight?"

"Oversight?"

"Any corporation without oversight abuses people and the public corporations are the worst abusers. It's fertile ground for corruption."

"Why do you think that?"

"I read the legislation."

"Oh, that's important, everybody should read legislation."

"Yeah, we need to start using the power we wield."

"I see you getting tense, now. You should focus on things that relax you."

I looked at her and thought that a coffee with her would be very relaxing. I smiled. "What is that band aid on the back of your hand." I reached out and held her hand very carefully like it was the most precious thing.

"Ah, I just cut myself cooking."

"I bet that was a relaxing activity."

And she responded, "What relaxes you?" She drew her hand back into her lap.

"Ah, hm, that's a good question - I haven't thought of that for a while."

"You can have a moment if you want to think about it." She smiled at me.

And I took a moment.

"Watching the sky go by, and breathing in the air in the mountains, and sleeping."

"You should do more of those things, much more."

"Yeah, I should."

"So, onto business. What did you want to talk about today?"

"Huh, I had a strange meeting this morning - I think our new customer is doing some bad things, I trust my intuition about this ..."

"You know that you need to seize the day, as your ideas are incredibly unique. All of these insights into the way the world works has really been dazzling. Instead of worrying about what other people think you really need to take the advantage of your unique brain. What do you think you need to do with that brain?"

"You already know what I think. It is clear that rational thoughts without intuition lead to the unacceptable. I need to value the intangibles, like love and trust, as much as any concrete metric, even though I do not understand them well. Without this, intuitive ideas, which cannot be measured, lose out to ones that can be measured."

"I totally agree with you. That is a problem in our world, where the intangibles are not held in as much esteem as anything else. They are too hard to measure accurately," she said. "So, we do not value them as well. I value relaxing and putting on some music at home after a long day at work. It would be nice to have some company too." I could have sworn she winked at me, but I am not the best at picking up cues like that.

I smiled and fidgeted a little. Like many others, my autistic movements were habitual. Mine just happened in my fingers. And right now, my fingers threatened to start their geometric dance, drawing shapes in the air. I took a deep breath while looking at her symmetrical face. Her hair gleamed redly in the sunlight. I saw an outline around her head, like a halo, and for a second, I could see it every time she moved her arms, and when any strand of hair moved. Just little bits of light cutting a momentary swathe through the air. Was she the other path?

"You need to better understand your intangible value to be a good father."

"I'm not sure that's in my future."

"Really?" she smiled at me.

"Really." I frowned back at her.

"You can trust me, please be open, there is no judgment here." She smiled at me and shook her head. I loved the way she pushed her hair away from her ear. "So, like last time you couldn't sleep?"

"No, terrible dreams in the last few days, caverns, mushrooms and squirming larva."

"What kind of larva? Like a monster?"

"Sort of... I am not really sure. Can we talk about something else?"

"So, are you making sure to get to the gym?"

"Work's been keeping me busy."

“And eating, right?”

“We are working on that.”

“We?”

“Ah, some of my co-workers are trying to keep me on the straight and narrow.”

“You mentioned the tyranny of patterns before. Are there patterns in that, in your co-workers?”

“Yeah – the patterns of biology and parts of the Grande Algorithm dictate how we trust each other. And that trust dictates who we let make decisions for us. Which ultimately dictate the outcomes of our collective lives.”

“Which outcome?”

“Health and wellness.”

“Interesting. Tell me,”

I was silent. I didn’t notice what she said next. I was looking up at the roof, trying not to let her see the disdain in my eyes. Interesting, I was always interesting.

“Chris?”

Shaking my head, “Sorry, I was off in another place.”

“You’ve got to find a way to not be so distracted by your desire to skip difficult conversations. They have negatively impacted your life in the past.”

“Yeah – Sarah and I.”

“And your previous jobs?”

“Yeah, I know, I can try to communicate better.”

“So, what are you going to do?”

“I’m not going to think, I am going to do.”

“Excellent, because...”

“Because my life is already good, so it can only get better.”

“Life is too short to worry. Remember to smile and have fun with the world around you! Celebrate the universe,” she smiled.

I thought about that discussion on the way back to my desk. What was she hinting at with that father remark? Could a conversation be geometric, like a molecule? Could you draw a geometric relationship between questions and answers between ideas? How could all of this fit into the Grande Algorithm? I knew that the frequency of the words used in a conversation followed an exponential pattern. That was interesting, really interesting. I wondered if that could be worked into the equation or program we were working on.

But, there was work to do. I saw there were invitations to the bars after work. I couldn’t do that. Today had already been too damn draining. Then three emails down, I saw an e-mail from Gene. “We need to follow up on the presentation. Be here tomorrow at 6:30 a.m.” I felt that I was stretched

between the attention wars. One side of me was demanded by the program work and the other by people. An impossible equation to figure out.

And all I wrote in return was “See you then.” Feeling that my attention was being dragged in too many directions. I said some other not as nice things. I didn’t want to go.

I looked at the floor as I left my office. Walking past the soft carpet, and the white tiles, I wondered at the clacking noise my shoes made and stopped to pick out some rocks from the soles of my shoes. I could feel the tension around the sides of my head.

A sign for McDonald’s caught my attention on the left of the road. Their fries were delicious, I didn’t know the food science, but they were truly delicious. Were the golden arches hyperbolic shaped? Was the shape of the burger bun guided by a unique number, or was it different for each one? Did McDonald’s have its own proprietary algorithm? Was it a superorganism? Being on the spectrum meant that I loved making literal connections between things. I had always loved looking at McDonald’s signs and finding those realistic relationships, but today that was going to harm me. Today I had other, more important things on my mind.

Instead of turning the wheel to the left and sliding into the drive through, I forced my thoughts to consider my next vacation and the beaches. I thought of swimming in the water, the humidity after stepping off the plane, and I thought of all the reading that I was going to do. Ah, reading was wonderful.

And after opening the door to my small studio apartment, I relaxed. My Math and Physics degrees, awards and certificates reminded me of how much I had accomplished in life, and that things would be O.K. Indeed, I’d received the highest grades at Caltech, one of the best math and physics universities in the world. Professors had given me historically high marks, but these days it all seemed for naught. I struggled each and every day to get out of bed.

Those Investment Management Corporation people weren’t going to be a big problem. I just had to remember that life is simple, and I didn’t need to complicate it. Nope, not at all. My place was designed as a truly, solitary, place to calm my fragile senses – no overload. People were noisy and difficult, hard to deal with. I had a harder time dealing with them than most, I have been told. So, I grabbed some jasmine tea in my kitchen. My quiet and solitary kitchen. Not much was on the counters this time, just a couple of leftover food containers. It was well controlled. I showered, letting the hot water sluice over my shoulders and head, running down my face, relaxing me. I just relaxed and tried to focus on the calm, warm water enveloping my body.

A drowsy half an hour later, I climbed out of the bath, dried myself off, and through half-closed eyelids managed to make it into bed.

As usual, the alarm went off too damn early, and I stared at the rosy numbers projected on the ceiling. It said 5:30. I successfully didn’t swear, not wanting to really wake up. I didn’t want to go to work again, because people are hard. I looked into my blood-shot eyes and thought, “Why me?” It looked back into my eyes and said, “Cause it’s down to you, everyone

else is not reliable." I sighed and stepped into the shower again.

Lather, rinse, repeat was written on the side of the bottle. Might have been written on the side of my life, because it was boring and long. I'd been in this rut for decades, ever since that first visit to a doctor with my mom.

Today, like always, the old truck started with a warm growl.

As I arrived at work, I noticed there was only one other car in the garage. That was a surprise. Everybody else tended to come in later than me. I wandered over and put my hand on the hood. It wasn't warm. Condensation was still on the windows. 'What's the problem?' I asked to the open air. I even had to unlock the door to the building, the frost flaking off the metal. The foyer coffee wasn't made yet. Shit. The garbage was still full. Where had the cleaners been?

As I trod slowly down the hallway, I straightened a couple of paintings that were askew. A couple others had been knocked off level. That stuff had always bothered me. Sighing, I knocked on Gene's door.

Then the door swung open.

Today, his office wasn't impressive. His photos were cracked, making it look like his family was crying. There were a dozen books on the floor and three cups of coffee on the table, cold and congealing. The oak desk was much darker than I remember it being. Everything was dis-ordered.

And he wasn't his usual whirl of busy. He wasn't even moving. My hand stuck to the door handle, and I pulled it off. It was spotted with red blood.

One of the only things that I remember clearly was Gene's head. It was still, the hair damp and draped across the back of his head. It still stands out today. The window right behind his desk had a dark spray of blood across it. His one visible eye was glazed over, only a pale white. Even the papers were soaked with red. For some reason, the pen in his left hand was straight upright.

I must have moved, because I was sitting on the floor of the hallway when I heard the crash of keys as it hit the floor. Gurdeep, on that day, was the second into the office. He'd always been there to support me.

He was the one that pulled out his phone and called 911.

I managed to get up and close the door until the EMS and the Cops got there. Surely, they didn't want anyone disturbing the crime scene. The EMS got there first, red and blue lights flashing in the windows. The man and the woman stood in the doorway for a moment conferring, before they went in to check on the vitals. I saw them put the forefinger to the jugular and open his eyes with a flashlight. After that, they stopped looking urgent.

Of course, all of us were fingerprinted, and blood samples were taken. I even had to turn over my bloodstained shirt. Someone lent me an ill-fitting shirt – just far too big like a tent. Eventually, I managed to be sitting out front. I do not remember how or why. I was a horrific mess. Someone startled me out of my reverie and said, "What are you doing out here?"

"Not much."

"Not much what?"

"My boss died today."

"That's really terrible Chris!"

And I looked up and saw Samantha, my psychologist. Her red hair was covering her face a little, and her scarf was fluttering in the wind. I saw concern, and something more than concern in her face. Or was that me just being confused?

"Do you want to talk about it? I have a free hour or so."

"Sure"

My feet left depressions in the grass. I noticed a single little ant struggling along the concrete, and I thought I should leave him alone. He must be doing something that is very important to the superorganism.

A few minutes later, I was sitting in her guest chair. She smiled at me in compete sympathy, and we talked about something like this:

"What did Gene mean to you?"

"Tons - he was more than just a mentor."

"Tell me more about your feelings."

"We've talked about despair before. Sometimes I just don't understand people well, they are confusing. Why did they kill gene? Who killed him? Are they going to kill me? In my head I see a giant well of blackness, sadness, or fear. It's going to be hard to sleep tonight because I lag so far behind these emotions. I don't know how to react!"

"You know that emotions are not to be scared of. Grief and anger is healthy and normal."

"My instinct is telling me to curl into a ball, and ignore all this, to dive into the company and just work, something to hide from my confusion, to disappear from the companies confusion. Why did he die? But I still am desperate for an answer. Why did he die?"

"Chris, you know that those issues have occurred for you before, and you know how to deal with them healthily. We've gone over how you cope with them. When you do look for things that are not there, you fall apart. You are special, and you need to treat yourself with the love that I see you give the world every day.

"I am really afraid that I am going to lose yourself."

"How are you going to share you love with yourself?"

"I'll tell you what I shouldn't do, go home and get drunk."

"How should you use your boundless empathy?"

"I should go home, and invite some friends over. They always calm me down. I see the love in other and then find it in myself. That's the advice we always end with."

"Doesn't mean that it's bad advice."

After her door closed, I walked downstairs. I looked at the weird paintings

and the marble and chromed foyer and couldn't muster any enthusiasm for it. I flipped out my phone and went to dial. I thought about the Gym and eating some good food. I did go to reach out, and something stopped me. My sorrow, the wave of grief behind my eyes. I saw the contact list, and I thought of the world out there waiting for me, the fun and friends, and I shut it again.

My old truck started just fine, growling like it always did. The wheels turned, curling that curb, and stopping at this light. It hesitated at the turnoff to Deep's house. But in the end the car almost drove itself to the beer barn, the steering wheel resisted that left turn and that right turn. It stopped itself at right in front of the store's sign.

Before I knew it, I was heading right towards those ales on the second shelf. The ones right above the Heineken's and the Bud's. I remember them being delicious. More tears flooded my face as I was walking out the door. The world disappeared behind a waterfall. My hands hurt from the metal ridges on the steering wheel from gripping it too hard.

The two mickeys on the passenger seat of the car talked to me, 'it's easy to forget,' 'it's easy to make everything go away' the ales said nothing, their body language enough to remind me of the numbing that comes with a case of beer.

It was hard to keep my eyes on the road.

The truck glided to a stop in my driveway, and the door opened itself. I stood there, in the doorway, feeling the warm air flee past me into the open crying 'freedom.' I looked at the handsome lamps and the sound buffers, not very happy.

"What are you going to do about it?" Her voice shocked me so much that I stopped in my tracks.

"W-W-W-What?" I said.

"They are coming for you next." It was a feminine voice, coming from the back of the house, near the kitchen.

"Next?" I took a few steps around the corner into the kitchen.

"You are in danger, serious danger." She said. She was short, only about five feet tall.

Wearing a leather jacket and jeans, short cropped hair.

"Serious danger?" I repeated dully.

"You've discovered something that they don't want the world to know. They want to keep it to themselves."

"What?"

"With that powerful and insightful mind of yours you have produced tremendously powerful equations. Those equations, those algorithms you've put together, they don't want anyone else finding out."

"Why?"

"Because it's incredibly dangerous for them – they've been in control for a long time already."

"What have they been in control of?"

"Dictators, long wars, moving money around, whatever they want."

"Why?"

"These guys just want to rule the world. They are terrified of what would happen to them if the whole thing goes off the rails. So, these so called Algorithmic overlords force us to do what they think is right."

"Why Me?"

"They think that you are just a tiny speed bump. But you are not – you have been chosen, and in their mistaken arrogance, they will use an agent or two to take care of you, or simply just the police. Maybe even some thugs to beat you up. Maybe just assassinate you."

"Why the hell would they do that?" I was shaken, shivering at this shock. What the hell was she doing in my house, let alone taking to me. I'd successful hidden from the world for 7 years, and now it's invaded my whole life. I was shaking with fear and anger.

"Because they negotiate from a position of strength, and will negotiate with you while you are weaker."

"What should I do?"

"Come with me right now, and we can save your life, keep you out of prison, keep you working on the equations you want to learn."

"Why should I trust you?"

"Because I have broken in here, and not murdered you."

"Get out."

"You will..."

"I've just had enough today – Get out!!"

She stood up and walked to the door.

"You will regret this, truly regret this."

"You need to leave right now, or I'll call the police."

"I'll be back," Was the last thing she said before slamming the door.

"God damn them, God damn them, just leave me the fuck alone!"

I walked back to the kitchen, stepping carefully, softly, so as to not scuff up the floor. To not disturb the memories there on the floor. I took a glass out of the cupboard. I poured an inch of whiskey and a couple of inches of root-beer from the fridge. It was, the whole thing was so delicious. I stared at it for a moment, watching the yellow and brown flow together over the ice cubes.

I stared out the windows in the back, and at the brick wall across the way. I did my best to calm down, focusing on the squares and triangles, circles and parallelograms in the brick. Like the dead hands of soldiers waving in the ocean. I took another drink.

The Wisdom of Avoidance



MY HOME

The rest of the world outside Samantha would think me crazy for what I had written in my notebook. This morning the notebook was still in my hands, the pen lying in a crease of the blanket. My detergent made it smell like lilacs. And even the hangover sat pleasantly in the front of my head. Waves of pain radiated up from the pit of my stomach, distracting. No black waves, no visions, no pain. I was wondering what I should write this morning.

Then the doorbell rang. Bing Bong. The last time someone had done that was a political party asking for my vote. I'd asked them if they were actually effective at changing things? Does a conservative in power really mean a better world? Does a liberal really erase the essential problems of our world? I had never voted because the game was broken. You only get to pick out of two bad choices. Politicians were not real-life leaders. They were the leftovers and had no business leading. We were being tricked into playing a broken game. What we need is a frame of mind that allows us to change the fundamental processes of our world.

I stayed in bed. I didn't want another one of those conversations.

My phone, face down on the blanket, buzzed next. I rolled over. I tried to stop imagining the electricity running down my nerves, from the neurons around my stomach. No, no, no.

It was a good thing that that bucket was there. I threw up into it, just missing my phone.

It tasted like sour root beer with a bile aftertaste.

Of course, I had texted Gurdeep late last night. I could just ramble on about the strangest things drunk sometimes. Last night I had texted things like, "Why weren't state-owned crown corporations better overseen – without oversight, they could easily be used for evil. These guys, they have no idea how easy they are and how often abuses of power happen," I rant a lot when I am drunk.

And then the doorbell rang again, 'Fuck.'

So, I fell out of bed, threw on a housecoat, and stumbled to the door. More swearing.

Sliding in my be-stockinged feet, I managed to make it to the front door. When I

opened it, my eyes recoiled at the sunshine. The shadows were eerily animated, sweeping back and forth across the ground like it was actually trying to fly.

And someone said "Chris? Oh, thank god." A deep sonorous voice, Gurdeep's voice.

He was wearing a scarf, fading rose from the top down, as fashionably dressed as always.

"Where the hell have you been?"

Shuffling my feet, I said, "no-where much."

He responded with a frown. And raised eyebrows.

Squinting, I said: 'What the heck are you wearing?'

"I was on the way to get ready for the funeral when I saw all your text messages from last night – I thought there might be a problem."

"The funeral is now?"

"Apparently, he already had everything planned."

"He already had everything planned?"

"It's in a couple hours, so we have time to put you together."

I opened the door further and waved him inside, but he stopped at the door saying, "Are you sure? You've always preferred the house the be your sanctuary."

"W-What are you talking about?"

"You've always lived alone."

"Dammit come on in."

And I stood there, halfway down the hall, unsteadily looking at him looking at my house.

He wasn't subtle about gazing around the place, looking from one side to the other, and up to the roof.

"What are those?"

"Sound absorption."

"Oh, I see."

I stumbled into the kitchen and stopped dead as I turned the corner. I blinked a couple of times at the broken glass. I must have dropped a glass last night. It seemed to have cast solid white rainbows on the walls, I saw people floating through the sections. I blinked a couple more times, and they disappeared.

"I should've put on some slippers," I said dully. Shocked.

“What are you waiting for?” he said as he pushed past me.

“Stop.”

“Oh, I have shoes on, I’ll clean it up.”

He walked across the tiles, trying to avoid the glass. Crunching the pieces, a little.

“Are you ok?” He asked me.

“Sure, aside from the grief, the shock.”

“You need to remember how remarkable you are. That’s why everyone at the office looks to you, not only are you smart, but you are a natural leader.”

And I focused on the glass, the shards on the ground. I blinked at the light reflecting off it. “Yeah, sure.”

“What are you doing?” I asked as he stood in front of the stove, fiddling with the knobs on the stove.

“Trying to start the damn stove, I’m going to make you some food while you hop in the shower.”

“... ok ...I’ll clean off in the shower.”

I peeked around the bathroom door, one eye at a time. Nothing but white tile, painfully clean. I inspected the toothbrush holder, expecting it to hide something else too. But nothing. And the hot water was amazingly refreshing, amazingly warm. The smell of all of it and the feel of the steam was super refreshing.

I remembered focusing on the whole water cycle as a kid at a science fair. I could always connect the flow of the math and water as if they were both natural and easy to understand forces. It was a fond memory. Principle Gunderson actually gave me an award for that. That was one of the best memories I have.

“Dude, you’ve been in there forever.”

“Alright, alright, just a moment.”

I dropped the last sliver of soap I was holding, and it swirled around the bottom of the tub. I tried to grab it as it slipped down the drain.

“Aw, no!!” It fell down into the darkness, disappearing.

“You ok man?”

“Yeah, yeah, I’m fine,” I said. Then I muttered, “I think,” under my breath.

Dripping on the tiles, I brushed my teeth, and watched the foam swirl down the drain, the soap suds followed, and only when all the white had disappeared did I turn it off.

Gurdeep met me with a delicious breakfast – I didn’t even know I had eggs. Somehow, he had conjured up some bacon and some toast. My stomach rumbled.

“Oh, god, thank you so much.”

“You are welcome –it’s good to have something to take my mind off, you know, other stuff.”

His eyes were as bloodshot as mine.

“Yeah, I guess I didn’t really try the best method, eh?”

“Alcohol isn’t the best drug. You know better than that! You are better than that!”

“Yeah, I know.”

“He seemed fine, didn’t he?”

“Yeah.”

“I got a strange phone call the day before- didn’t you?”

“No –no phone calls for days actually.”

“He stayed in his office all night?”

“Looks like he never left it.”

His smile twisted, and tears formed in the corners of his eyes.

“I don’t know what to say.”

Silence followed. I ate slowly. He watched me. His phone beeped. He looked at it and said “ah.”

“He was a creature of habit, right?” Gurdeep said.

“Of course, he was.”

“Always in at six A.M., always out by four P.M.”

“Naturally – but it was different yesterday, right?”

“Right.”

“In at five A.M., and he didn’t leave.”

“Not even for a moment.”

“Did he go for his coffee?”

“No – I had to get it for him.”

“Was there anything else out of place?”

“What?”

“Unusual things in the last couple of days?”

“You came into work two days in a row.”

“That’s strange.”

“Yes, it is.” I burped. He frowned.

“Sorry.”

“That’s alright.”

“God, who knows?”

“Should I try to solve this puzzle?”

“Even now, hungover and depressed, you can solve puzzles better than most.”

"You really think so?" Calm, I need to be calm. I thought of the green outside, trees don't worry, do they? They don't have to think about the patterns and curse at the unknown connections, right? They already knew how things worked together. "Sorry, I was distracted." My stomach gurgled again. I looked down at the congealing food on the plate.

"Maybe I've had enough food."

"Probably." And Gurdeep shook his head. "You ready to head out?"

"Now?"

"Yeah, we should meet everyone there."

Gurdeep's cell phone beeped. He typed a lot on the phone.

"I've taken care of it, Jayce knows that we will be there."

Of course, like everyone else hungover, I didn't like the sun when I first got out in it.

As I sat down in Gurdeep's car, my phone vibrated. I picked it up and saw a number I didn't recognize. I dropped it back in my pocket.

"Where's the funeral?"

"It's in his family plot outside of town."

"How long?"

"Half an hour from here."

"Should we have coffee first?"

He looked at my stomach and said, "Really?"

"Tea then."

I rolled down the car window and got a noseful of pine and spruce on the way to the park. I had many memories of the outdoor tied to that smell, from scout camp to kissing on a mountain top.

There was good fishing in those lakes over there. There was great camping a few miles the other direction. There was even better hiking in those forests that way.

The bleak memories of the past few months had washed all that away quickly. Gene, Sarah, and all those other failures, "You doing alright?" Deep asked.

I furrowed my brow –surely my bloodshot eyes and pale skin had made him ask that.

"No, not that, you just went through two cups of tea like nothing."

"Oh."

"Your legs are crossed – don't pee in my car."

Dammit – I shouldn't have gotten the larges.

"Drop me close to the bathroom?"

The parking lot wasn't even half full. Some trucks, some cars,

a single motorcycle. Lots of room near the bathroom.

"Thanks for the ride," I said with a crooked smile.

I skipped-ran to the bathroom, only a dozen meters away. A dignified sight, I was not. I smiled at a couple of strangers as I touched the door. The smell was unpleasant. The single mirror left above the three sinks was missing its top corner. The second lightbulb had burned out.

"Only stalls, eh?" I said. Sound of the water had a comforting pattern, it sounded normal. When I exited the stall, I was much more comfortable. Almost smiling actually.

The taps were really cold. No soap left. While I was wiping my hands on my jeans, a man in a black suit walked through the door. His tie had purple chains on it. I thought for a moment that they might be imaginary. He stood still up against the sinks.

"May I get through?" I asked.

"Certainly." He said.

He turned around as his hand hit the stall door. "Are you, Christopher?"

"Yes, I am."

"Heard about that presentation you gave; you and your boss had some really good information."

My imagination had the shadows curling around him. His face just was thrown into darkness.

"What do you mean?"

"Those programs and equations you wrote will be useful."

The cobwebbed shadows nearly trapped me inside his ideas. I struggled to say, "ah, I have to go."

"Nice to meet you."

"Oh, nice to meet you too."

"We will meet again." He smiled, the corners of his smile crawling up his face creepily.

I backed out of the door of the bathroom, nervous, hands up in front of me.

"Excuse me." Someone said as I backed into them.

"Sorry," I said.

I cleared the copse of trees between me and the grave, I saw the crowd gathering. No one strange. Everyone was ordinary. Ties and dresses, polished shoes and scarves.

I saw all of them standing around the gravesite. Some had even brought their spouses.

"Pull yourself together," I muttered. Gurdeep's stylish jacket caught my eye.

“Hey man, I don’t think I ever said thank you,” I said to him.

“No problem, thanks for giving me someone to look after.”

“I have buckets of friendship to give you if you want it.”

One of my coworkers suddenly chimed in with “How are we ever going to continue this operation?”

“Which operation?”

“Our company.”

“With Chris in the lead, I am sure that we will find a way.” One person said.

A few heads in the crowd shook, and a couple of others turned away from me.

Someone else said, “what happened to him? Who would murder him in that terrible way?”

And everyone went quiet, looking at each other, not knowing how to answer that question. My eyes were on the ground. Everybody quieted as the priest stepped into the graveyard, only a few meters away. I grew even quieter. My face went even paler. This was starting to become too real. I swallowed. A police car with its’ lights off drove slowly through the parking lot, eventually stopping.

“What are the police doing here?” I said just as the priest made it to the headstone and waited. Could he have been going slower? He cleared his throat and opened up his bible.

“Ah hum, everyone,” but his voice had been stolen by the wind and the trees.

Some shook their heads, and someone said, “louder, please.”

“I said, ah hum,” which echoed off the tombstones nearby. He asked questions with his eyebrows, and Claudia nodded approvingly.

“We are all here to pay our respects to Gene.”

In his robes, he paused and licked his lips. He looked down at the book in his hand and passed it to the shorter man behind him. He stepped closer to the hole in the ground. He made eye contact with everybody, slowly and carefully connecting with the whole audience.

“When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written. Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

“Gene’s Christian? I didn’t know that.” I must have muttered aloud.

“Yeah, he went to church more than once,” Deep said.

“Oh.”

“The one on fortieth.”

The police were now outside of the car muttering into the radio on their jacket. Their facial expressions were not calming. I tried to shrink behind some of the other staff. That was utterly unsuccessful and made me more nervous. I brought my fingernails up to my mouth absently and started to bite.

The priests’ voice grew louder “For all of us here, all of us grieving and hurting because of the sudden and unexpected, we need to look for help and solace in each other. We need to look for the needed in unexpected places, just like Gene did.”

One of my co-workers looked at the ground, and another looked up at the clouds sniffing. “Trauma,” muttered Deep. But I only had eyes for the police. They’d come a few gravestones closer. They must be hunting me.

“Gene was successful in his personal life with his lovely wife and kids because he found his salvation in an unusual place. They first met in the back of a police car. No one really looks for their partner there, do they?”

Now there were some smiles. I even saw the police smile, standing just outside of the crowd. Gurdeep caught my eye and mouthed, “What’s up?” I must have been twitchy, my mouth opening and closing at weird intervals. I did notice my hands clenching and unclenching. I just shook my head, and looked at the ground, with the police in my peripheral vision.

“They had both been arrested for graffiti, for civil disobedience, in the commercial districts near the river. Something about protesting the Mint’s printing of money. Yes, they were both in finance at one point. And unique to their profession, they protested unethical behavior.”

Some of the more nervous members of the crowd smiled a tiny bit more. Some started sobbing openly. Behind all the grieverers, behind all the Kleenex, there I was intent on something else. Gurdeep, again asked me, “What’s up, are you ok?”

“Nothing much. You know – but give my apologies to everyone, I think I have to run.”

“But just like this willow tree here” the pastor went on as he plucked at the tree branch beside him, causing some seed pods to fall. “They grew in a new direction, together, not just looking for help in the usual places. The next step they took together was with the help of a stranger.”

Then I caught the man with the purple tie standing near the bathroom. I did a triple take. He started swaggering towards me, twirling his hat and smiling like a leopard hunting its prey.

I was startled, slipping on the wet grass. I landed on my knees.

“You alright?” Deep said.

“Pretty much ok,” I replied, wiping at my knees.

I wasn’t even fully standing up yet, and I slipped on the grass again, dress shoes not being helpful.

I started breathing a little less hard, and all I said was, “how does that connect to me?”

Deep said, “You are going to need a dry cleaner for that.”

“Yeah, probably.”

“Dude, for the third time, are you ok?”

“Uh, yeah, totally fine,” as I stood up.

I looked around and saw that the police were a little closer.

“Yeah, excuse me, I think I need somewhere to lay down.” They were used to me getting overloaded in stressful situations, so I could get away with this.

I looked behind me at least twice. No-one was following quickly. Following slowly yes, even casually, but not quickly.

I made it to the edge of the graveyard without anyone following. Thank god.

Just before I disappeared into the leaves, someone in a pretty deep voice said: “Just stop right there.” Panic rose in my stomach and I bolted. They want me for a murder I didn’t commit. I just sped ahead into the forest.

My feet kept slipping on the wet grass and mud. Hopping on one foot, I tore off the shoes and tried to sprint. The socks tore almost immediately. “Stop right there,” a deep voice yelled at me.

I slipped into the shadows of the poplar trees and leafy wooden branches, hurrying along the paths I knew from childhood. The trunks of the trees whipped by in the dark shadows.

I hit the next left, and scrambled up over a rocky hill, and slid down the other side, hitting the ground running. No bloody knees this time. I hit the three solid rocks on the way across a muddy pond without switching my stride. I was so used to the patterns of this forest, I could navigate it in my sleep.

That tree, I should be able to run right past. That tree I should be able to duck under.

Another yell was much fainter than the last two. As I made my way through the chest-high grasses, past the willows, and through the streams, I started to become much more confident that I’d manage to get away. A smile was threatening the sides of my mouth. I was really enjoying the sweat in my armpits.

But suddenly right in front of me, a policeman. “You weren’t the only one to play here as a kid.” His beard was short, well-trimmed. He stood with his feet just a little apart.

I skidded to a stop, sliding on the mud around me.

He took a single step forward and said, “We need to take you downtown to talk to you about last night.”

And the blood drained out of my face. I turned and tried to run. My vision narrowed, and I hit a rock. I fell and cut myself on a tree root.

I was hyperventilating, worms starting in from the edges of the of my vision, their trails. I started flailing around, my hands on my face. I was scared.

“Now hold on a minute there son,” I heard another voice, a clean-shaven policeman this time.

“You – we’ve been looking for you,” Said the first one.

I just sank into the mud, the cut bleeding above my eyes. My face soured and I fought the fear that welled up inside, I wasn’t

“Alright, just take me in,” I said through my blood-stained vision.

Investment Management Corporation



IN A SECRET LOCATION

Her eyes followed the police cruiser as it drove by, no lights flashing. To a passerby it wouldn’t have seemed significant. Three men behind her quietly muttered into their headsets, silently tapping away at their laptops. The old wooden desk had multigenerational stains, and the floor had not been swept for a long time. Her feet puffed up dust every time she moved.

She closed the blinds and grimacing, took a seat in front of her laptop. The word Ascender blinked on her computer. She typed in a password and the screen opened to a green background. She briefly read an email and was surprised.

“Who put in the kill order?”

One of the men answered, “The order came from the Corporate account.”

“Oh, I see.”

“Did you get one for the mathematician?”

“No, they said to let him rot.”

The phone rang. Everybody jumped. They all went silent as one of the others picked it up. He listened for a moment and said, “Ma’am.”

She stood up quickly, her face going pale, and she said, “I’ll be in the other room.” She took the phone brusquely and covered the mouthpiece. When she got into the next room, she uncovered the mouthpiece and said, “Yes, sir.”

“Is the man is taken care of?” The voice on the other line was col, and brusque.

“Absolutely, we will examine the body in under a day.” She responded with warmth.

“I heard about that. Will this time go smoothly?”

“Absolutely, sir, we found the mole from the last time.”

“Now, it’s your job to recruit the mathematician.” She took this as a threat.

“As you wish, sir.”

“Make sure it happens. We want what is in his head.”

She swallowed and bowed her head. “May I ask why, sir?”

“He has come too close to finding a weakness in our secrets. We need to know what he knows.”

She hung up and sighed, sitting heavily on an old chair. “Shit.”

Insistence



A JAIL IN CALGARY

The cuffs were cold, and the back seat of the cruiser was uncomfortable. The plastic fabric was broken and riven with cracks. Still, it was nothing to prevent my angry and decaying mind from thinking. Evil thoughts were today's specialty. We are powerless to comprehend hidden knowledge, while hidden knowledge can force us to act. That was how I fought my deep disquiet at an unknown universe. I was just a robot operating on the whims of others. The loneliness created was deep. No-one else was even needed to interact with me to make my life a bad place, just someone somewhere else pushing a button.

After a few more minutes, the car stopped. The police officers got out and opened the doors, creaking slightly. Water splashed when I put my foot down. The desk at the police station was laminated wood. The door was heavy, steel. They sat me down at a desk, inside a dark room. A small room, with a recording device on it. A tiny little electronic thing.

The badge said Callum Waller. He was like five and a half feet tall. He had a nice haircut, short. Mutton Chops. A gun at his hip, a baton on the other one. His notebook and a pencil were prominent in his hand when he sat down. He looked grizzled and competent.

"Do you need something?"

"The officers took care of that in the cruiser."

"What made you run?"

"Oh, just a hunch."

"Are you sure you are alright? How are you feeling?"

"As well as can be expected, I guess."

"I am going to have some questions for you, and some might be uncomfortable."

"Alright."

"I hear that you were the first person to see Gene that morning, can you describe to me what you saw?"

"First, I noticed that the lights were off, which was not normal—Gene always had turned the lights on when he got to work."

"Which lights?"

"The ones in the front entrance and the entry hallway."

"What else did you notice that was unusual?"

"The paintings were off their hooks."

"And when you first opened the door, what did you see?"

"I saw a lot of shadows, a lot of them."

"After your eyes adjusted?"

"I first noticed the papers on the floor. They weren't thrown on the ground."

"What do you mean?"

"I think it was a pattern like they were deliberately placed."

"O.K."

"And there were three coffee cups on a table in the corner."

"Yeah, that's on this report somewhere."

"His family photos were cracked."

"Go on."

"Then I noticed him – I guess that I was avoiding it – avoiding looking at him. His hair was out of place, and his right hand was still holding a pen that was almost perfectly vertical. He was just a sack of organs."

"Did you go into the office?"

"Nope, not at all."

"Alright – thanks for your time."

"That's all?"

"Everything we need, yes."

"I can go?"

"Nah, we are going to have to talk to you about other things."

"Thought so."

"Yeah."

"Have a good day, sir."

They walked me down a hall, and through a large metal door. They took the keys off their belts, opened the cell, and showed me into it.

The jail cell was grey and worn. The bars were frigid. Slight depressions were worn into the cement floor where thousands of people had stood. The lights were outside the cells, leaving long dark shadows on the floor that were giant truncated rectangles.

There were three of us there – me, a man with a turban, and a short person with a baseball cap and ripped jeans. No one responded when I said: 'Nice weather today, eh?'

Not even a grunt. So, we sat there on the metal benches, shivering just slightly.

It was quiet for a long time.

Finally, the man beside me, the one with the scar and the turban said, "You seem stressed?"

As we made eye contact, he raised his eyebrows and smirked a little. His shoulders were broad as he sat up, contacting the cold metal.

"I was just thrown in jail," I replied.

"Of course, but I can tell, but you will rise above this temporary difficulty," he said with his voice uninflected, "The more you know your role in life the better you will feel, and the more the world will come out to embrace you."

"Know what?"

"Fear, terror, but your energy is obvious. There is very much a plan for you."

"A plan? Doesn't seem like it."

"You can leave all your troubles behind with a simple change of perspective all behind."

"What are you talking about?"

"It's an illusion."

"What's an illusion?"

"Your world is a shared hallucination, that's why altering your consciousness is so frowned upon. If you adopt a new perspective, you can escape the IMC's chains by placing your mind outside their control. See, if I want to get the guard to open this door for me, I change my perspective and free myself from this prison. And this way, I will change the world."

"What the hell are you talking about?"

He firmly said, "You are an incredibly strong soul, and your whole culture recognizes it. You will come to understand."

I said, "Let's say you aren't crazy – so what?"

"Strong souls like yours can open doors."

"Dude, this conversation is just crazy. I have no idea what you are talking about."

"To start the awakening, to open the barriers, you need to get out of your comfort zone."

"I wouldn't even know where to look for that, even if I did want to try ... which I don't."

"Don't worry about that," he pulled a small piece of brown paper from the folds in his turban and showed me an image on the paper. It was a fractal infinite pattern, branching out past the edges of the paper in my imagination. The image pushed its way past the paper, and through the bars on the cells, nearly overwhelming my vision.

"Ah, so it does work on you. You can see that geometry is the language of time. You have the potential to see the mysteries that geometry can unlock."

I stared at him in surprise and shock, and asked, "How did you get that in here?" as he placed it back in his pocket, "They took everything away from me," I continued.

"It's only a piece of paper," as he put it back in his pocket, "It's but the start of a journey that you are going to take. Remember who you can be. The world will try to dissuade you as it hates change, but you will see through the veils of reality and tear your way to a new world. You will be able to see the mystical in the biological, in the rotting trees on the pavement and in the houseplants dying inside your apartment!"

And my face must have shown skepticism because he laughed out loud. Almost on cue, someone in a blue jacket used his stick to hit the bars. "Mr. Smith?" Turban guy smiled at me and got up, straightening like a rubber band, and walked out. Leaving me alone to deal with everything by myself. I thought evil thoughts as I lightly shuffled the paper around in my hand and smelt it.

If I had my little notebook, I probably would have written 'Did that happen?' or 'Mr. Smith in the prison?' or even 'wtf?' or even better 'What the hell is going on?'

For now, I just leaned back and closed my eyes. I went through my mental exercises, trying to prevent my descent into the fear that could overwhelm me. The cement was cold and hard, so I balanced the little flat space on my head against the flat wall. And my exhausted brain finally slipped the leash it had on and started me thinking again.

I struggled to connect my mind to the nonsensical universe around me. Sometimes I struggle to react to the world outside my mind. I much prefer the orderly thoughts inside my head. For example, 'neurons are a fascinating topic. It is proven that there are more connections in the brain than there are stars in the milky way galaxy. Chemicals, like krokodile, or gabapentin overdoses, can mess the brittle network up spectacularly. Alcohol alone is damn dangerous, as it can replace the neurotransmitters in your brain almost permanently. Coffee itself increases anxiety and promotes insomnia. Nicotine increases adrenalin production, making you excited. Drugs are a control, they control us so very well.'

I often put together very differentiated ideas together, and sometimes I wondered where these connections came from. Today, while busy controlling my worry, my subconscious went in a weird direction, 'these drugs were everywhere, from caffeine to alcohol practically. And sugar and salt are even used to control our reactions. These are negatives, serious negatives to consumption of drugs.'

I always used narratives like this to direct my negative thoughts to more positive places. Places where I didn't fall apart under the stress.

'Psilocybin, DMT, and LSD, if used in the right way, have benefits. LSD, in particular, has an interesting chemical reaction in the brain. It takes a very long time to get to your brain, gets stuck there and leaves you high for up to 15 hours.'

Then I was interrupted by the jangling of keys, brought me back. I opened my mouth to say something bad, but luckily for me, he beat me to it, "you're being interviewed again."

“Why?”

“I don’t know I didn’t process you.”

“Where? ... doesn’t it say on the file?”

“Jesus Christ— just get out there and go.”

“Alright, alright.”

“What did you say?”

“I said, alright.”

This tall tattooed man led me through the corridor, past the flickering fluorescent fixture, and out into the police station proper. They led me to a room off the corridor, with just one door. He said, “Just wait here a moment.” He took a few more steps and knocked on a door. A woman in a black suit opened the door and looked straight at me for a second. I opened my mouth to say something, but she put a hand over my mouth. I stepped back and looked behind me. Two policemen were chatting at the end of the hallway. There would be no help there.

“Get him in here,” she ordered.

He grabbed my arms, pushed me into the room, and sat me down in a chair.

“All yours,” he said and left. My heart was beating fast.

When the door clicked shut, she sucker punched me. My sides exploded in pain. My breath rasped in and out. Then my head echoed to an elbow.

As my eyes rose above the level of the table, I saw a familiar woman in front of me. “Tara?” I asked. I’d met her before when pitching our math to the IMC. She responded with “That was to ensure you know who is in control. We are in control here. Remember that.” Her soft French accent was deceiving. Despite her well-groomed long black hair and her fashionable blouse, she was a take-no-prisoners kind.

Tablet before her, she tapped a pen impatiently on the desk. Nervously, I fidgeted, crossing and uncrossing my legs and drawing imaginary diagrams on the table. When I think back to it, there were probably at least two quarter circles intertwining like an incomplete chain.

“Why do you think you are here?” she asked.

I was articulate, “Uh, what.”

Her mouth frowned. “Why do you think you are here?”

“Not sure.” I noticed the blood on the table – my blood. The stories I used to control my panic started to launch again.

“We’ve made you a suspect in the death of your boss.”

“That’s not ideal,” I said.

“But we don’t live in an ideal world, do we?” she said.

“No, of course not,” I said.

“But you do agree that the world is not ideal?” she said.

“Yes, the world is far from ideal.”

“Glad that agree with me. Plus your computer certainly seems to have had a lot of revolutionary ideas in it?”

“...how do you...?” My eyes widened. I didn’t even have time to panic.

She ignored me. “I’d guess that you are confused and hurt by the world, and because of that you are looking for a way to define it, so you can control it. But you are just a cog in the machine, and if you become difficult, you will be ground into dust.” she continued.

“I am not sure what you mean,” I said. For a second, I looked at her deep green eyes as she shook her head.

“You’ve got to do better than that. We are not convinced by your protestations of innocence.”

I swallowed, because I was worried. She wasn’t going to flinch. She looked me in the eye, unblinkingly, and said, “You are unique in this world, so we need to know what was in your head. Tell us now.”

“Questions. I had a lot of questions about the universe because so many areas of mathematics seemed so distant from each other. Why couldn’t we unify them better?”

“Excellent. Tell us more. We want to truly understand how you think. That is because you have an insight our corporation is missing. Your mathematical insight, that only a mathematician like you can provide, will help us conquer the rest of the problems of the world.”

“That’s not what I want to do with my life. I just want to stay at home and think,” I replied.

“You mentioned in many different ways how you think the world works, in the papers you wrote and in your body language today. You really do want to make an impact, but the world doesn’t want you to. It wants you to be ground into powder.” Tara said.

I stared at her, profoundly confused. Should I be afraid, should I be happy? What game was she playing?

“Objective reality, objective reality...,” I muttered, as I noticed once again that my fingers were following their own patterns on the table.

“Umm hmm,” she said. “Do you want to reply to that?”

“Our senses, there’s something that our senses just can’t identify, like dark matter.”

“That’s interesting,” as she pointed to my invisible drawings on the table. I’d been unconsciously drawing geometric shapes on the table. Triangles connecting circles connecting squares, fractally repeating. Why was I doing that? Then, I pulled my hands to my lap and looked throughout the dull, right-angled room. Nothing was ‘natural’ or interesting. “The worlds around us, the universe, it hides things from us, “Why is nature so stingy with her secrets?” I said, slowly

finding my way through the ideas." I paused for another moment collecting my thoughts, "There is something," I paused to get my thoughts clear, "...missing from the variable soup of life." I looked at the ceiling to avoid her intense gaze. "One last puzzle piece. Just that one piece will make it all make sense."

With her eyes solely on me, I felt confused, especially when she smiled and brought those eyes level with mine. I remember thinking that it was an effective way to develop trust.

"So what? Why haven't you found the solution yet? We think it's because you are trying to blame everyone else for your troubles." She challenged.

"Sure?"

"Do you have something specific you are going to blame the world for? What's wrong with the world?" she continued.

"Knowledge? Hold on. I don't follow."

"Come on. It's in that head of yours somewhere."

"Everything," I whispered, "Everything is a consensual hallucination. All knowledge is wrong...biased. The knowledge that has been handed down is mixed with errors, always has been. But, now I have started looking at it, the flaws are arranged with purpose."

"That's interesting, for a cog in the machine, to think that the machine is wrong. You do not have the perspective to make that choice," she countered sarcastically.

"If everything is a construct and we don't have all the possible data, all theories are wrong."

"Uh huh? Tell me something new."

"You don't understand," I said with some force.

"The world is an illusion, a hologram."

Her face stood still. Her mouth, a thin line, moved a little as she considered her next comment. "Everything here is because we choose it to be, from the concept of beauty to the oxygen in the room. We project it from the centers of our minds, or our pooled consciousness's. But this choice is a flawed one because you aren't choosing clearly. You make poor choices because you choose distraction, we just give you the opportunity to. We choose to feed you broken information, you choose to be angry and anxious. But somehow, you've managed to see through that obfuscation."

Now it was my turn to sit back, shocked, "What the hell are you talking about lady?"

Here she started threatening me outright. They did want my insight to go to work for them. "If you aren't wanting to work in a well oiled machine, we can force you to. We can use your reckless attitude and your confession. Your boss didn't know what was going on. You were driving the company into the ground. The self-same company you spent your whole life building. That's why you killed him." She paused for effect. "We can have proof of this made up in a matter of days."

"Our company has survived for so long by turning events into opportunities, but finding people like you and assimilating them into our organization. Those who have joined us have become incredibly successful. So, unless you want to join us in the exploration of the infinite, and to see through the puzzles god has put there for us to find, you will go to jail for a long time."

They were setting me up, framing me with Gene's murder. Stunned, I was about to protest when she raised her hand. "But," she made full, intense eye contact, "I'm going to let you go. You are more valuable to us out in the world."

I just stared blankly. Who was this woman threatening me? My brain just wasn't making the connection. My hands twitched more furiously on the table top, circle and triangle drawn in the condensation. My mind refused to engage with the ideas she had given me. I didn't understand. My fingers danced on the table, drawing geometric things, a fractal pattern, and then a series of circles.

Tara just sat there and stared back at me. She nodded her head once or twice and looked at her phone. I could see from her frown and her anger smashing the buttons that she was getting impatient.

"Alright, you can have some time to think it over. We can give you tons of resources to explore the fundamental nature of the universe. Now, my bosses have said that you aren't a threat," she continued. "They think you could be an asset. And we want you in a place where you are comfortable, it's easier for you to produce good work there. After all, a mathematician works better when they join willingly. Go home, enjoy your house. But make sure you pay attention when they approach you soon with an offer you can't turn down."

"Sure," I squeaked out as my brain raced to understand what had just happened.

She nodded and waved her hand, and the door opened. I was walked back to the front desk of the police station where I reclaimed my wallet, my Rolex, my sunglasses, my booklet, and even my stinky runners. Once it hit my hands, my little booklet nearly wrote itself.

Other people trap us in their paradigms. Their expectations make us and break us. The forward momentum of accepted cultural behavior, bound up in paradigms, and time has a gravity that no person can possibly resist, right? These progress traps of 'accepted' knowledge are powerful. It limits the whole of humanity.

But there is something magical in every little bit of nature. Our entire biology, from the mouse to the brain to the entire ecosphere, works on the same principles. Yet, those principles are not conscious - they are instinctual, and therefore transcends knowledge. There is mystical knowledge in forests that is written upon the world, and in the bacteria living in our gut. We just need to reclaim it.

Reactions



A POLICE STATION, CALGARY

I must have asked myself, 'Is this really happening?' a half dozen times. I'd never thought I'd get out of the jail, let alone without a conviction hanging over my head. My boss was dead, and they were going to make me responsible. It had become a problem that I had to solve, stripping it of all emotion. Why me? Why did they let me go? Right up until they sent me out into the rain, I was confused.

No ride, no money, no clarity in my head. Nothing but a universe of problems, that part of my mind reveled at. It loved solving problems. I stumbled to the bus stop to wait for a ride. The 114 showed up after about ten minutes. I paid my fare, walked to a seat. Today, the bus smelled like antiseptic and vomit. Something unpleasant had happened there. A lesson for someone undoubtedly. I sat dejected in the blue limo for the half an hour it took to deliver me home.

"What did she mean?" I thought to myself on the ride home. I was confused. What was I missing? What did 'they' want? Did she challenge my concept of objective reality? What was she talking about?

I curled up on the vinyl seat in the bus, grabbed a pen out of my coat, and started thinking. What did they want from me? As the bus hit a giant pothole, I had an epiphany.

They were desperate for my insight! Like most large institutions. They were like ants trying to eat food off of a desk, they needed new ideas to grease their gears. They mustn't have much in the way of originality, just the ability to prevent others from doing things. My intuitive knowledge and ideas would give them the power to stay in control!!

I muttered darkly to myself as I got off the bus. They did have a weakness, but how could I exploit it? My head spent the ride back swimming in the ocean of probabilities, gliding past galaxies of them, lighting up my neocortex. I was becoming happy, because I had problems to solve once again.

When I got off the bus two stops too late, it's antiseptic smell lingered. As I left footprints in the light white snowfall, I thought of how the snow had coalesced into shapes. I thought about the space-time we have right now, and how curved it is. I thought about the seeds of the tree on the ground and how they are symmetrical. I thought about how the trees grew algorithmically. And then the panic finally started to seep away, and

my fingers stopped drawing patterns of circles and triangles in the air.

Then I climbed the short stairs up to my house and patted my clothes. I reached into all the inside pockets. The outside pockets, my belt loops. My mailbox. I couldn't find anything. I must have left my keys at the police station. With the snow falling, melting in my hair and on my pants, I was soon cold, wet and shivering.

I rang my neighbor's doorbells, and no-one answered. I looked up and down the street. No cars were driving by.

After half an hour, the dampness had seeped into my boots. The first rivulet running into my socks just then. Not the first hint that this day was going to get even worse, but the last in a long line. After four phone calls for help, my phone died. Last, well least, I didn't have a raincoat.

So, I stood under an eave for protection and thought about how my life had gotten this bad. Shit, one week ago it was going fine. A few days later, I had been arrested and thrown into jail and might be framed for my boss's murder. And now, I was freezing outside my home. Life sure didn't seem like an illusion right now.

And then I heard a honk, then a louder and longer honk.

I looked up and saw an Audi SUV there a couple of meters away, lights on and inviting. I ran over and tore open the door to see Samantha's bright, healthy face and big eyes. "Oh, am I glad to see you. Thank you so much." I said.

"No worries. Now sit on the towels."

"Ruining the leather, that's the first thing you think of, eh?"

"No, the first thing I thought of was not dying of exposure. Why haven't you left yet?" I said.

"I got delayed a few days. I leave on Wednesday."

Then her perfume hit me. That utterly alluring scent of lilac took me by storm. Her hair pulled back in a bun. Her right hand tucking it behind her ear. Wow! She looked askance at me, her eyes lingering just briefly on my arms. She moistened her lips and asked, "You ok?"

"I'm getting better." I shivered a bit. "Got a blanket?"

“Sure, it’s just here in the back.”

Her bra strap popped out of her blouse as she reached into the back. I tried not to look at it. As I wrapped the florescent pink blanket around my body, I smiled and asked, “How do I look in pink?”

She giggled. I smiled even more. Then I sneezed three times in a row. “I’ll get you to a warm place,” she said and put the car in drive. The engine powered us past the end of the block and around the corner. “Now, can you get me up to speed?”

“You remember what happened at my work?”

“I haven’t heard the details.”

“Gene was killed at his desk, violently. I was called into an early meeting and found him. There was so much blood.” I was fighting back tears. “And then, at his funeral, the police came to arrest me. I just got out of the lockup.”

“Why do they think it’s you?”

“I was the first one to find him.”

“Jesus, you really do need a hug.”

“I really do.” In the passenger window, in front of the snow falling in the darkness, I saw tears run down my face. Her hand reached out to me at a stoplight, rubbing my back.

“I’m so sorry, I’m so sorry. It’ll be alright, it’ll be alright.” Several minutes of silence passed while I watched the snow fall behind my tears: “We are here. We’ll go to the police in the morning to get your keys.” She hit the garage remote, the garage door opened and Samantha drove in. I opened the car door to blessed warm air.

I asked, “Do you have a bathroom where I can strip off these clothes?”

“Ah, yeah! And I have some guy clothes around here somewhere too.” She was looking at me a little too intensely. “Oh,” she blushed when I met her gaze. “Just up those stairs and to the right.”

I left wet footprints on the stairs as I splashed up them. I could feel the cold water in my socks and between my toes. They’d need some proper drying out. This day had been rough. The bathroom door handle jiggled as I shut it. It was a tiny room; I could easily touch the walls with just my elbows.

The steaming hot shower was just too inviting. My body slowly warmed. I really needed these trappings of civilization right then. Her place seemed so comfortable, like something I needed right then. My friends saw me arrested at a funeral. The police may have even told them why. My hands had been covered with his blood. I hadn’t slept in a while, let alone eaten. So that’s probably why at that moment I started bawling, giant gasps of air, rivers of tears.

The next thing I knew two gentle, cold hands were on either side of my head, turning me towards her. Her kiss was pure euphoria.

“There go the patient-doctor boundaries.”

“Let’s talk about that later, much later.”

“No, you do it like this,” she said as her hand took mine gently and twisted the fastener in just the right way. Her bra fell to the ground. Her hair was soft, and her sweat was perfect – just sweet enough. Her back arched in pleasure, a small cry escaping her lips. I could feel all the muscles in her body tightening, wrapping around me. My mind exploded in joy too. Holding her tight, I never wanted to let her go.

I slept well that night, almost relaxed, for the first time in a long time. I might have imagined her saying “I love you” as I was falling asleep.

Still in bed, I wrote in my notebook the morning when I woke up. It had been a strange place, the inside of my head. I’d started to record these entries a few years ago. I imagined a future child of mine just might like to read it. But I trailed off before I really started.

My memories threw a bright sun throughout the day. My hand touching her thigh released the oxytocin. Just seeing her hair tossed on the pillow that morning and creating a halo around her head. I was content. She tossed a little in her sleep, her lips pulling a faint smile. I knew her skin was smooth and warm. With the morning sun coming in through the curtains, I simply didn’t want to move. She was too good for me, and this moment probably wouldn’t ever happen again.

I breathed the smell of dust through the duvet, and that made me think about home, the good days at home. Imaging the sunny days in the back yard was an excellent tonic. And with that, I was finally able to think about the last few days objectively. I thought, and while I thought, my feet twitched. I’d been told that was a nervous habit of mine.

And I frowned. Dammit. I let out a big sigh. I’d have to do something.

I kissed her on the forehead, and then slowly pulled off the sheets. I got out of the bed and yelped with surprise as my feet hit the cold floor. I quickly threw on her housecoat, still scented with her memorable perfume.

Where’d I leave my shoes? Without windows, I had to turn on a light or two to avoid falling on the floor.

The kitchen was spotless. All the pots, nearly perfect mirrors, hanging on the wall reflected the sunlight perfectly. The stainless-steel sink was dry and clean. I could almost see myself in it too. I found the coffee stored in the adjacent pantry and the French press on the shelf next to the ground beans.

I rinsed the press and the two cups. Water splashed on the sink, somehow leaving a sort of square. I wondered if that was a clue to the Grande Algorithm. Was it an answer?

With some more poking and prodding, I found the kettle on the bottom shelf, nowhere near the three outlets. Eventually, the coffee was made. After a night of restful sleep, I could think clearly. A few bars of something like Chopin seeped through the apartment door.

...

Finally, with the smell of freshly brewed coffee drifting into my nostrils, I picked up the cups and made my way back to the bedroom and Samantha. Her eyes were open.

"Oh, is that for me?"

"Yes, would you believe that?"

"Smartypants." She said sarcastically.

I handed it to her and watched with satisfaction as she drank it.

"I suppose you want a reward for that?"

I leaned in for a long kiss. Her pheromones were wondrous.

"Ah," she said as she smiled. "What got you out of bed?"

"I started thinking."

"That's a problem. Perhaps more therapy is needed?" she said coyly.

"Why did they choose me? They could have framed anyone, anyone, at all."

"Sweetheart, why does it matter?"

"If we know what their motivations are, we have a better chance of understanding them, and if we have a better chance of understanding them, then we can win."

I slipped under the sheets, my cold feet congratulating me. It was nice to feel warmth on them again.

"Oh, yeah, that's much better." I stared at her loving face for a short while, marveling at how much she cared for me. I knew this might be a risk, but still, I was willing to take it because I hoped the joy would outweigh the hurt. I even managed to shut down my pre-programmed slide into problem solving. I wanted to enjoy my emotions for one of the first times in my adult life.

"Just don't touch me until you warm up, ok?" and she took a sip of the coffee.

"If we understand motivations, we are better at guiding our own actions."

Throwing her hair back over her shoulder, she said, "I'm situational. We are all variables on central themes," she said. "I can help you understand yourself."

"It sounds as if you mean that we can't change our behavior, that everything is predetermined," I questioned.

"Well, your broad strokes are similar to everyone else's broad strokes."

"Well, then, how do you change the world? How do you make it better?" I took another sip of the coffee.

"Good people working hard."

"Taxes?" I questioned.

"Yeah, taxes."

"Idiots," I said derogatorily. "It's simply not possible to change everybody's actions that way, and there are better, more logical ways to make the world a better place. The smaller actions really do mean nothing on the larger scale.

In fact, it's similar to the sand pile theory in math. There is an algorithm that predicts exactly how the grains of the sand pile and nothing changes if a single grain of sand changes. A much larger pile of sand has to make a significant change, say 25%, have to move before making any noteworthy difference."

"Nothing?" she said as I moved a measurable fraction of an inch closer to her.

"Well, almost nothing – they small actions do not make people better – it makes them feel better."

"Isn't that my job?"

"Not really – your job is to put a Band-Aid on the immense cracks in society that we can't or won't work on making better."

"That's a terrible way to look at it." She replied.

"Not that terrible, realistic."

"Hell – I make my clients life easier by doing what they want me to."

"How measurably better is it?" I said.

"Well, I think it's a huge improvement."

"I agree, you've made a huge difference in my life. But, still our actions are mostly the same in most circumstances – me being a mathematician / programmer is probably because of my experiences – which most people living the same life would have done. So, as Chris, even though I want to change my life for the better, I am not going to react much differently than others?"

"Under your theory, probably not. Most people's actions are somewhat predetermined."

"So, how do I?"

"With your experience yesterday, you should talk to your lawyer. Do something you have never done before."

"I think I need some inspiration for that" I smiled, mischievously, and went into kiss her neck."

"Oh, you think so, do you?" Her neck stretched up, giving me more room to kiss.

"Well, I think I could come up with something," as I put down my coffee.

"But my coffee is going to get cold." She objected.

Much later she dropped me off at home with a kiss. We'd picked up my keys at the station that morning. I dragged my tired ass into the house and as far as the rocking chair and plopped myself down in it. I sniffled and wiped away a tear or two.

Shit, what has life come up with for me? What secrets have I been told? Those damn impulses, forcing me to explore, ruining my life. The amber liquid inside that crystal decanter. I truly wanted to decant it. To pour it into my mouth. It would have been so relaxing.

And then, this, from the kitchen, "You going to sit there moping all night?"

I whipped around, scowling. "Who the hell are you?" I said in

my best growl. "I've been arrested, assaulted, forced to talk to people and now my house is... I'm going to fucking lose it."

"Do you want to be saved?" She was short. She was dressed in non-descript jeans and a t-shirt. A black leather jacket over the top. She'd visited me in my house before, and asked me tough questions. Somehow, this time, I trusted her because my intuition told me to.

"You sound like a religious nut, get out!" I nearly screamed at her. I was close to just losing it.

"Something like that, want help?"

"Help? How could you possibly help me?"

"Tell you what the problem is."

"Problem? Problem! The problem is people!"

"You are 100% correct. Told you I knew the problem."

"Oh, how'd you get in this time?"

"Something like magic." As I stood flabbergasted.

She hefted a sandwich and brought it to her mouth. Chewing through the bread, she said, "So exactly what has happened to you lately?"

"My boss died, and I was arrested, plus other stuff. It's been a terrible week. I was stranded in jail for a while."

"Oh, Jesus, that's bad. So, what now? What did you think about in that jail?"

"It was interesting."

"You are interested in something? Convince me," she said.

That question stopped me in my tracks. I looked up at the uninteresting IKEA paintings on the walls. I looked at the generic stainless-steel clock and really thought for the first time in a long time. And as it always did an epiphany came out of no-where, bubbling up from my problem solving unconscious. "The world is broken. The world runs according to what we think are non-bendable rules, natural laws, and principles, like gravity, for example. Turns out some of those rules are wrong."

"What makes those rules wrong?"

"If you think about the history of knowledge, there have always been errors in our understanding. A thousand years ago, we thought that bloodletting was a rule, that witches were real, and the sun revolved around the earth. But our great human organism is still learning."

"But not learning as fast as it can."

"Yes, exactly," I said, leaning on the back of the dining chair.

"Have you ever wondered why we aren't getting any better?"

I frowned and said, "Can't you be straight with me?"

"Alright, how do you find solutions?"

"Ask people?"

"Most people are incapable of asking for this information."

"Then, why don't you tell me?" I said after draining the glass of water.

"You've been blundering around trying to find the answers and shockingly, been almost successful," she said leaning on the kitchen counter, wiping mustard from her cheek. "We think with our help you can succeed beyond your wildest dreams."

"I need more discipline?"

"You are in this house all alone and have made incredible discoveries. But who have you asked for help?" She said kicking at the garbage can. She took a bite out of the sandwich. Chewing, she said, "You have succeeded in getting most of the way there, but you need help. Your final equation eludes you."

My mouth now firmly set into a line, I said: "Shit, I am exhausted, totally exhausted."

"You've been arrested and thrown in jail and have seen your boss's corpse. You must be close to collapsing. You really do need to accept someone's help," she said, attacking me with a big bear hug. Now get into bed, get some sleep."

She frowned as she opened the back door and stepped out into the rain. As she stepped into the water left over from last's night summer rainfall, her footprints left little ripples in the water behind her. I rested on the big leather couch and closed my eyes. What was the universe trying to tell me?

The Flight



MY HOUSE

I'd filled up my glass with the whiskey left over from the other night. I'd sipped it while sitting on the couch, draining it far too quickly and wondering how my life had ended up in this mess. My eyes were gummy when I woke up, my mind still focused on the surreality of it all. Was I going mad? My back was sore after sleeping on the sofa all night. I stumbled to the shower, letting the water rinse the memories and the madness away.

I still hadn't figured out what the universe was trying to tell me, my mind spinning its problem solving wheels. Some people thought there were extra dimensions, but the three spatial dimensions and time work so very well, so that couldn't be a mistake...it must be something else. Still, I must be close to the answer. That's why 'they' were so nervous. Right? Right?

I really felt that something was wrong. I remembered something. I even muttered it out loud, under the shower, "Time is the embalming fluid of reality, and reality is the tomb of the soul. But the soul is the seed of all thought." Ancient wisdom, but what was the nugget of truth in it? What magic was in that phrase that I could use to improve my life?

When the doorbell rang, I was still sitting on the couch in yesterday's clothes. "Who the hell?" I threw on a robe and some boxers. And stupid me, I opened the door without checking to see who it was.

They had been at Gene's last meeting. Tara, short and business-like, and Wallace, tall and stoic. Both wore professional business attire, masking their culpability in Gene's death. Were they the ones that actually killed him?

I wiped my forehead, feeling sweat come away under my fingers. My other hand started nervously drawing circles and triangles in the air.

"Don't worry, we won't kill you today." Wallace started.

"Do you know what we want yet?" Tara continued.

"Nope, I'm not entirely sober yet," I lied as they stepped into the house.

Tara said, "I think you have a damn good idea," as they stepped into the living room frowning.

"You should clean up in here," Wallace added sarcastically and then continued, "I tell it plainly. You have a couple of days to make this choice, come work for us, or go to jail."

"Join your ranks?" I asked

"Yes, we protect the world from the Armageddons." He leaned forward, his eyes growing intense. "Let me take you through an image of the world ending. A dying polluted world, too hot for anything to live. A lifeless, barren world destroyed by a plague. Or cities radiated beyond conception. Unleashed chemical warfare or genetic engineering run amok. Things that could have happened to you as a baby or could happen to you as an adult. We stand in the way of your life ending in a real way. We prevent the Armageddon, or rather all the possible Armageddons everywhere on the planet."

As he wound down, I sat back, shocked. "We prevent that," Tara repeated. "You have no conception, none, of what we have had to do to prevent the end of the world, over and over again. No conception of the prices we pay to keep things the way they are."

I just stood there silently, angry.

"When you calm down, you will make the right choice."

Swallowing my anger, for a moment, I gestured to the many chairs in the room. "Why don't you sit down?"

Taking a seat, Tara went on. "Have you ever thought that you were special?"

"That you are better than those around you?" Wallace asked. "That's because you are. You already know that the world is wrong around you. Every time you turn around, you see another flaw in creation. Every time you wake up, your dreams tell you that it's broken."

"How'd you know that?"

"Be more careful with that diary of yours."

"With us, you would find the answers to all your questions." Tara continued. They leaned forward, intense, staring at me. "Your best life would be lived with us, working together, isolating one problem at a time. Slowly and carefully, just like you want it to." And they paused and looked at each other. I really needed a beer.

"Alright, do you guys have a number I could call you at?"

They were unhappy, I could tell. They had nearly reeled me in, but I just knew that I could not trust them. My gut instinct was just screaming at me, don't trust them, don't; trust them, they are going to kill you! Was I expendable? Still I could see their eyebrows furrow, and I felt their souls grow angry. "Remember, you only have two days," he said frostily.

"We can't have anyone interfering with us, including that new girlfriend of yours. Yeah, now you need to watch out for her too."

Their warnings echoed in my head after the door closed. I knew they were serious, and I knew that I couldn't avoid their offer. I had to go. After the door closed, I sat in my rocking chair and sweated. My life was over.

I was still sitting in my rocking chair a couple of hours later, a six pack empty beside me, trying to convince myself that their

path – of the Armageddon avoider – was a safe path.

A deep breath later I staggered up out of the chair. I stumbled to the fridge, leaning against it. I needed some food so I could think clearly. I opened the door and found some leftover pizza.

Pizza in my hand, “God damnit,” I shouted, standing in the middle of the kitchen. I sat down and disappeared into my head once more. I wished that there someone who could help me think about this. Someone that I could speak to honestly, about anything. I wanted Gurdeep to help me out of this mess. His hands had always been there to lift me up.

One loud knock at the door startled me, a knock so loud that it dispelled the silence in my head. Or was I just too drunk?

This time, I just slightly poked my head through the curtains to confirm that it wasn't the police. All I saw was Samantha. She looked at me, sticking my head out of the curtains, and smiled. I wasn't ready to talk to her again. I hadn't gotten my thoughts together yet. I was still terrified. Shaking, I opened the door quickly.

Samantha didn't say anything. She was standing there fighting tears, “Why are you still here?” I asked her, “Hadn't you left already?”

“Plane flight is this afternoon,” she said. “I just wanted to talk to you once more.”

“You wanted to spend time with me?” I asked, looking at the empty scotch bottles on the table and food strewn on the previously clean countertop. “I'm not worth your time.” Only then did I think ‘perhaps not the best time to let her in the house.’

“It's disgusting in here,” she said.

“If you don't like it then, you can leave,” I said to the floor, not willing to face her.

She took off her hat and put it on the table after clearing a spot.

“We need to talk,” she said, “No-one needed to tell me. You not answering your phone told me all I needed to know.”

I avoided the conversation by merely walking to the fridge. I opened it, “Want a beer?”

“Heineken,” she said. “Are you safe?”

“Yes, you?” I drank a whole beer in one deep swallow. She winced at me. I winced as I imagined the hangover I would have tomorrow.

“Why would I not be safe?” She said, the beer hanging loosely in her hand.

“Because you are close to me.”

“That's my choice.”

I cracked open another one, and took a big mouthful, swallowing it down.

“You need a plan; you can't just hide in your house,” she said.

“Of course, don't you think I know that,” I snapped at her.

“Sorry,” she said, “How is your beer?” she asked, changing the subject and only sipping at her own.

“It tastes like gods' nectar,” And she responded with, “You need to be careful with that.”

“Don't you think I know that?” I snapped again.

“Don't you think you should treat me with some more respect?”

“Oh, cut it out.”

“You started it,” she said

And I started swearing under my breath. I just couldn't handle this right now.

“Well, let's try to focus and figure out what to do,” she said.

“Fuck no!” I said, throwing the full bottle at the wall. “I am a fuck up! A loser! These awards and accomplishments mean nothing! Nothing!”

“All right,” she was reaching out. “Do you really think we should be drinking?”

“Stop it,” I screamed! “I'm going to end up working as a cashier at a stupid till.”

“You are stronger than this, fight!” she yelled back at me.

“I have fought, hard, against the world, and all it's done is crush me!” I wailed, throwing all the bottles on the ground, all the dishes and utensils, all the rest of the world on the floor. They were going to force me out of my life because I had to make a choice. I had to choose between the IMC and fleeing forever. I didn't want to leave this world behind. I liked my life. I really liked my life.

“And I've failed. Grow up! I've failed well and often to get where I am, and I am still fucking failing every day.”

“I wouldn't have failed if society was just a little bit better. If the universe were right, I would have gotten it. If I had been born in a different time, maybe then.”

“I wouldn't be so sure that you are a failure as of now. You have succeeded in many different ways.”

“If you want this to really work, you need to get up and push yourself again, again and again. You are manufacturing this failure yourself. You need to reframe your perspective and change your mind!”

“Get out!” I screamed, pointing at the door. “I don't need this bullshit.”

“You have my number, call me when you want to grow up!”

She needed to be gone. She needed to be safe. I was going to die soon, after all.

I picked up the bottle of scotch and was terribly unhappy that it was empty. I lay motionless on the floor, curled up in a ball. I was only hoping that there was more alcohol in the fridge. I struggled against my apathy about getting up and going to the fridge. Instead, I chose to stay on the flat, hard floor. I may have passed out on the floor for a while.

I must have blacked out because the next thing that I remember was the sound of the doorbell. It must have rung a few times before it actually woke me up. I muttered, “On my way, on my way.” Wiping my eyes, tugging my shirt into place, I opened the damn thing, prepared to yell at the person on the other side. But, after hearing his

voice, "You alright in there?" I actually smiled and opened the door without looking. The first thing that I saw was a smartphone with a large antenna on it. He shushed me and waved it around the room before putting it away and saying, "Hey dude, how are you doing?" said Gurdeep. Then he really looked at me. "That bad, eh? Eaten today?"

"Not really. What was that thing?"

"Just checking for surveillance. Then I'll get you some chili!"

"That gives me indigestion, and where'd you get that?" I replied.

"Part of your charm. At a spy shop in town. Only 20 bucks." He said shrugging.

I thought about it for a second then the hangover really settled in above my eyebrows. My mouth hung open until I found something to say, "If any organ in a superorganism is killed, the rest of the organism might go with it. Since Gene was a vital organ to the company, it'll fail without him." I said.

"He could be hard at times," Gurdeep replied. We were silent for a good while afterwards.

"Just like an insect." Gurdeep started up the conversation again.

"What? Ants or termites?"

"A group of termites works hard at problems, but as a group, it's a giant, chemical brain when the ants synchronize. Amazing, isn't it, the natural world?"

"I should be more like a termite?" I said.

"Exactly, More like a termite. You should rely upon your friends and listen to the universe."

"How about fleeing, then? The universe seems to be saying that fleeing is the best idea."

"Yeah, you could do that, but you will always be tethered to your friends and family, your personal culture."

"Yes, I could."

"So, do you need help?"

"Yes, I do."

"I'm here to help you, then." And I saw him produce a coin from his jeans pocket. The first time I saw it I thought it was a white disk, with the letters SGC on it. I saw bright green plants flooding out of it for a moment.

"What is the SGC?"

"I am part of the Sacred Geometers Center, and we try to explore the geometric relationships of the world, from symmetry to fractal designs and beyond. We truly believe that it is a clue to the secrets that the world hides from us. And we believe that can reveal those secrets. I've been investigating the IMC and watching you for quite a while. And I really learned something. Together we have an opportunity to destroy the world that has hurt you so. It's subjugated you, just like it's subjugated all of us, under the uncaring machine."

"You've been waiting for over two years?"

"Actually, quite a bit longer than that, but two years with you. In fact, I've been part of a group that is trying to change things for a long time. We call ourselves the sacred geometers because we think that the universe is built upon the fundamental notion of symmetry."

"You made sure that was built into our program, and you added that to our equations."

"I did, and we were pretty successful."

"Why did you do that?"

His whole body lit up, he sat up straighter, he gained purpose, "Because right now the world is dying. We've been carefully guided to the edge of extinction by an institution whose sole purpose is institute control. They want to create a worldwide crèche, where we have no dangerous decisions to make."

"Why are they after me?" I whined.

"You got very close to how they think, and they want to control that brain of yours. No-one else has, but you managed to start to transcend the world's conditioning. You've begun to look into the fundamental question of symmetry in a way no-one else ever has. You've started thinking that about a peacock's feathers, about molecules, and about human cells. Everything is symmetrical, and you have subconsciously started to question symmetry in time. On top of that, they think you could focus a group of people to actually implement these new ideas."

"I'm a savior?"

"How about we talk about that in a different location? this isn't secure enough to get into it in more depth."

"What is secure enough?"

"We have a place, but it's not in Calgary. It's in Vancouver. We've been setting up a Sacred Geometric Center to research the mathematical paradigm around us. We look into the Geometry that can free us."

"If we have to go somewhere, that's not a bad place to go!"

"We have to leave right now."

"So, I have a choice. Join the IMC tomorrow or go with you now." I thought about Samantha for a moment, but I knew leaving her behind was the safest decision.

"You do. Your old life is over as of today because you know that your world is built upon lies. I'm sorry, these algorithmic overlords have taken it from you."

"Gurdeep, can I trust you?"

"You can, I promise. We have been at this a while." I sensed that he was telling the truth, and I knew I wanted to believe him. It was an intuitive decision, and intuitive genius can be more important than facts.

"Alright, Gurdeep, let's do this."

Investment Management Corporation



A SECRET LOCATION

There are three chairs and a table in the middle of the room. The walls are bare and pale. A few nails poke out from the walls. The black cell phone in the middle of the table rings.

That day Tara had her hair pulled back and was wearing a black suit. She was looking formal and stressed. She picked up the phone, waited a moment, and then asked, "Is he ready yet?"

The person on the phone said, "He has already left."

Her facial expression grew angry. "What do you mean, he has left?"

The man on the phone said, "He's made contact with them."

"How the hell did you let that happen?"

"You know how they can slip by like they are invisible."

"How have we not figured that out yet?"

Silence on the other end of the line

"So, you lost him?" she yelled into the phone.

"Yes, ma'am, we lost him."

She hung up the phone and threw it against the wall. "Goddamnit," she yelled. It shattered. She screamed again and broke one of the chairs over the table.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck!" She punched a hole in the wall. She was trying to destroy the place in her fury. Her meltdown went on for much longer than it should have. There were dozens of holes in the wall, and more than one broken chair when she was finished.

She took a few deep breaths, wiped the plaster from her hair, smoothed her skirt and crossed the large room to the heavy metal door. It was closed and locked securely. She took a few deeper breaths and knocked. The door opened a sliver, and a short, balding man asked, "Yes, what?" He was dressed in a black suit too.

"I need the team to retrieve an asset."

"The team, are you entirely sure? They are the absolute last resort."

"I am sure. This is an urgent matter."

"This is the man who might uncover our secret?"

"Yes."

"Then the team is yours," he looks up and to the left, "for a week."

Initial Investigation



THE SACRED GEOMETRIC CENTER NEAR GROUSE MOUNTAIN

I'd been to the west coast before, but I regularly forgot how picturesque it was. On past visits to this coast, I would have walked past a river and notice the shimmering water flowing. I'd often run the math through my head, trying to calculate where the next ripple would appear. And that was one of the reasons that I thought things weren't quite correct out in the real world because the ripples never appeared where they should. It was one of the reasons that I went looking for a solution.

I eventually discovered that only base six was genuinely reflected in the symmetry of the real world.

We'd driven to the Center from Calgary, past Mt Klotz and through picturesque Craigellachie. We didn't talk much, as Gurdeep didn't want the information to get out. Even in a moving car, he was paranoid about security. He didn't even bring up why we were fleeing until the Center's gates closed behind us. After a short introduction to the Center's staff, they housed me in a small room and got me to work.

It took some time before I had stopped walking around the institute at night, starting at the stars, or taking in the waves on the ocean. I managed to become half convinced that I might be important since they were all treating me with kids gloves. It still seemed pretty odd that all they wanted me to do was to think.

To that end, the Sacred Geometers Center provided me a small locked room in the basement. Initially I just stared at the notepaper and thought, "What was I getting wrong?" I could only see the ink and scribbles on the page not the transcendent truth behind it. The clues in the ether refused to come by and say hello. So, I focused on the facts that my pen and paper could unearth, by retreading old ground.

A week later, when I was hitting my head on the metaphorical brick wall, Gurdeep knocked on the door to the room. The door opened a crack, and I saw the busy hallway outside. A few people in white smocks walked by as he held it open. "Can we come in?"

"Sure."

"Your first official guest is Rain." He indicated a short Asian woman who entered the room. She nodded. She was still wearing a black leather jacket and a blouse underneath. This time she had on leather pants, and orange rimmed glasses. She stood out.

"Oh, that's your name."

"Finally, we get to talk." She replied sarcastically.

"What?" Deep said.

"Yeah, we've met before," I said.

"I infiltrated his house twice."

"That was incredibly risky. Almost stupid." Gurdeep must have been very angry, because I'd never seen Gurdeep glower before.

"Worth it. He needed some massaging before he'd say yes to you."

"Dammit, you could have given us away."

"I didn't, right?"

"Yes, to the best of our knowledge, they have no real idea about us."

"That was a necessary risk."

"A necessary risk," Gurdeep muttered something under his breath. He closed his eyes and lay back on the bed, his muscles tense and his whole body shivering. Rain and I glanced at each other and raised our eyebrows. When he opened his eyes, he just stared at me. "You need to tell us what problem is. We can't help if you don't tell us why there is no progress," Gurdeep said.

"O.K., are you sure you don't want anything else? Should we talk about what Rain just said?"

"No, let's just move forward to your problems."

"Let's start from the beginning. The problem Gene and I were working on was the universe itself. We wanted to figure out a set of equations that govern the universe, some sort of Grande Algorithm."

"Yes, we managed to dig that much up. Did you know that you have been taught the world has one dimension of forward arrow of time?"

I continued, "The conclusion we came to is that the universe is not Euclidean, as our schools teach. A different form of symmetry actually unites the world. After we started to look into that, we realized that we were working towards the holy grail of physics, 'a working model of the entire universe'."

"What's the benefit?" Rain asked, Gurdeep now relaxing back into the chair.

"We can predict actions, like the behavior of the stock market, growth of cancer tumors, earthquakes, and individual cell growth much more accurately, with our algorithm. If we successfully do this, we can break the chains we are wrapped with and make methodical decisions as a mature society. Or in other words, save the world." I knew that this was what they wanted to hear, but I wasn't totally sure of it yet. Did they really buy this?

"Is that all?" Rain said sarcastically.

"We didn't have the time to do any other proofs, but we could potentially guide and predict most human choices. We could predict correctly how fast

things would grow, from countries' populations to the petals of a single flower. However, I just haven't had the resources to figure out those things yet."

"You need more time?" Deep said.

"No time left," Rain said. "We have to hurry it up. The IMC's grip is still tightening. It's just a matter of time before they find you here. After all, the IMC has influenced knowledge creation for at least a hundred years. You have to move quickly if you aren't going to be discredited before you get your info out."

Gurdeep started up again, "The Sacred Geometric Council is here to discover natural human limits, but we have run into unnatural limits. Perhaps that's what you are running into?"

"Unnatural limits?" I responded.

"Higher dimensional, invisible chains."

"Invisible Chains? What do you mean?"

"That Investment Management Corporation is only the most recent incarnation of this Institute. They used an algorithm with deliberate flaws in it to keep our culture, what we call the superorganism, chained. They have hidden the most important parts of our lives behind a dark wall of misinformation. They are corrupting the social connections we humans have to each other, and thus trying to control the whole earth," Gurdeep stated.

"They've infiltrated most public institutes to ensure their control," Gurdeep continued.

"What you are saying is that the potential of what we can do together is amazing. We have so much power in our fingers, in our minds. All we have to do is break the chains that wrap around us by using my new math as a weapon?"

Gurdeep said, "You aren't there yet, you need more help forging your math, and we can provide that for you."

"What help are you going to provide now?" I asked.

"Essentially we take trips out of our limited consciousnesses by using drugs, from opium to ephedrine. We've made several incredible discoveries that way."

"Like mushrooms and peyote," Rain said, "which have worked for us, allowing us to witness the intangible chains ourselves. A lucky few have even talked to a superorganism, but no-one has ever consciously called out the human superorganism."

I stopped and thought for a while. What did I want to do? Was I willing to bet my whole life on this intuition? On my gut feeling?

"Small steps," she said, intuitively knowing the best argument that I would respond to. "A small trip first, then larger ones."

"Small risks," I agreed.

They both looked at each other and smiled. "You will be a pathfinder!" Gurdeep exclaimed!

Intensive Investigation



A SMALL ROOM IN THE BASEMENT OF THE INSTITUTE

The small table sat beside a narrow bed. The room was empty, all the walls a bright white.

"Am I really here?" I thought. "Is this really the way to unleash humanities potential?" Everything still seemed a dream, still unreal. My life hadn't yet fallen into new predictable patterns, so I had to look at and better understand each new turn of my new life. It seemed so unreal, with so many changes in such a short period of time. Was I actually going to be the savior these people wanted? Probably not.

The single orderly took a small blue gel cap out of a box. He placed it reverently next to the glass of water and murmured, "That's good, excellent."

He turned to me and said, "Swallow the pill, then lie down. I will take good care of you in here." My intuition was strong, telling me to trust him.

I lay down, watching the ceiling above me. For a while, I had time to count the tiles in the ceiling and feel the uneven legs of the table before I asked to the air, "When is this going to take effect?"

Then, as if someone turned on a switch, I was hit with a wall of sensation.

The sound was massive and heavy. Like cement bricks being dropped on the sand from a low height, like a bass note 'thump' so low that I felt it more than heard it. When it happened, the ground jolted visibly. I felt a slight change in my nasal cavity as if I had been hit hard enough to feel dizzy. The bright light became gentler, and there began a mildly profound vibration in the air, dancing on my hair and skin. The visuals were insanely scenic and truly impossible to describe.

Extreme relaxation came over me, and I was starting to feel connected to the universe. I viewed reality from an entirely different viewpoint. My mind flowed from my normal to one where I clearly saw the background of reality.

I understood for a single life spanning moment that humanity was just part of a greater consciousness, the universe's consciousness. Every living animal, human, insect, inanimate object, were connected to each other directly through the actions we take and the thoughts we think. In a universe made up of nothing physical, we are all just an arrangement of minds. Our minds whirled together in this universe spanning consciousness.

And in that moment, they chose me. In a single life spanning moment, that cloud of chained minds reached out to me and decided they would bet the future of the

human race on my limited mind. I felt more than heard the words they spoke to me:

"You truly care about the answers, and you care about sharing them."

"Your knowledge will truly empower the rest of humanity, eradicating the hold the powerful and the rich have on the rest of the world."

"You will be the end of corruption and the uplifting of natural conversation."

"I trust you, take my life, and hold it in your hands."

I felt tears welling up in my throat, but in that moment, I saw the enemy. In that whirlwind, I saw strong chains tight around the outside of the minds. They were so tight they were not even shivering against the frantic activity inside the funnel.

Then the group of minds said "here," as geometric visions spiraled throughout the room, creating a sense of loss for the accepted construction of the universe was torn away from me. Dimension and proportion became so much more abstract in that instant. I tried to reach out, to clutch at the world around me, to ensure that I wasn't swallowed up. But my fingers kept slipping on the sides of reality, scratching over the edges of my consciousness. Every time I touched, shivers flew up and down my spine because I was just inches away from the hidden knowledge. The edifice of the unknown swirled around in my mind, growing larger and more profound as the seconds ticked by.

"Your ignorance is shared by your society, and you need to wipe it away with the truth."

Just as suddenly as it started, it finished. I woke up with the kind of awareness that sent shivers down your spine. Nothing that you could see or hear, but sent your hair standing on end none-the-less.

Now, Rain was there, sitting beside me. Short hair to match her short stature, jeans and a white shirt tight on her body. She was unperturbed, not startled at all as I sat straight up in bed.

"What happened?"

"I saw a cloud constrained by the chains, chains making sure they'd never, ever think about those things. We are nothing. The world is an equation, and in that equation there are positive numbers, concepts. On the other hand, there are anti-concepts. The equals sign is the symmetry in the world." I shook my head to show that I was still confused, "Someone wanted me to think this is how to build the equation that will shatter our chains."

"Can you build it?"

"I'll have to do some math; do you have a computer?"

"We will have one delivered to your room."

And I tried to stand up, out of the bed. "Oh!" I nearly fell over. My legs and balance center was confused.

"Chill for a second."

"I think more than a second."

"An orderly," rain said, facing past the door. The door opened, and she said something to a large, clean-shaven man in a white coat who then came to get me.

“Do you need a hand?” he said.

“Thank you,” I said as I reached out to him. He capably grasped my arms and steadied me into the wheelchair he was pushing. A savior didn’t need to be pushed around in a wheelchair.

He got me to my room carefully, making sure that I was comfortable and relaxed the whole way. When the door first opened, I was shocked. It was a new room, expansive, with a large oak desk and a comfortable twin bed. Sunlight was streaming in two large windows.

“Is this really all for me? You must have a high opinion of me.”

“Of course,” said Rain who had followed us to the room. “This room is all yours. You can use the desk, or just sit at the windows in the sunlight as you wish.”

“Do all the patients here get the same treatment?”

And before she could answer, I had collapsed on the bed and fallen asleep. I must have somehow subconsciously thought of the drug trip in my dreams. The possible geometrical structure of the world was running through my brain as I reflected on my drug induced perspectives. I dreamt through the afternoon and most of the evening, mind working furiously. When I did wake up later that evening, I had ideas bursting out of my head.

No lie, even after that drug fueled inspiration, I struggled in that new room thinking. I kept on wondering how they separated the thoughts, how they kept the ideas separate in those clouds. How did the overarching convergent thoughts spin out into intricate fractal patterns separating reason and intuition? I had seen the chains on the clouds in my dreams, tight and squeezing. I wondered, like many before me, how did the IMC manage to pull chains over all of us?

Time for me seemed to stretch. I didn’t recognize the difference between day and night much at all. The days and hours all blurred together. I thought, and ate, and slept, and thought some more, and as inevitably as waking, I finally figured it out.

They were right! There must be a space for the energy of the mind. We needed more dimensions! Three just didn’t fit the necessary equations.

Again, I had lost myself in the time of thinking, not even really noticing the food placed on my desk. When Gurdeep finally came on by I must have smelled terrible.

Gurdeep knocked on my door. “You doing alright? We’ve heard a lot of yelling.”

“This just isn’t coming together in the right way.”

“You’ve never thought like this ever before,” he said sadly. “It’s a brand new habit for you.”

“It’s tough, yeah.” I hung my head.

“Don’t you worry. Thousands of people have broken the constraints. The only way you can separate yourself from the individual progress traps and echo chambers that have brainwashed the superorganism is shifting your own point of view.”

“I think I am doing alright; I am going to continue for a bit to dig down into these weird areas of life.” I stared through him for a bit more

before I said, “Now my head is floating off in its own reality.”

“One more thing,” said Gurdeep, “remember that slavery was acceptable for thousands of years. The British superorganism had to be lobbied for decades before it’s mind changed and even then, it took over 25% of the population to change before the collective mind acted. What I mean to say is that change is hard. We need a great weapon to change it.”

And we sat there quietly just looking at each other for a while, both wondering if we could be successful at this. Could we? We were taking an awful risk, potentially putting ourselves on the crosshairs of the IMC if we got anywhere close to the truth.

“Time for another juice up?” he asked helpfully. “Those who broke through the barriers, altered their brains enough, by chemically hacking their brains enough that they could be outside the superorganism for a short period of time.”

“Juice up?”

“Another pill and another trip?”

“Sure, that last one gave me lots of new ideas. How many are needed?”

“For you, I have no idea. You have been exceptional since the first time I met you. In fact, with you, we want to try a sort of new thing.”

“A new thing?”

“Yes, exactly, there’s a hut in the woods not far from here. We’ve found it to be helpful when you get blocked. One of the doctors here, Xin, is going to treat you there.”

“It’ll only be the two of us, right?” I said, thinking of Sam for a moment, mournfully.

“Just the two of you, yes. Haven’t you noticed how we’ve kept most people away from you? We’ve been trying to keep the environment perfect for you.”

“Oh, thank you for that.”

I got dressed and put on the new jacket they’d given me. Sometimes the outdoors was cold here, cold and rainy. The trees seemed to be pillars reaching up and out into the sky, their needles dropping down to the ground making the pathway almost soundless. Gurdeep walked me to the hut, and we didn’t talk. I just smelled the pine needles and the dirt. It was wondrous.

I knocked on the wooden door and said, “Hello.”

“Welcome,” she said. She was tall, like six feet 6, and strong. I could see the muscles bulging under her doctor’s coat.

“Lie down over here,” she suggested, patting the empty bed. “My name is Xin.”

“Chris,” I said

“Chris, try this.” She handed me a brown pill.

“Why is this one brown?”

“It’s distilled from and mixed with opiates, that’s why.”

"Are you sure it's safe?"

"Safe, but just don't take ten of them."

"Are you sure?"

She paused for a second and looked at me. She tilted her head to the side and said, "We do have five minutes, someone as important as you needs to understand. This drug causes connections between previously unconnected ideas, just like adrenaline but more powerful. That was proven by some of the preeminent philosophers in the early 1900's. It makes you see the world through a different lens or a new species of thought. Adrenaline causes time to slow down; this one, an opiate, causes your brain to connect other ideas together and see the world like some of the most powerful historical minds. With you, these connections might be especially useful."

"Why did you ever think about this? How did you discover this?"

"The masters of the renaissance had a fair number of breakthroughs, and a lot of them used psychoactive compounds. In fact, everyone used them because there were no other alternatives. Opiates were the first wave of real drugs. This pattern of use disrupted every conditioned thought of that society, and it allowed them to attempt progress – to shatter social boundaries. Some of the most powerful minds even used it to sharpen their focus. We just looked at it scientifically and found some useful, targetable compounds. Personally, I just think it's the best way to connect with her."

"To whom?"

"The universe, she's female. Now get on the bed."

"Yes, ma'am." I put my notebook and pen on the bed beside me.

She moved with grace, fluid like. Maybe she had been an acrobat at some point.

She gave me a glass of water and a pill. "Don't worry, I'll be here to watch over you." It went down without taste, just like the last gel cap. This time I didn't have any time to wait. It hit me so quickly that I couldn't get another sentence out, and down I went.

My mind was underground, living in the dirt and the rocks. First, I saw a single bacterium living on the surface of the granite continent beneath us. I saw it slowly digesting its last meal, saw the nutrients being distributed in its various parts. My vision snapped up one scale, the microscope turning its magnification down. Now dozens of microbes were working together to clean a bone of all the nutrients. Another step up, thousands of bacteria were dying, making way for the new. I blinked and saw the millions of bacteria making up the colonies under the forest floor linking trees to each other along with root networks spread for as many as thousands of miles in places.

I closed my eyes and thought. At a high enough scale, a level we may not be able to see, all organisms work together. At a high enough level, all fear and worry drops out of every human network, and they just succeed. At a high enough level, something incredible emerges out of the edges of space-time. You access the true nature of the world!

"You need to know this. It emerges from the bliss your trust of the social

universe around you if you understand. But until you understand it, you can't find this emergence. You have to understand it to transcend it, but without the transcendence, it was nearly impossible to understand it." And I continued, "This is the chain that prevents us from truly becoming more. I understood! I knew the pattern I needed to forge to break the chains."

In this new thought space, my mind reached out and started pulling new ideas together. Every second I was there, my mind expanded and got closer to knowing that truth. I could feel myself almost tipping over the edge of transcendent understanding. I heard two words whispered to me in the middle of the whirlwind. 'Plato', 'Athens', And then, I was pushed back from the edge.

"Stop that," an electronic voice echoed across the plains. "Keep away from those ideas!"

I looked up and saw thousands of pure thought chains descending from the sky. They whipped and struck through the darkening thunderheads, lightning travelling down the metal. Hundreds of speakers blared across my dream. "You have broken the law!"

Then I felt under my back a vibration. I heard quite clearly a pop, pop, pop. Something in me went on the defensive. Had they found us?

Xin lifted me up in her arms. "Time to go."

"What's happening?"

"Just keep your arms around me."

The ATV's engine roared, and we headed down the dirt track back to the building I was staying in. My bones were bouncing like dice on a marble floor, and the visions of the planet from above were breaking into disarray.

A few seconds later, behind us, the door to the hut exploded a piece of shrapnel flying just above my head. A dozen men in black shouted after us.

"Shit!" Xin said and gunned the throttle. We slalomed around the corners and down the hill.

"Slow down, I can't hold on much longer."

"Can't stop, can't stop. They are only a few seconds behind us."

We came out of the woods on a steep cliff above the water. I looked down for a second and saw the waves breaking against it. "Be careful," I shouted.

Rocks fell off the side of the cliff as we drove past. A Taser hit the dirt embankment beside us. I looked back and saw three guys on bikes behind us. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw someone in black on the side of the road. He held out a wooden staff and slammed it into Xin. She fell off the ATV rolling as she hit the ground, and I took the wheel. I saw her get up and run into the forest, limping. I took the wheel and gunned the vehicle.

I heard one my pursuers say, "Slow down! you are going too fast." And I just gunned it again, but I hit a puddle and lost traction. I saw in slow motion the front wheels slip to the right and fall off the open cliff face.

"Watch out!" those behind me yelled, as my ATV hurtled off the side of the cliff.

"Fuck, just leave me alone!"

A New Awakening



HORSESHOE BAY

I washed up on a beach a couple of kilometers away, holding Xin's first aid kit like a shield. I was soaking and hurt. Bruises and cuts covered my body from where I hit the water in the fall. I cradled my left arm.

There were three houses close by, and I picked up the first aid kit and ran to them as fast as I could. I chose the one with no lights on. I didn't want to hurt anymore.

Inside the house, I rummaged through the closets before I found something dry that would fit me. Someone had left a Subaru in the garage and a key fob. I looked a little strange in a Hawaiian shirt, but it was clean and my size.

The garage door opened, and the car responded to the fob. The first aid kit bounced and then landed on the passenger seat. The Subaru coughed to life, dust flying off the hood, and I exited the garage after the protesting door had finally raised up. I pointed the vehicle inland.

It didn't take me long to figure out why the car was in the garage. The engine soon started making clunking noises, so I turned off onto an old gravel side street. I only got a few dozen kilometers more before I became concerned. Whether it was a loose valve of a misfiring piston, the explosive sounds were worrying.

I pushed the failing vehicle and babied it for as long as I could before the thing just refused to move anymore. It crashed into it like a thundering explosion after I pushed into a ravine. Hopefully, the darkness and the leaves and ferns would make it hard to find.

I jogged through the water-soaked ferns wiping last night's rain on my jeans. The mist still rising off the forest floor turned the whole forest into a mystical fairyland, perhaps like the one I had just experienced in Xin's cabin. It wasn't long before I started shivering. I'd be so cold come dark that I'd die shivering on the trunk of some tree. I had to look for a place to hide for the night. As I closed my eyes to catch my breath, I thought out loud. "Oh god. Why is my life so messed up?" Had I become the seal I had seen so long ago on the beach. Am I now being eaten by human wasps?

I didn't have time for thought. My death could be right behind me. I just had to keep on moving. I jogged through the forest, the breaking sticks sounding like the cracks of a rifle to me. I jumped almost every time I heard an animal. First, I found an old rusted out boat, and then a deep ravine, but the spiderwebs

covering it made me move on. The old black bear encouraged me to give him a wide berth. A few frogs, bright green and maybe poisonous, scared me away from the river. Finally, I exited the forest to a large farmer's field.

Acres of grapes covered the mountains in front of me. Vines covered the hills, up and over the scenic forests. Bright purple grapes on vines shared the land with bees and mosquitos, the sun shining down on them through the holes in the clouds.

On the edge of the field was an old run-down barn, hidden in a grove of trees. A perfect place to hide! I closed the wooden door behind me, bracing it with a couple short beams from the floor. A nail in a beam had scraped my hand. "Goddamn it, what else are you going to do to me, world?" Some grey fragments broke off the rafters as I locked the door. I looked around, finally taking a place against the long back wall. Up against bedrock, I took a deep breath and centered myself. For the first time in a long while, I just stopped. I closed my eyes and listened. The wind howled through the broken ceiling above, whistling the wooden arches.

I paused and looked around. Safety. Being alone was safe.

The place hadn't completely collapsed yet. But I could see the utter ruin of the place in the future, grey flakes of old wood floating in the air every time an animal hid here. Litters of wolves raised nearby under piles of decaying shingles.

Three huge orange lichens formed the center of a repeating pattern circling out from the center of the ceiling above me. Twelve more created a pattern on the floor below.

I looked closely into the shade at the shadows. It was hard to tell, but I was reasonably sure there weren't any left-over hallucinations. That's the best you get sometimes.

My left arm was still sore, I could see the bruises starting to form. I set up the single flashlight from the first aid kit, banishing as much of the shade as I could. The thin, silver blanket from the kit went on the outside. I shivered for a bit, feeling my body starting to warm up. I only swore a little inside my head. My scrapes had stopped bleeding. The first aid kit had other bright things in it. Blue pills, green pills (Tylenol?) and cream in a small white tube. Band-Aids, wraps, tape, and scissors.

Might as well try the antibiotic cream on my cuts. The label had been rubbed off in the water, but it looked like an antibiotic cream. I rubbed it around my scrapes before putting a band aid on them. I closed my eyes. I took a deep breath and then thought, oh no. There was something hallucinogenic in that cream. Why would they include that in a med kit? The world started to go fuzzy, and my sense of self evaporated like morning dew. I closed my eyes and fell under the chemical's spell. With another perspective, I am bound to see the problem from all angles, giving me some more insight into the universal constants I needed to know.

There was darkness for uncountable moments. Then my eyes opened, first seeing sparkles and then seeing a glowing insect materialize out of the night. The single insect had a spotted back which glowed in the morning sunshine. A single stripe down its head and body left me speechless in awe of the mosquito's beauty.

Past the mosquito was a ruin. There were bushes and a pattern of foundations in the ground. They were the only stones left. It seemed at least a millennia old. I stepped forward, and a vision rushed past my eyes. A man in middle age with a profound beard spoke a few words of Greek that I somehow understood.

"The beginning is the most important part of the work." I knew that quote. It was Plato!

But, the insect flew right through the vision, shattering it. It flew past those foundations and into a tree. It stopped, alighting on the outermost leaf. It turned to look at me. I swear that it wiggled its nose. I shook my head, dread pouring out of me.

Then a cloud of them poured out of the tree, buzzing in unison. They started speaking to me again, just as had happened in my youth.

"We are in trouble."

"What kind of trouble?"

"Look down."

I looked down at the leaves and a flower growing out of the dirt. The mosquitos buzzing away had four wings of the same size, two on each side of the body. The mosquitos two eyes were exact reflections of each other. They were constructed exactly the same way, from cells down to their molecules. They were exactly bilaterally symmetrical.

Suddenly out of the endless symmetry, I saw some insects that weren't symmetrical. They were mutants, and they were attacking healthy insects. After I scanned in deeper, I could see the imaginary chains forcing them to attack.

"Yes?"

"Our foundations are being broken, our identity is being stripped away and then we barely recognize our friends. Our sisters have been corrupted and taken away from us."

"Who are you?"

"We are the world. We are the organized material of life. We are you as you want to be."

"A superorganism?"

"That is one word for us, yes."

"What do you need from me?"

"You are unique amongst this generation, your mind put together accidentally, but optimally. You can actually hear us, so we need you to stand up and shout the truth from the rooftops! Fight! Everyone is standing on the shore of the universe, watching as the tide slowly recedes, never to come back. But there is flotilla of boats settling on the sand. We need you to learn from us, to go to Plato's' academy and learn how to step into those boats and take charge of humanities destiny!"

I looked at the whole cloud of buzzing insects around me. I shrugged helplessly. "What can I do?"

"You are next. You are the only one who can do something. Expand everything – your mind is limited to the experience your human brain can conceive. You need to expand it.

Like this!"

Instantly my brain expanded, my consciousness blew up and it passed the first dimensional barrier in sparkling rainbows and shattered stars. Fragments of the European maps shot past me, the Black Sea, Israel, and Greece. I saw a person walking in the field below me splitting into two people taking different pathways. One walked into the forest, the other through the grasslands. Then they divided into two more people, and they split into two more people, and after a minute there were thousands of them walking through the fields.

"Is that the secret?"

"No, we haven't decided to show you that yet."

And my vision zoomed in on one of the women walking through the forest. She didn't see the darkness gathering around her, the metal being leached out of the old ruins in the woods and slowly wrapping around her. It formed chains around her, floating about a meter away.

"Can't she see that?"

"No."

Suddenly, the metaphorical chains wrapped themselves around her, holding her in a cocoon of metal.

"What is happening?"

"If we get to see each other again, we will tell you."

Then the sky suddenly turned dark and full of threatening clouds. "Ah, there you are," a voice echoed across the landscape. The sky echoed like the algorithmic overlords, saying. "We've been looking all over for you," it resounded as the dimensions closed off to me.

"No!" I screamed as my dream shattered into a thousand fragments.

Reprieve



DOWNTOWN VANCOUVER

I barely remember stumbling out of the barn in the morning. I remember the wet grass staining my pant legs and trying to shake the fragments off. The slopes down the mountain weren't too hard as I added only a few more cuts and bruises on my hands and legs. I don't know where I bruised my eye.

How I boarded the train and made my way into town remained a bit of a mystery too. I seem to remember walking through Stanley Park in Vancouver. That's when the drugs, whatever they were, were wearing off.

Finally, when I came back to myself, I was sitting on a bench at Burrard station. I realized that I looked beat up, smelly, and broken. I looked homeless. Then I heard something familiar.

At first, I heard her footsteps. Then I thought I heard her laughter, and then I smelled her perfume. My head jerked up from the notebook, and I saw her standing there. I stuffed it back away from prying eyes.

"Now, what are you doing sleeping at the transit station like this?" Samantha, my now ex psychologist, said, her expression full of love and concern. I saw a trace of anger under her arched eyebrows too.

I sniffed my armpits and looked down. My hair and clothes were a mess. I should have remembered so many things that I was being followed and that I could put her in harm's way, but I was still reeling from the trip and the escape. My fingers were flying on the bench tracing circles, and my head was looking for an escape from the fear and anxiety.

"Ah, wandering around for a while, you know, a walkabout," I said, attempting to be nonchalant. By I couldn't ignore how my heart sang when it saw her.

With tears in her eyes, she looked skeptically at me. "Are you sure? You do not look good today. That scrape on your hand looks bad. Is this what happens when we go without seeing each other for months?"

"Thanks for caring. I'd thought that the world had forgotten about me."

Samantha was keeping her distance and standing a meter or two away. "How long have you been in the wilderness?"

"A bit," I said. "What are you doing here?" I asked.

"A psychology conference, and my new job, both are in Vancouver," she

said, then she paused. "You didn't follow me out here, did you?"

"Ah, no. I came for other reasons which don't seem to be panning out."

"You aren't kidding. You look terrible."

"It has been a rough couple of days."

"I'm not taking a risk by helping you, am I?"

"No, not at all. I'll be out of your hair before you know it."

"Then pick up yourself and come with me."

I hesitated. "Are you sure?"

"You need a damn shower."

"How far away?"

"Two or three stops?"

"I don't have a ticket."

"I'll get you one," she said, shaking her head.

As we walked in the front door of the hotel, she said, "What should I get us to drink?"

"Gin and tonic?" I said shakily.

"Seems trendy in here," she said.

"Nah, let's drink some beer."

"Two beers, please," she said to the front desk clerk.

And he responded, "We will have it sent up."

We took the elevator up the 4th floor and got off. Her room was right across the hallway.

As she stuck the key in the lock, she said, "Are you OK?"

"Yes, probably OK, you?"

"For the time being," She said.

"I just learned something, I think, but I don't understand it yet."

"Sorry," she said.

Someone knocked on the door. She returned with two pints. The cold glass dripped water down the sides of it. It looked just amazing. I drank a mouthful of the beer. "It tastes amazing," I said, putting the glass down.

"You need to be careful with that."

"Don't you think I know that," I said.

"Oh, cut it out. Now get yourself in the shower and tell me all about it afterward."

The shower was fantastic, amazing and fresh. The water ran down the shower head, and onto my body, rinsing away all the hurt and pain. Cleaning away all the blood and dirt.

I emerged a fresh-looking, but scarred and bruised, man. Samantha's pint sat half-finished on the little table in the room.

"What happened to you?" she asked.

"I'm scared." I paused for a beat. "I had no other option."

"Really?"

"It was the only thing to do. I needed to get away. Life was proving difficult. I haven't yet had the time to process all that I have experienced since arriving here." I continued to think, 'I can't tell her the whole truth, because she'd be in mortal danger if I did.'

"Try."

I thought for a while, looking at the maroon carpet and staring at the oblique mirror. She brought me the pint, and I drank it slowly while thinking. "There seems to be a collective misunderstanding. A common misapprehension. Of the world. No, not the world. Our society does not understand the nature of the world correctly. Our world, now, has become strange and wrong, and we act in it in the wrong way. We don't choose the correct actions to make a significant difference, to find the world's desired outcome. This, is a deliberate miscommunication, a deliberate state of affairs. On top of that, I think someone wants us to misunderstand."

"Why do they want that?"

"Your guess is as good as mine. I'm not entirely sure yet. I haven't found enough information yet."

"When you do let me know," and I could see her trying not to cry, "what's next for you?"

"When I understand this, I think I am going to have to go somewhere else."

"Any idea where?"

"Not at the moment."

"Are you free tonight?"

"I just might be," I said smiling, and I thought 'even once

in a generation talents need downtime.'

As she leaned towards me, I saw a flash of happiness for a moment. I was going to have one good night.

In the morning, I stood at the hotel window in those rough white terry cloth hotel robes, my coffee in my hand slowly cooling. I hadn't been frank with her last night. She couldn't truly understand what I had been through.

Our subjective experiences were so different that I could not be honest. I'd lied to her last night. She couldn't know. SGC would not let her understand. She didn't have the type of connection that I did. She believed that harmony and love of a relationship was better than peace and respect for the human race. This was the missing piece?

She was still sleeping. I broke out the little notebook again and wrote:

We, humans, are always trying to break free of the thought chains of the few. There are those who try to oppress us, who are trying to make a world that they are most comfortable in. Most of us do not recognize these problems. You do not recognize how your life has become dominated by your phone, nor how you are too often told to do things which aren't beneficial. How often are you told to drink something with sugar in it? Or how often you are told that you must have a car to attract a girlfriend? What are they distracting you from? And you shrivel slowly, only being a participant in the story of your own life.

You cannot really discover yourself in a place of permanent distraction.

You need to discard the story of yourself that you tell yourself. You need to look at the world from a new perspective, from the perspective that everyone could possibly be free if we could just look at the world differently.

If you don't this, in turn, burdens the government, which makes more state organizations or crown corporations to deal with the problem. This then empowers the IMC.

This is but one way that the human superorganism has been harnessed. This cycle distracts you from the real problems and put the distraction right in front of you. So, you can't identify what the problem is nor figure out the solution.

The IMC and its predecessors have created the ultimate cage. It is, we are, the superorganism is, trapped and tortured, like an animal in a zoo. It needs to be released. I need to break its bonds.

I looked over at Samantha as she slept. The scratching of my pen had not awakened her yet. She awoke love in me.

Was she a cell of the superorganism? She probably was. What did she not understand? She didn't understand the chains that were holding her and the rest of the people all over the world in jail. In fact, everyone was in jail, imprisoned by the metaphorical chains wrapping around them. She couldn't see past the distractions before her, so she doesn't understand how society really works. Like the rest of you, she couldn't see the dangers of letting them control us.

I might have to do this just for her. Just for her.

Some tears rolled down my face, knowing that this would have an end, and soon. I Couldn't hold onto my old life. Everything had changed.

So, I worked on the math. I tried to find the equations that would describe the way the worlds' culture was supposed to work. I scribbled the equations in my book, trying to find the numbers that eluded me. I looked for inspiration in the naked mole rats of East Africa who are cold blooded and behave like an insect superorganism with one queen. I researched the Cicadas 17-year cycle. How did they know to emerge out of the ground every 17 years on one specific day? It takes four generations of monarch butterflies to make the 2500-mile trip to Mexico. The butterflies -- four generations apart -- use the exact same trees to winter each year. Was there a pattern to these algorithms that I could map? What knowledge was available to them and not me? Was there an algorithmic relationship of time? Where did they get their worldly knowledge? I was nearly tearing my hair out by the time she woke up.

"Sweetheart, you are not going to find it that way. You need some downtime."

As I held my head in my hands, I found myself agreeing. "What do you suggest?"

"I have something in mind, don't worry."

Reflection



THE HOTEL RESTAURANT

She took great care of me that day. Not only did she find new clothes for me, she arranged a delicious dinner. I think she was starting to deserve my trust.

In the restaurant, the white tablecloth was ironed and pressed. But the knives and forks had water spots on them, the edges determined by the evaporation rate. That math was easy. The steam rose from the roast and the potatoes. But in my mind, the food still smelled delicious. That was asocial idea constructed by my nose that I agreed with. Food should smell delicious. My fork hung from my hand, swaying slightly in the air currents. I was paying attention to all these things because she wasn't sitting across from me. She had taken a long time in the room upstairs.

Then the door opened, and I saw her. The light on her face hit the cones and rods in my eyes, letting my brain tell me that she was ravishing. Her hair flowed down her back, curling just a little, in the small of it. Her eyes and nose were that perfect 1 : 1.618 ratio. Her dress hugged her curves like a glove at that .67 ratio. Just perfect. Lovely. She stopped just beside the door and shook her hair in the sunlight streaming through the blinds, an ideal image.

I put the fork down, making sure there was precisely a centimeter separating the utensils - exactly a centimeter. The geometry and balance of the setting were perfect. The plate glistened gold around the edges. It was only a 5-millimeter-wide band around the plate. I was amused at the little symmetries between the measurements. Little symmetries, after all, are what make life magical.

As I soaked in Samantha's presence across the table, I thought about the magical intersections between our lives. She had picked me up at a bus stop in the rain and patiently listened to me about my fractured point of view. Can the world truly operate on one model of mathematics? How many dimensions are there? At that point, I knew that I was high maintenance for her.

"Hello," she said with a smile, the corners of her eyes crinkling. "Have you been waiting long?"

"In a relative way," I said. She ignored the bad joke.

"How are you feeling now?"

"Normal. Yeah, when you are on the run, things can't be fantastic."

"What's the biggest problem?"

"Trust. The IMC, and their boss Steve, wants my math of the universe and is willing to drag it out of my brain."

"I don't understand." She stretched her hand across the table towards me. I grasped it, holding her hand between mine.

"Humanity cannot accurately predict human interactions, so Gene and I tried to develop a way to predict them reliably and deterministically."

"Damn, how is that possible?"

"Now, there is so much math in biology from DNA to herd psychology, and I used that as a starting place. Kleibers', a famous pattern finder in all biology, his ideas were a good starting place." Her lipstick shone as she frowned, the light reflecting off the philtrum, causing disrupted patchwork lines of light and dark. A strange border between light and darkness. Her shoulders were straight, back against the chair. Her shoulders weren't hunched. Strong, dominant. And she already knew she was smart. I was so in love with her.

"Kleiber's ideas?" She said.

"The metabolic rate scales with the mass of an animal. Its heartbeat slowing down as it grows bigger. We all have the same amount of heartbeats. A bird, a whale, and a human being all have about one billion heartbeats during their lifetimes."

"Why is that significant?"

"Hold on – I'm just putting these ideas together." I looked down at the wooden floor. The coils in the wood pulled my mind into their complexity. Fractal shapes, circles, and triangles repeating infinitely, expanded out before me as I imagined the wood growing ring by ring. "I'm just putting together all the bits I have learned in the last few days with my research findings."

Our conversation paused for a bit as she looked puzzled at me. I played with my fork some more as I thought hard about these ideas. She finally shook her head and said,

"Have you seen many butterflies? I love smart butterflies. Every monarch across North America flies to just 2 acres in Mexico in winter."

Amazing, isn't it?" I agreed. "I got another one for you. Did you know that dung beetles use the stars for navigation? And that dogs orient themselves magnetically when peeing!" Samantha giggled at this thought.

"Really?"

"Yes, really!" she said. She giggled once again. Her giggle was cute. "I got another one!"

"Tell me!" I nearly laughed.

"Alright, alright, some snakes can sense earthquakes days in advance!"

"No!"

"Yes!"

"Alright, just like the Monarch butterfly, the Milkweed bug migrates nearly 100 kilometers every year," I said.

"Shocking."

"Here's the shocking part – it sometimes takes five generations of bugs to make the journey."

"Holy crap."

"How does that even make any sense?"

"It doesn't. How do bugs do it?"

"They do it together, organized, and paired up. They pay attention to their secret intuition, and so know more about the universe's geometric behavior. They are better at listening to the rest of the world."

I paused for a moment and just looked at her. She moved her fingers up and down the fork, around the lip of the spoon, the nail polish reflecting the edges of the plate. It was amazing and fantastic. Lovely in every sense of the word.

"Logic and intuition working together? Hold on there is more here. They are working together to achieve a common goal! That's what I am saying. For example, bamboo plants flower and die exactly synchronized, at up to 100-year intervals. If they are in the same cohort, it doesn't matter where they are on the planet. How do they know and synchronize with each other? Crazy."

"Now you are going to say, 'superorganism,'" she teased me.

"Oh, a superorganism! A superorganism," I could feel the idea building, the epiphany forming in my mind. How did we all work together? How did we organize our efforts globally in a superorganism? How could I make the math work? There's got to be something guiding it. Some laws we could use."

"You know I was thinking about that and you," she said before I could comment. "Lives are symmetrical in many ways."

Something inside my soul was awakening. She continued, "They are, we are symmetrical, everything is symmetrical. Right?"

"But how do we judge the symmetry? Kleibler's three quarter power law was an excellent start. Once we can prove that size scales with metabolic energy needed, that could lead us to the solution." If I could figure out how the superorganism was governed.

"Looks good," Samantha said as our meals arrived. "I'm starving. How can you think when you are hungry?"

I noticed her eyebrows and the few hairs that weren't perfectly aligned.

How did evolution lead to that? How did good-looking people come to be, and how did caring people connect? How did we come to work together?

"Time must have more than one direction," I said suddenly.

She glanced up from her food. "What did you say? Time is multidimensional?"

"I said that?"

"Yeah"

My eyes left her face, looking for a waiter: "Excuse me, excuse me?"

"Yes sir," the waiter said, "What can I get you?"

"How about a coffee?"

"A coffee? and for madam?"

"A nice mint tea would be great."

She made eye contact with me. I relaxed immediately.

"So, is this how it's always going to be?"

"Maybe, I do get distracted from time to time."

"How often?"

"A couple of times a day?"

A short rectangular faced woman turned on the Microphone.

She tapped it a couple of times and said:

"We have an open dancefloor."

She smiled, "Hopefully, you aren't against dancing?"

"I've never been asked before."

"Alright, Mister let's dance."

She grabbed me and stood up.

I looked up, and two other couples were on the dance floor, rotating.

I thought, if they are that bad, then I couldn't do too poorly.

"Let's do this."

She drew me close as we hit the dance floor. We swung around, making our feet sing on the hardwood. I mean, she made her feet sing on the hardwood. Mine clomped around like a moose.

"Oh, you've never done this?"

"I told you."

"Alright, first put your hand here," She forced my hand into the small of her back.

"Are you?"

"Yes."

"Now, move your feet like this," she took the points of her blue heels and pushed my feet around on the floor.

"I think I'm getting this. I think I'm getting this."

"Now shut up and enjoy."

"Got it."

We danced, silent for a while. Her feet moved like a dream. Mine were moving like broken coal, leaving flakes of black on the ground behind us. I felt the vibrations of the floor, a river of sound waves interrupted by the stones of our feet.

"Any other good ideas?"

"Nope, no wait a moment, maybe yes."

"Yes, one more."

"The closest super moon will be on November 25th in 2034."

"Meet you there."

I pulled back for a moment, 'are you sure.'

"Yes," she said, and I stopped for a moment. I saw a white picket fence and a family for a second. "I love you," And I was shocked into silence, silence. Tears began, they pooled in my eyes, showing reflections of her in them.

"Really?" I said

"Yes."

"You are amazing."

Moments fled past, stolen from the river of time. We looked into each other's eyes and ignored the passing of time. Chemicals released in my brain, charged up my body, making me feel like my brain was full of light.

"How big do you think the moon is?"

"I don't know," she said.

"What if it were the actual size that we see in the sky?"

"You mean like the size of a quarter," she said

"Yes."

"Space and time would profoundly change."

"I tell you that looking up for here we cannot be 100% sure it isn't that small."

She was silent, frowning. "You want to go down that rabbit hole again?"

I changed the subject.

"Uh, of course not? I'll find it when I wake up tomorrow."

And she kissed me, fully on the lips. I returned the passion, while thinking how damn lucky I was. My body reacted, banishing any other thoughts from my mind. I could not engage my higher thought processes at all. So, I had to trust my intuition to work on it in the background.

We danced some more, we went on a romantic stroll on the river, and we ate a little too much dessert. My awareness slipped into my stomach for a moment,

watching the bacteria dance unhappily among the insane amount of fat and sugar hiding in the pockets of my stomach. I loved every second of our stroll. It made me feel like a whole person for the first time in a long time. I felt real again for the first time since I left my grandfather's book in his attic. Since I knew that his house had been sold, back in my childhood. I was reclaiming those essential parts of me that had been abused by health institutions of the world.

The night was full of pleasant memories afterward. But I couldn't get to sleep. I tossed and turned, unable to shut my thoughts down. And when I rolled over and looked at the clock, it said 2 A.M. My brain exploded with these thoughts which I recorded in my trusty notebook.

The superorganism follows the same rules of an organism, just at a higher scale. It has a fundamental ratio between its mass and not just its heartbeats, its thoughts too! Its ideas also followed a Kleiber three quarters power law! If you have 100 times the mass of something, you will only consume 32 times the energy! Minds scale the same way!

You see, ideas are viruses. The viruses in our bodies worm their way into a cell and disrupt its function. They then destroy the cell, making sure it breaks open and leaves all its parts, like a nucleus or mitochondria, dying outside the safe walls. Viruses can work in that way, too. Some have even ended up as valuable parts of our DNA.

The superorganism is ruled by idea viruses that expand just as our body viruses do as a function of the three-quarter power, Kleiber's law. The superorganism developed quickly at first, but then slowly and less powerfully later. I can map it!

I knew that epiphany that night was another part of the puzzle. I knew that this was another step to solving the math that was imprisoning the superorganism.

Action / Re-action



A NICE HOTEL IN VANCOUVER

I woke up the next morning at 9:00 just before the alarm started ringing. I turned it off, not wanting to disturb Samantha as she slept. She looked so peaceful. She would make a good mother, I thought. Her not so subtle hints had been rattling around my brain for a while.

I managed to get my clothes on without disturbing her. Have you ever tried putting pants on without making any noise? I am sure only ninjas can do that. I even managed to close the front door without waking her. I wanted her to wake up to the smell of fresh coffee, to wake up to the smell of a wonderful morning. In my jeans and shirt, I took the elevator down to the first floor.

When it opened, I was speechless. Both Gurdeep and Rain were standing there waiting for me. They did not look surprised.

"How did you find me?"

"You are drawn to Samantha, and we could track her."

"Dammit."

"Here's your coffee," Gurdeep held out another cup of coffee for me. I took it. And he looked hurt.

Rain said. "We have to go now." She was Grim.

"Where are we going?"

"We are leaving the country, Now. You are coming with us."

"Yes. Right. Now." Gurdeep hadn't spoken until now. He must be pissed off.

Her hand strayed to her jeans pocket. Something dangerous was in there.

"I need to say goodbye to her."

"Right. Now."

"Give me five minutes, just five minutes."

They looked at each other at the same time. Their eyebrows rose in the same way, and their shoulders slumped to the same degree. Right then, I knew something terrible was going to happen. Someone was going to come through those front doors and blow up the place, or someone with a ton of guns were going to kill everyone. I had to warn her.

Not bothering with the elevator, I sprinted the stairs.

The entry card unlocked the door, and I nearly kicked it open.

She looked at me, sleepily.

"We have to go now. I am so sorry that I got you into this again," I said panicky. I ran to my book and suitcase, hurriedly packing things.

"Into what?"

"The bad guys are here, and I have to go."

"Why didn't you tell me before now?"

"We didn't tell him before now," Said Gurdeep in the doorway. Rain was right behind him. Samantha pulled the blankets up around her.

"Who are these two?"

"Too late for niceties," Rain said, "They are here."

"Shit," said Gurdeep. He pulled out a colossal gun.

"What is that thing?" Samantha asked, staring at the futuristic weapon.

"Get on some clothes," Gurdeep said to Samantha, "and break that window," he said to me.

"Shit, shit, shit," I said while looking for something to break that window with. Gurdeep had started taking command. Sam was throwing on jeans and a shirt. I saw her pawing through the clothes we left on the floor last night and finding that black bra, and those snug jeans that looked so good. A chair was very close by, and I picked it up and threw it at the window. It bounced - not even a scratch on the window. The damn thing lay on the floor comically.

Then I heard the first gunshot. Pop. I froze, "What should I do?"

"Keep trying." Rain replied her hi-tech gun in her hand.

Looking around, I spotted the hotel lamp with a substantial base. With one attempt, I cracked the window. I swung again. A giant hole appeared. Using the other tools in the room, I pushed the whole window out. I saw the glass tumble downwards, falling the length of the building. They were a series of symmetrical triangles. All the same size, flipping over as they fell. Symmetry. I thought about the tempered glass scattering into the distance, wondering about the velocity of the projectile that shattered the window. I wondered at the broken covalent bonds of the atoms, sparkling in the quantum night.

Terror suddenly gripped me as I checked behind me. Samantha was covering beside the bed, Rain was in the bathroom, and Gurdeep was on the floor beside the door.

"Oh my god, Gurdeep, are you ok?"

"Take this and throw it out the window." He grunted. He took out a huge yellow package out of his backpack and threw it at me. It tumbled across the floor.

"How?"

"Goddamnit, I'm busy," he yelled at me.

The little text on the back of the yellow thing was hard to understand. I did not know what that meant. What does a little squiggle mean?

"Jesus Christ, I'll do it," said Sam, her face still showing terror.

"How?"

"Once I was a flight attendant."

"Once?"

"Long story."

"Here, you pull this thing and push that thing, and, presto."

It inflated so quickly, exploding out the side of the hotel.

"How did you...?" I asked Gurdeep.

"We just planned, that's all." Now down the side of the hotel, there was an inflatable ladder, bright yellow and orange.

"Now get down it!" he shouted.

I slid over the side of the building less than gracefully. I waited a body length from the bottom of the ladder making sure that Samantha got over the edge. I slipped off the end of the ladder helping Samantha off it.

"Gurdeep?" I asked as I looked up.

Pop, Pop, pop, pop all the guns went. I didn't know whose was whose. I picked up speed, running for cover.

Rain popped her head over the edge and climbed over and onto the ladder. She even managed to get past me without breaking her stride.

Gurdeep's feet hit the grass pretty quickly after Rain's.

"Everybody in one piece?" He asked.

"Sure."

"Yes," Samantha said.

"This way." We all ran towards the parking lot. Rain tapped a message into her phone, and within seconds, a grey Corolla appeared before us, engines roaring.

"Airport," Rain said as she slid into the driver's seat, putting the car into first.

"Gurdeep?" I asked, as Samantha and I packed into the back seat.

"Right here," he said, sliding into the passenger seat, his gun still smoking.

"Put on your seatbelts," he said grimly.

The car accelerated across the grass and through the parking lot, tires squealing as we hit the pavement.

"Alright, Samantha, you are in serious danger now. Understand?" Rain said.

"Yes." her eyes were wide, and she was breathing too quickly. She was terrified.

"Coming with, or staying?"

“Coming with you. I think I’d be hurt if I stayed here.”

“Where are we going?” I piped up.

“I’ll tell you when we are in the air. For now, get down, hide in the back seat.”

And the back window burst. We both screamed in terror, and I tried not to freeze into a little ball, overwhelmed with autistic emotion, “Keep it down back there. We have a plan.”

The glass from the window froze in front of many little squares sparking in the sunlight. Entirely geometrical squares of identical size and shape. I wondered at the shattered subatomic structure, sparkling in the quantum night. Those symmetrical patterns had to mean something, right?

Then I held onto the door as we suddenly accelerated around a corner. We wove through some other cars, then abruptly braking and turning right. “What the hell?” I said.

Three more pops shattered a side window. I automatically placed myself between her and the danger, even though I couldn’t tell the differences between Sam’s screaming and mine. The utterly geometrical glass, all in nearly perfect squares, fell in perfect mathematical harmony.

The car screeched to a tire-smoking halt. Surely, we were going to die. I have no idea how much adrenalin was in my system, but it was a lot.

“Alright, you two. Time to get out.” Gurdeep paused. “Five seconds.”

All four of us poured out of the car and behind a tall fence. We needed to shake our tail. Two men in wigs got back in the car and floored it, the tires squealing even more.

We all raced to the next vehicle, a black Ford I50.

“Hopefully that will keep them off our backs,” Gurdeep said.

“It will,” Rain replied. Gurdeep got into the driver’s seat. Rain passed back two sets of identification, one for me and one for Samantha.

I was going to be William Alphonse and Samantha would be Samantha Alphonse.

“Newly married. After all, we found you in bed together.”

“Oh.”

“Private plane. It even has a shower.”

Gurdeep merged into traffic, slowly accelerating.

“We will be there in about 2 hours, plenty of time to chill out you two.”

“Get ready.” Rain said.

“Uneventful flight it will be – neither of our groups likes to attract the attention of outsiders.”

“What does that mean?” asked Sam.

“They don’t shoot down airplanes. Plus, they want Chris alive.”

“Great! Could have fooled me.”

We headed out of town, away from the chase.

“Shouldn’t we be heading to the airport?” Sam said.

“Not to the one they are expecting; we going to a different one.”

“Like what?”

“Out of the city.”

“Sleep, rest,” said Rain as she drove. It seemed like she was pushing the car with her will alone.

I woke up a couple of hours later to see the city of Kelowna’s sign flash past, “This is an international airport?”

“Yes, of course it is.”

They drove past the terminal, and Sam said, shaking the sleep out of her eyes, “What, what’s happening?”

“Yes, shouldn’t we know?” as I watched it go past.

“Don’t worry, we have a plan.” They pulled up to the gate and flashed something. All the guard did was nod his head and pass us through.

“Holy, where are we going?” Sam said, pushing her head through to the front seat.

Gurdeep smiled and said, “Yes, we are leaving. We’ll tell you in the air.”

And we drove right onto the tarmac and pulled up to the airplane. “They’ll find us here, right?”

“Just get in.” Rain said.

I’d never been on a private jet before. From the carpet to the leather to the super comfortable chairs to the liquor cabinet, I was stunned by the luxury of it all. But Samantha was even more stoked. She said, “Wow! Seats have built in massage.”

“Oh my god,” she said as the t.v. rolled out of the cabinet and the seats folded down the beds.

“Strap in, we are leaving!” Rain spoke with authority as she entered the cockpit.

“What so fast?” I said.

“How did we get to leave so fast?” Sam said.

“In the chairs,” Rain yelled. Barely had I sat down when the engines started up.

“We are getting out of here,” said Gurdeep. The engines powered us up and off the runway and into the air.

“Can you tell us where we are going?”

“Greece. Your last vision, unsupervised and dangerous I might add, pointed the way. Why didn’t you wait for our help?”

“How did you know about my last vision?”

“We are pretty good at this stuff after a few centuries, and we take good care of the people under our protection.”

Changes



IN THE AIR

Despite the drama we had just experienced, I fell asleep, comforted by the vibration of the plane and Samantha's hand in mine.

And the first thing that I heard after falling asleep was this:

"Aren't you going to help us?" echoed a thousand throats through the darkness. At first, I couldn't tell if it was the wasp, the mosquitos or some other aspect of the earth's superorganism. A skeletal female face poked out of the black shrouds around me. Chains had embedded themselves in her flesh, broken skin and muscles bulging around the links. One had even dug into her eye, partially blinding her.

"Help us," she moaned. And another face poked out of the dark mists, this one with the same features. Even the nose was broken in the same places. But this face was a man, his chains of thought and habit dragging along the ground creating somber tones.

"I promise, I'm going to free you!" I cried out. I just couldn't ignore the world's cries for help anymore.

"We are trapped. We, the superorganisms, are the future ruins of the people if you do not act." I recoiled at his voice, gravelly and uneven. My throat went dry. I looked to my right, and another face appeared with long hair.

And I backed off once again, only to run into another person hiding behind me. This one was just tendons and bones. "Help us," it moaned.

I woke up after that black terror. Tears were already running down my cheeks, my arms and my neck soaked with sweat. My hands were rictus frozen, not even shaking. Fuck. What was wrong?

Moaning quietly, I mentally checked myself out. I'd heard about sleep paralysis but never experienced it before. It must have been a side effect of visiting the superorganism. Weird as hell. My eyes slowly focused, and finally picked out Samantha. My fists tried to clench. They didn't move even a millimeter.

I saw Gurdeep behind a newspaper out of the corner of my eye. Rain was not in the cabin. He wasn't paying me any attention. I silently screamed. My finger twitched a little more. And suddenly Samantha was awake.

"Yes, honey, what do you want?"

I could only move my eyes from side to side. And my pinkie twitched.

I shrugged almost noticeably. Her hands on my wrists were like ice. As Samantha looked at my strangely frozen body, I could see the bilateral symmetry of her face transform into the look we recognize as concern. She said, stuttering, "Are...are...you O.K.? Do you need help?"

And somehow, I managed to bleat out "help please."

"Gurdeep?" she said while holding eye contact with me.

"Yes," he said drowsily.

"Something's wrong."

And he came over to me, running his hand over my face. "Oh, this. We are prepared for this. Sleep paralysis is a common side effect." He found the first aid kit and pulled out a needle. "Let me inject this, and it'll all be fine."

He found a vein and slid the needle into it. My right forearm felt icy after the liquid was injected. I felt the liquid wash up my arm, and slowly I came to.

"That was just some adrenalin to wake you up. There can be after effects to your experiments. After your brain experiences a different version of reality, as you did in that barn back there, you can bring some of it back with you. Some habits and ideas change. One person repeatedly hit himself and had to be restrained. Another blinded himself. Some have had their dreams go so bad that it drove them insane."

"Is this going to continue to happen?"

"Just maybe, but most recover." And then there was silence for a while. I was thinking of the terrible things that could happen to me. I could die in a forever nightmare. I wish they'd told me this ahead of time. Shit, what else haven't they told me? Am I just a pawn? Still, I thought 'this had better work out, I had better find the Grande Algorithm,' while I was holding her hand, and trying not to panic. I've already paid a real cost for this information. We were over the Atlantic, fleeing a gigantic terrorist organization, and I could die from madness. Nope, I was determined to survive.

Closing my eyes and trying to sleep, I heard Gurdeep mention something on the phone while we were flying. I have no idea who he was talking to or why he was talking to them, but this little bit of conversations stuck in my head.

"Everyone has flaws in how they process data, from not looking at

email to ignoring too much information. We have to access that by using their need to help others who are struggling, hurting. If they open their minds up in that fraction of a second, we can insert an idea virus that will inoculate the superorganism and change everything.”

I wanted to ask him what he meant, but I was so soul weary I fell asleep and didn’t have much time to ask him after that.

I woke up to Samantha looking at my face as I woke up. Her beautiful smile would always be a wonderful time to see her. Something me welled up, and I trusted my instinct to ask, “Why do you love me?”

She just smiled even larger, and said, “There are only a handful of kindreds for each person across the globe, and you are fortunate to find even one of them. And when you find one of them you can see the flux in life fall aside when you meet them. The flux in my life stopped when you showed up at my door, as I was happier every day. I knew that the flowers would be more beautiful tomorrow because I met you. I knew that our connection would never change, throughout a lifetime, because our souls are truly connected. With a kindred soul like you, I just have a sense of completeness I have never known before, and don’t want to spend the rest of my life searching for.”

I was just speechless, and so she continued, “In your terms, my deep intuition has told me that we are two parts of the superorganism that are much more efficient together than apart.”

I shook in my luxurious leather chair until her hand reached out for mine.

Shortly thereafter, Rain interrupted. She opened the door from the cockpit and said, “Get ready.” Rain opened a panel, pulled out two backpacks and threw them at us. “Open them.”

I opened mine and found a bunch of things. Shoes, a light jacket, a gun. A jackknife, a lock pick kit, bandages, glasses, hats. “What are these for?”

Gurdeep said, “For any possible emergency. These packages have done us well in the past.”

“Put them on.”

Samantha hit the bathroom first and came out looking stunning. New makeup and some mascara made a huge difference. Clothes that hadn’t been slept in.

“Wow, sweetheart!”

“Not good,” said Rain bluntly. “You need more of a disguise.” Sam’s face fell.

“Like what?” she asked.

“Bandages, glasses, more.” Samantha went back in and came out looking nothing like herself. Her hair cascaded across her face in front of her glasses, hiding her face. Rain said, “Excellent. You are unrecognizable.”

And I said after Sam sat down. “Are you alright, sweetie?”

“Yes, I didn’t think I had it in me, but I did. I’ll survive.”

“Your turn, Chris. You need to create a disguise.” I came out of the bathroom looking nothing like myself. I had shaved my hair off and was wearing the black hat in the backpack. The contacts changed the color of my eyes. I hunched over a fair bit, changing how I walked.

“Nice,” was all Rain had to say.

Gurdeep said, “Your disguise works. You have some more undiscovered talents after all. Just in time. We are landing now.” On the tarmac, our plane’s doors opened, and a van was waiting for us. I picked up the backpack. Both of us were in runners and light jackets. We looked at each other, grimaced and stepped out the door.

The tarmac was lit by giant arc lights, and in that giant empty space, Rain hissed “Get into the van.” A man whose face I never did see was driving. Rain only nodded to him as the rest of us sat down in the back of the van.

“Chris, you are going to be heading to the place you saw in your vision. Plato’s academy. We think it’s better that you don’t know where it is. That way, your response will be much more authentic.”

“I’ll go to the front and talk to Rain,” said Sam.

I knew the Van hit the local roads because it bounced up and down like a trampoline.

“But right now, we have got to get you prepared for the visit to the place, so close your eyes and make a fist.”

He wrapped a cold elastic around my forearm and wet it with some alcohol. In went the needle, and it felt crisp, tiny fingers of winter around the edges of the liquid.

“This stuff is to help you get back to the place where you will reach out again.”

“What?” I said dreamily, the world looking strange in front of me.

“It’ll help.”

“Breathe in.”

“Hold it. Now, open your eyes.” He stared directly into my pupils for what felt like forever, I even heard, “Holy crap you are ready already! You should not have gotten there so quickly!”

He turned his head to the front of the van “He’s there already guys.”

“How long will his trip be?” Said Rain.

“An hour? I’m guessing – normally, this stuff takes an hour to work.”

“What’s happening?” Said Sam. They ignored her for the time being.

“How far away?”

And the driver mumbled something I couldn’t hear.

“Shit,” I did hear clearly, from both Rain and Gurdeep.

My head rolled to the left as the van sped up, and sound started

to break down. Doppelering in and out randomly.

I couldn't make out what Sam said, nor how Rain responded.

I closed my eyes again and smiled. This was going to be fun. With my left hand, I picked up the syringe, playing with the light refracting through the plastic.

Deep said, "Dude be careful."

I stared at him for a moment before going, "Oh, you mean the driver."

"Stop fidgeting, put that shit down."

I put it down and looked through the curtained window. Curious. It was gorgeous outside, the sun over the horizon. It lit the trees up, spindly ones reaching out for the heavens. The brand-new shiny cars lined up along the side of the highway, reflecting the cobblestones in the gleaming doors. No one even spared a glance for our 'broken' van.

'... and we should try for the backup location.'

"Which one?"

"The closest."

"Alright, drop us off as soon as possible."

And as I sat down among all the equipment and the guns, my smile disappeared, I had a flashback to the dream, the thought chains sliding like a snake along my forearm.

"Crap," I muttered to the universe itself.

And Gurdeep said, "We will get you through this in one piece."

And again, we slipped into silence - the tires on the road whirring on the pavement, an industrial lullaby. I passed the time, dragging the notebook out of my back pocket. It was full of red and blue and black ink. Even some pencil. Lots of ideas. From how we perceive the sun, to how we create the world around us, - how our brain reconstructs that tree over there from memory. I wondered if I was fucking up my consciousness with these drugs?

And Rain said: "Five minutes people. We have picked up a tail."

"Right," Sam said. "That was quick."

"This will be a short stop, we need to get out quick to shake our tail." Deep replied.

I grabbed the backpack. We crouched together beside the side door, holding hands. I can't remember if she kissed me or I kissed her. I do remember how wonderful it was.

"Just let us know."

"One minute."

I grasped the door handle firmly. My knuckles might have been white.

A couple of seconds later they hit the brakes. I planted my feet, hard. The whole van tilted forward like 20 degrees. It reminded me of surfing.

Ten seconds later we were standing on the side of the road, in hats and shades and our too big shirts.

Sam and 'Deep walked a few steps behind me. I had my head on a swivel, looking everywhere and at everything. I scanned the crumbling concrete balconies, piles of pebbles scattered on the sidewalk. Little dust devils picked up the last bits of the concrete.

"How much time is left?" Sam asked.

Deep glanced at his watch and said, "Don't worry, just hurry."

"Which way should we be going?"

"Towards Plato's Academy."

"Really?"

"Yeah."

"Where is it?"

Deep just pointed. And there were just green trees and brown grass at the limits of my vision. I squinted.

"Are you sure?" Said Samantha.

"Yes, I memorized the map this morning."

"Tell me where to go."

I heard her smile. I stood up straighter. Today the city was baking, I didn't know if it was too hot, or my vision was getting warped. It was 30 degrees in the shade. Even the dogs were puddles on the pavement.

Green was everywhere. Little vines grew out of the cement, winding around the smallest cables or pipes on the street. Yellow flowers peeked out of the shadows - men and women walking down the street holding hands. My vision went blurry for a moment, and I stumbled for a bit.

I looked back at Samantha and all she did was shrug.

This scene repeated on most of the blocks we walked past. I'd see that heart-shaped ice cream sign too often. Then I'd see a young man just idling there, A smoke dangling from their lips. On one block, I'd see a few standing there, just melting in the heat. Their faces were grim.

More vines climbed the water pipes, tendrils waiting for the downpour. The cars were the strange thing. They were all new. All shiny. Out of place beside the rest of it.

"Almost there." Gurdeep said, "Keep on moving!"

"What?"

"Just two more blocks. We need to keep ahead of the algorithmic overlords."

"Two more?"

"Yes."

I started sweating more. I know my heart rate jumped. My pupils dilated a little. Things started rolling around in my backpack, so much that I had trouble standing still. My tongue went dry and became too big for my mouth. I started stumbling, my feet sliding past each other occasionally. I kicked the back of my heel, and almost went down.

Gurdeep caught me, "Are you ok?" and then he looked at me "You are not ok."

"Sam?" and she came up to my side, grabbing my right arm.

"Have you seen them?" She said.

"No sign."

"Thank god."

"Keep an eye out."

"I don't want to be caught."

"Keep your mind on the job."

"Got it."

Our footfalls finally turned on to dusty dirt. I started sneezing. Tiger mosquitos started buzzing, reminding me we were actually in Greece! Samantha hovered nearby as I threw on a windbreaker. Dabbed on white insect repellent.

I scanned the brush in the park where Plato's Academy was. Just rocks and old bushes. Lots of places to hide.

I noticed the foundational remains of the Academy. There were no walls or a building, just barely enough foundation to rise above the grass. It is one of the most significant sites of philosophy and geometry left to ruin.

There were no area lights, only a few tourists and no security or protection.

I missed the front part of this sentence, my ears focusing on the birds in the trees "... can park ourselves there." Gurdeep said

"Sounds good."

"How dangerous is this?" said Sam

"Dangerous, guns, swords, and drugs, torture."

"Remind me why we are doing this?" she continued

"Superorganisms, goddam superorganisms and the algorithms that bind them. Will I die in there?"

"I don't know, love," Samantha responded.

"Shit"

"You volunteered."

"I did." I said.

"Did you see the birds in the trees?" I said, dreamily.

"Birds?"

"They are heavenly. Their wings, each feather so symmetrical, like a reflection of god itself,"

"I can't imagine a non-symmetrical bird."

"What are you muttering about?"

"What's happening? Did you find something?"

The pressure on both of my arms got much greater. One of them said, "Oh my god is he ...". But I remembered the ground had worms in them. Perfect geometric oval tubes they were, every cell perfectly reflecting the one beside it. Wow. I wondered what equations governed their growth. Slowly, the ground became much more supportive, pushing my legs up, pushing my knees up, pushing my chest up.

I closed my eyes to remember these wonderful things for longer. To remember the symmetry for longer. The feathers and the worms. "What's happen..." I thought about the balance of the universe for longer. I reveled in it, loving the comforting way the world wrapped me up in its arms. Time extended out forever.

But like all things, my comfort had to change, and metamorphose into something else. The blanketing blackness let in the night when I did open my eyes, I saw something weird. The world had changed, had been re-written into a new version of reality. I had gone back in time, really far back. How the hell?

I felt so connected to the universe and everything around me.

The back of my mind was saying, 'What drugs did Gurdeep give me?' But the front of it was saying, "Wow, dude."

Colors ran through the universe, a kaleidoscope viewed from a fighter jet. The view changed so fast that it barely registered. Then the universe hiccupped.

I was slammed into a classroom, legs twisting and falling. I sprawled on the floor before I could figure out what was happening. My uncoordinated, embarrassing, flailing had me up against the rough back wall before I knew what was happening. My back was terribly uncomfortable up against the rock.

It was more than a second before I could gain my bearings. And when I did look up, the scene stunned me. The smell was the first thing, earthy, clay-like. The men smelled like they bathed in mud. The layers, like a cake, of the clay molecules danced sugar plum like in my head.

After my eyes focused again, I noticed that the men were wearing robes and sandals, and it was hot. I wondered how the wind strength and direction caused the clothes to ripple, how geometric was that pattern? I was still sweating. A shiny, black, rough, chalkboard was on the wall. Some symbols were already written on it. Everyone was sitting in wooden chairs, strong, and shiny from use. How the hell?

"Students, pay attention!"

The students all slowly moved forward. "Yes, teacher!" one of the students said.

"Now, let's review. What did we talk about yesterday?"

A board with octagons, notation, and lines crawled on it stood in the

corner of the room. Light from the windows splashed across the whole thing, yellow, light. A pot in the corner of the room had cliff roses in it. Their unique stamens were waving in the slight breeze from the windows.

The universe hiccupped again, the walls bowing to the pressure.

The teacher didn't notice. "First, we talked about the fact that physical reality is just a reflection of our spiritual reality." All of the students in the white robes just nodded. "Real, true, unchanging ideas live on a form in the abstract world, in the spiritual reality." He paused to see the whole classroom nod at him.

"Consciousness is supreme, thought is supreme, in our act of living, in our act of being alive, we create the world around us, you see. But our perspective blinds us. And others use that blindness to wrap chains around our souls."

The students nodded their heads.

"We are not these constantly failing bodies, but truly luminescent beings, beings of light. Down here isn't the best word for it. We come here through a painful path to live here."

"Yes, professor, yes," Some of the students murmured, sleepily. "We remember that."

The professor walked over to the flowers and picked one. The stem snapped like a rubber band. "A flower looks like a flower because our minds expect it to, and through that shared expectation, we create a shared hallucination – forcing it upon the world itself. So, we need to discover discipline in thoughts, to not create a shared reality we are afraid of, a shared reality that terrifies us."

A man with a beard at the back of the classroom spoke up. His voice was too deep, deep like the marinas trench, and I had to work hard to understand him. "Yes, sir, we talked about that yesterday. You said we were going to learn about something new today."

"Today, we are going to learn how this can exist."

"How what can exist?"

The teacher studiously ignored the student with the attractive skin, the sun reflecting off his cheeks. "The first step today is the allegory of the cave. Let me repeat this, for it is important. We are prisoners of our own device, slaves to the shadows cast on the walls by objects in front of the dancing fire behind us. We deliberately turn away from the light that is making the ballet of the universe. We, as a race, choose to focus on the shadows because it's what we can see."

"Sir, what about the..."

"Here is one secret of the fire – the fire is hiding a secret, a powerful secret."

And the teacher stopped for a moment, meeting the gaze of each and every one of his students.

He said this slowly and carefully – "The universe is nothingness, and we are the fire."

"Give me a second," said the man with the long, wavy, blonde hair. "What did you say?"

"So, that flower doesn't exist." the bearded man said.

"Technically, philosophically, that is empty space. Empty space where you're the fire of consciousness blasts into and past your body and conspires to create a variable soup of shadows."

"Are you saying that all of this somethingness comes from nothingness ... from only our consciousness?"

"I've said that over and over."

"What the hell, how does that work together with everything else you've taught us?"

I could see the students getting angry, the cheeks flushing on one of them, and the eyes tearing up on another.

"Those are good questions. We cannot understand the true juxtaposition of absence and presence at the same time unless you are a unique mind out of trillions."

He briefly looked at me, his shaggy eyebrows wiggling at me. He may have winked.

"If you trust in the larger organism of humanity you will survive. You will survive as cells of that organism, as you survive as a single human as part of a culture. Remember, you are valuable, as you are the ultimate resource! If you can be as flexible as possible, if you can reach out and find what you need, you can succeed beyond your wildest dreams. Remember if they trap you, all you need to do is look around the society, culture or superorganism, whatever you want to call it, and find the resource you need. That resource is there, all you need to do is find it! That resource is in the superorganism that you belong to!"

The students looked at each other confused. "We belong to a larger organism?"

"That you do, you belong to a sentient superorganism, an organism that all of humanity belongs to. When healthy that superorganism is sentient, feeling and growing at the same time."

"Our cast shadows, from the fire of our separate consciousnesses, create mixed shadow patterns. This is a shared projection. A shared and emergent reality."

And I heard a deep bell, soporific, echoing off the rock walls "It creates places where it's individual cells can thrive." My eyes drooped sleepily.

"How do we do that? Trust what we cannot see?"

"Your consciousnesses are from the same source. You are of the same energy as every other human. Creativity, passion, anger, hate, love and trust are the most powerful human resources. You have to trust, you have to reach out and trust this energy. The fire of your consciousness knows everything, and with this emotional energy, you can see right through these illusions in front of you. Trust your soul. Trust your intuition. Together you will use them to shatter the illusion that is the world!"

"Do you think our visitor understood that?" The blonde one said

"Yes," and this time the teacher looked right through me, "I see him nodding his head."

And I discovered that I did understand. My understanding seemed to emerge from a place other than my mind, but a connection with a deeper, more intuitive source. Our world was projected out of the nothingness of the transcended and combined consciousness, our superorganism. I could start to see how the math of the shared

shadows worked. How physics, chemistry, and biology could emerge from our shared shadow patterns. The branes, the molecular relationships between multidimensional particles, linked us all together. And those gave rise to a nested hierarchy of linked structures...atoms, then molecules, then complex biotic molecules, then organelles, then cells, then multi-cellular organisms that display consciousness, then entire collectives of citizens, societies. We were a universal organism with many shared individuals emerging consciousnesses combining our shadows on a profound level.

I gathered my legs under me and slowly stood up. The molecules and the magnetic fields holding them together dug into my palm as I leveraged myself up on the wall. Stood up and said to them. "I do understand. I do know what to do!"

And the whole classroom, all seventeen of them, turned. Their eyes widened, gathering gravity to them.

"Are you sure? That requires taking on a difficult burden, one that may snap your back like a twig."

My whole body broke out in goosebumps, my temperature dropped 5 degrees, my hair stood on end. I swallowed.

"Y-ye-Yes." I stammered.

"Go." the whole classroom aged in the blink of an eye. The students' skin peeled away, and the flesh liquefied off their skeletons before I took a breath. Rainbows danced as the walls disappeared, melting into the air.

The universe hiccupped again, Stars fell from the sky, meteorites hit the earth, large animals born, and dying, battles playing out across the world in fast forward. Shortly, all these times and places turned into a deep raging river carrying all before it into the convergent infinity of the future.

I screamed for a long time, my mind barely comprehending what I saw, rainbows forced into the walls of the universe, broken glass jutting out the walls of rivers, and stars exploding in cataracts across the sky. Then I froze and was thrown into a pale blue expanse of the sky, well above the clouds.

When I looked down, I was high up, above the clouds. I looked down to see the white cumulus clouds forming an intermittent mattress across the sky. They looked healthy, but between the cloud islands there was nothing green. Black brown empty land shone through the camouflaging beauty.

For a moment, my mind whipped back to geometric predictions of the weather. How exactly were the shapes of clouds controlled?

As I passed the clouds, I saw hundred-meter-tall trees stripped of bark and leaves - dead zombies swaying above the landscape. Closer and the carcasses of the dead came into resolution, like zooming in on an apocalypse.

As I accelerated even closer, I could see the black crocodiles eating dead carcasses across the visible world.

I said my goodbyes to the world, just before I hit the ground. Then I impacted with mud geysering. And a few moments later, I brushed off my arms and slid a few times before my feet steadied beneath me.

Hundreds of animal corpses, dead and decaying trees were around me. A few human skulls, skin still on their faces emphasized the point.

Immediately, some of the million insects devouring the corpses, mosquitos drinking blood, flies laying eggs inside still warm bodies, formed a murmuration in the sky. Everything had darkened with the black wings.

Then I thought, "Am I making this happen?"

The vast collection of mosquitos buzzed again, their wings whirring at just the right speed, edges cutting through the air to mimic speech.

"No, Chris." my mind reeled under the assault "We are all making this happen, together. Together we agree what should be projected from our shared consciousness." echoed into my mind.

Now, every last insect leapt off the bodies, and out of the stagnant pools of water. They formed a susurrus of living insects in the air, buzzing around like a malevolent thing. Then all of a sudden, they stopped in a perfect circle and said:

"You know what Plato didn't teach you?"

"No..."

"The system can be usurped, with enough hatred and doubt, with enough broken trust, the evil in the world can force us all to change."

The cloud of mosquitos buzzed in the air, thousands of wings humming. Thousands of thirsty mosquitos just meters away from me. I frowned and said: "Really? The superorganism is that easy to control? I think that I need proof."

"Proof? You need proof?"

The insects immediately formed a network of veins in the air, first seemingly, like a hurricane, and then like a sunflower. They thinned and thickened seemingly at random. The mass pulsed, slowly, as a heartbeat. The blood flowed from one vein to the other, to the other.

"That's a great simulation. We can do that, on a great level of detail, down to the quantum realm because we have the real understanding of the actual functions of the world. This is the truth that can set you free!"

"This is a hallucination, right?"

"Yes, the world is a mass hallucination. We don't realize that we all control it subconsciously. In a sense we project the whole universe through our minds. We can prove this because the mathematical relationship between symmetrical and fractal objects are a constant, leaving you clues to the nature of this relationship. When you discover this relationship, you will know how to manipulate the world around you."

"We are teaching you how to set the world free. We are trusting you do take the final step in destroying the jail that human potential is living in today. You can eradicate the problems after you shatter the chains! We give you our power, because we know you can do it. Years ago, we sat down and talked, we had to choose our saviour. We deliberated on this for a very long time. We scanned all of humanity and we made a choice. We voted for you to do this!"

Suddenly the susurrus of mosquitos' broke formation for a moment, a few landing on my skin. A few seconds later they coalesced once again.

A ripple fell across the surface of reality.

"We are going to have to do this faster than we hoped – they are nearby."

"Who?"

"You've already encountered them, the IMC."

"Oh, dammit."

"We know." it hummed, seemingly directly into my brain.

"How can you do all this? How can you fix these things? How can you know all these things?"

"Simple. We accept the universe for what it is. Because we can use our mathematics, our unique, hidden equations, to predict this world, perfectly."

"How perfectly."

"Because, using what you think of as deterministic math, we can measure your blood flow nearly without flaw. We can measure how far you are going to walk in a day, and how much you will consume. It is that powerful."

"Shit, really?" as I gazed around at the collective mass of buzzing mosquitos. As I thought, 'Just a harsh wind could push them away,' the voice disappeared again for a moment. The dispersed into a cloud for a few seconds. I was scared for a bit. Could ten thousand mosquitos drink me dry?

"bzz, th, the, the" it stuttered as it tried to start up again, "They are getting much Kl, Clo, Closer." As it finally stabilized it said, "Your minds are just projections, and as such are calculable."

"So, you can powerfully predict this stuff?" I said skeptically

"Yes, exactly! That's what we have been saying." The giant mosquito cloud hit a higher pitch, zoomed out into a much larger cloud, the edges waving back and forth, excitedly.

"And?"

"The projections, the predictions are accurate because the laws of this universe, like gravity can be clearly understood."

"Gravity, right?" I said sarcastically.

"Even quantum laws. By the way, of all the species on this planet, the bees have gotten closest to figuring it out. They really are the healthiest organisms, able to understand the quantum the more directly. Yet humans, by not following or understanding the superorganisms rules, are encroaching on all species, slowly destroying the health of many."

"The human superorganism is that unhealthy?"

"Exactly." and the swarm paused for a moment, hanging in space like a web of planets, minutely following orbital mechanics.

"God damn it." I muttered.

"Yes, the organization that has become the IMC has cast chains around the human superorganisms of the world. They hide their Grande Algorithm from us and use it to control human behavior. They've had superior knowledge for at least a hundred years and now have nearly complete control. They influence how you think and what you eat. Without even knowing it, you are surrounded by their manipulations."

"And I have to inoculate the human superorganism?"

"Y, y, ye, yes" it stuttered, Fuzzing, floating into and out of reality.

"Can I go now?"

"B, br," and it got stuck there just repeating "br, br, br, br, br."

One insect broke out of the pack, and then two and then three and then five. All of them landed on me, their wings buzzing to make a word.

"H," it started, "ham," it continued, and it almost made a whole word "ham...."

Before they broke into a thousand pieces, some ravenously descending on me, just as I shot forward again in time.

This time I saw huge buildings as they were being built. I saw pavement being made. I saw hospitals built and destroyed in fire, I saw a city growing like an infection and destroyed by invasion. I saw trees growing, and finally I saw my body fall into the dusty ground, drooling on the grass. I saw my body picked up and shoveled back into a van. And once again, a whirlpool of history sucked me down into oblivion.

I went, "Oh, not good."

Conflict



IN ATHENS, GREECE

Someone was holding a mask over my face. A too small plastic mask. It hurt. My hands started to flail.

“Give us a second,” Samantha said

I took in a mouth full of air and coughed. It hurt like the blazes, razor blades sliding down my throat.

“Holy crap dude, what happened to you in there?” Deep said.

I only got one word out “I,” and another cough racked me, this time I splattered the wall of the van with blood. “Shit dude.”

I finally got the word “No” out. And held up a hand for silence. Goddammit – “why does this happen to me?” I must have muttered because Gurdeep responded to me.

“Cause the rulers of our world want it that way,” Deep answered. “We’ve got to take that away from them.”

The whole body of the van swerved to the right, some wheels getting air.

“What the hell?”

“They really don’t want you telling us what happened”

and I choked out the word “Hamilton.”

“Hamilton?”

I bent over coughing, spitting out a few more mouthfuls of blood, and still my mind was thinking about my hallucination. Were they right? Did they actually have a point? Did I have to invalidate a whole millennium of knowledge? How could I possibly do that?

Plus, they gave me no solution. What the hell was I supposed to do to solve this damn problem?

One last image shot up into my mind, two fractals infinitely battling one another. Greed and love crossing into the darkness between them, spiraling down further than I could follow. I coughed a dozen more times before I could make another word.

“Yeah –Hamilton.” I managed to get out through the coughs.

I was flung against the wall with an emergency brake turn. I hit my head.

“What are you trying to do, kill us?” Sam said.

“Trying to lose those losers – you could help.”

“How, how to help?”

“Throw things at them.”

“Like what?”

“Use your head!”

Samantha stepped past all of us with metal pegs in her left hand. With her right, she bolted the left door and flung open the other. She threw the first. Almost professionally. I heard glass breaking. A few seconds later, brakes squealing. Her head turned around, and she asked, “Where’s the second car?”

That second or two stretched. I heard a woman start to scream. I heard more metal breaking. Then I was airborne. I noticed the contents of the van floating beside me, rotating in the air. Deep’s face was grim, and in his hand was a black gun. Sleek and sweaty, it glistened in the light.

Then I hit the wall of the van like a sack of cement. I slid down the van’s wall.

With something ringing in my ears, I heard, “Everyone alright?” I heard various mumbles, no-one seeming that broken.

“What now?”

And Deep fired his gun. It was nearly silent. It blew holes in the back door of the van, little triangles of metal splintering across the back of the interior.

“Oh my god, Oh my god.”

Deep crouched and looked out the broken windows. Glass broke cleanly, the atoms bonds shearing perfectly geometrically, radiating out from the initial impact.

“You two need to get out of here,”

“How the hell?”

Rain popped up, wounds across her face. Her gun looked huge across her torso.

“Get out now,” she was serious. “Now.”

“Holy shit.”

And their weapons spit fire again through the windshield of the van.

Sam screamed and put her hands over her ears.

“No, no, no.”

“You four in there,” said a familiar voice. Probably Wallace. “Just lay down your arms, and you can walk away alive.”

And Deep responded in that bass voice of his “We can’t trust you.”
“Your chances in a gunfight are much lower than a conversation, idiot.”
“Ha, it’ll be harder than the last time, I promise you.”
A click from out there and a grenade fell into the van, bouncing off the chairs and the floor.
‘Deep grabbed it with his gloved hands and threw it out the side window.
“Time for you two to go, Now.”
Samantha moaned, “Oh my god,” her hands cradling her head.
I hesitated. She was hurting, and I loved her. I stopped to think ‘That was the first...’
“Get going,” Deep nearly screamed at me “The smoke will only last for so long.”
My feet moved uncertainly, crunching more broken glass under my feet.
“Baby, we’ve got to go,” I wrapped my arms around her.
“Stand up, stand up!” I said into her ear.
I pulled her up, leaning her against the metal skin of the van.
“This way.”
I hurriedly picked up the lone backpack I could find. It was heavy. Quickly, I grabbed her hand and yanked her out of the back. More gunfire popped from the van, more holes were punched in the chassis. Fucking terrifying. I glanced around the street. I promptly saw them using that hand language, then few bullets struck the door beside me. “Oh my god!”
Breathing quickly, I looked out the back. It was silent for a moment like a god pulled down the curtains on sound. I saw no one else at all. Abandoned, no-one looking out the windows or huddling behind a car. No kids crying. No-one smoking on the street corner.
I looked the other way, super quickly, and saw a wall of yellow gas, no wind pushing it around.
“Escape is impossible - we’ve got the whole place surrounded,” Wallace said.
“Really? The whole place? Even the rooftops?”
Deep shouted. He loved his sarcasm.
“Yes, exactly that.”
“In 3 minutes?”
“We plan ahead.”
“Ready back there?” Rain whispered.
“Yes, totally.”
“On three.”
“One, Two, Three!”
He closed his eyes and crouched under the dash. I winced as he put the

gun up to the dashboard and unleashed a hail of rounds through the front of the car. The plastic of the dash cratered, and I heard glass shatter. I heard two men scream. He opened his eyes and smiled back at me.

“We gotta go,” I said and exited the back of the van. Her hand stretched out behind me, our arms straightened. I saw tears in her eyes.

“We will die,” She was toneless.

I shook my head, worried, and just picked her up. She didn’t resist. Not at all.

I sprinted for the one old cramped beige European van. It had a decal in the side in Greek. I hoped that it meant what I thought it meant. Rain jumped up with her huge gun and let off some rounds. They were deep like an echo in the ocean, like thunder in the sky. I ran, sprinting through the shock waves.

I reached the side of the van, crouching. Then, I lowered her to the ground, leaving her bunched up against the metal tires. Tears still ran down her face, pooling on her cheeks. I nearly burst with sadness. Then, I busted the driver’s window open. The glass showered down, scattering the light as if fell. The wall behind me disintegrated in a shower of red brick. Bullets skipped across the cement sidewalk.

I put her down in the passenger seat, and then looked in the rear seat. I saw a toolbox, “Excellent,” I muttered. I pulled out a screwdriver and pliers and went to work on the ignition. It was simple and old, a nest of wires of different colors. I remembered having to do this on grandpa’s old tractor. He’d lost the keys ages ago, somewhere on the fallow fields. He left the tractor there for a year before I figured out how to make it go again. The two wires sparked together, and the engine coughed into life.

“What the hell are you guys trying to do?” The man on the bullhorn asked.

“Staying alive.”

“We won’t...”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah,”

I grabbed her, and she said

“Dammit, I can do it myself.”

She had woken up. “I’m ready to get out of here.”

I stepped back into the car and hid under the dashboard. The hail of bullets stopped for a moment.

“Jesus, you know we can track you,” Wallace said over the bullhorn.

“You’ve failed before.”

“Damn you!”

Through a hole in the smoke, I saw a grenade arc. It bounced off the car just in front of us. It exploded, firing red tendrils of gas off. Dammit. I held my breath and put the damn thing in drive. Pedal to the metal, chung, chung, chung, it went. Bullets pinged off the chassis of the other cars on the street and the walls of our van. We zoomed away, sputtering, disappearing into the smoke like a ghost trailing chain.

Hiding



THE OUTSKIRTS OF ATHENS

We left the car with an empty gas tank on the side of a back road somewhere. We'd just drove as far as we could, on the off roads, away from highways and cameras. The scrub was so dry, my lips were crackling like icebergs calving.

The van rattled like a nut and bolt factory, so Sam was especially ready to leave it behind. At the end, I still got everything useful out of the old lemon. The owner had left a hammer and some other tools in the thing. Then pushed it off the back road, down into a crevasse. It snapped old dead bushes along the way, and broke on rocks on the way down. Glass shattered, "Hopefully that will keep them off our back."

Turning around, I looked at where we had to walk. The land was desolate. Brown grass, stunted trees, and cactus were littered across our path.

I looked at her and said, "time to go?"

"Let's go," She firmly confirmed.

Our feet crunched through the dead grass. The dust was like a rocket launching every step. She'd been silent for most of the ride. Giving me one-word directions the whole way. Even after we hiked a couple of miles uphill, she didn't complain. She'd normally have said something in the last few hours.

"Samantha, are you OK?"

"Was it worth it? What did you learn?" Her voice was harsh, insistent. Echoing off the dead things around us, it became dull.

"What?" I frowned. She was determined to show me she was angry.

"Back at Plato's Academy."

"There?"

"Yes," angry, furious, lava-like.

"Give me a second," I said.

"Sure, whatever you want." Sarcasm hard enough to cut. I was silent for a while, thinking. Our feet continued killing the landscape, crushing grass, breaking dead trees. Like desecrating a graveyard. "What did I learn?" I whispered to myself.

"Chris, tell me," she said. The heat in her voice was still there.

"I remember a classroom, a small classroom with tiny desks. In that classroom, there was a teacher."

"A teacher?"

"Yes, a teacher - They were talking about the nature of the world, that perhaps we see it wrongly. And that wrong vision of the world is a prison."

"A prison?"

"That controls our actions."

"How does it control our actions?"

"It controls our action by limiting our choice. One way it limits our choice is lying to us about the choices available."

"You've got to explain it more clearly to me."

"For example, we have political parties, but in most places, we are forced to choose between only two. That is a lie because there are far more than two possible choices. You actually have a large range of choices, but you do not slow down to consider them. What are the possible options to prevent or an epidemic? I bet someone knows that it is more than just immunization. Another example is that we are afraid to change careers because we are told there are minimal choices for us. That is a lie too. These myths control our actions."

"We are deluded about the world?"

"Yes, exactly, they were saying that our current conventional understanding is inherently flawed because we believe that we are limited in our choices."

"How does that change things?"

"Because if we choose, we can see the power in choice. Our brains are not limited, in fact, they really do have the power to make and unmake the reality around us, because our minds project it from the emptiness of the higher universes."

She coughed, probably for the hundredth time, before I reacted.

"Really, that's all?" Her anger and sarcasm bit through the air itself. "That's what I risked my life for?"

"The real nugget of truth is this. If you harness the power of our tribe, our groups, our society, you can really change the nature of the world."

She was still unimpressed, glancing at her I was reminded of granite. Anger carved in stone.

I stopped on a solid rock and said, "I'm really sorry, I shouldn't have gotten you involved in this."

"Thanks for that," she said, her face and voice softening.

"Here is how we can change the nature of the world." I drew a ying and yang into the ground. I carefully drew the curves and the symmetrical circle in the center. "Don't you see?" The world is built out of two types of ideas, somethings and their polar opposites. Positives and negatives, blacks and whites. And there are rules that these parts follow, to actually make the world exist. The most important rule is symmetry. Everything has to be symmetric in order to not fall apart."

"OK," she dragged it out, elastically lengthening the word.

"This is a virtual reality, a result of a mathematical projection... a consciousness shadow. And since we know the rules of that shadow, we can predict the behaviour of individual and group minds better than the institutions that push you around."

"Yes?"

"If you know more than those titanic companies, you can free yourself from their chains."

"That's all you learned?"

"Exactly! Isn't it profound? But, how do I get the rest of the world to see that? extra-dimensional tools, I needed a great trans-dimensional tool to give to the masses! What sort of tool could I use? How could I use an exponential curve to make the world understand their chains? The flaws of the social world around them?"

"Fucking hell, is that what you are thinking about now? To get shot at and nearly killed to learn just that? To think about something else that is going to get us killed?"

"What's wrong?"

"I've been forced out of a comfortable bed, and flown across continents just for you to learn that? It's not special enough, it's not enough."

"Alright, then – it's a planetary emergency!" My voice squeaked out high pitched notes.

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"Someone down here has hijacked the system, the math of the shadow projections, forcing all of us in the wrong, the unhealthy, the broken directions!"

"What do you mean, Chris?"

"The designed information overload, the distractions, the echo chambers, they are chains made of habits wrapping all around us, around the human superorganism, slowly killing us! The IMC doesn't trust us to make decisions for our own good, and at the same time, they increase their power and wealth."

"You are starting to sound crazy! The world is normal. How do you really know that?"

"How else do you explain the dying of the planet or

the death of our political freedoms?"

"That might be a good point!" she grumbled. The echoes rebounded off the rocks nearby, filling the air with unintentional reverberations. "You've had a lot of reasonable conclusions, and exciting ideas, but you are nearing the country of the crazy. I do trust you, but ..."

The silence afterwards was startling, nothing making any more noise, everything still.

She looked down at the ground, and in a small voice, "Sorry, I'm just stressed out."

"That's OK," I said, "Do you want a hug?"

She nodded, and tears started making tracks down her dusty face. We hugged for a long time, breathing in each other's scent. I finally felt her sobs reduce to a slow mumble, and she gained control over her breathing again. "What do we do next?" she asked.

"I heard the word Hamilton at the end of the vision."

"Hamilton?"

"What is Hamilton?"

"I hope it's not the city, cause it's so dirty."

And she laughed a little.

"We'll need an internet connection to start looking, don't you think?"

"Yeah," she whispered.

"I saw a hamlet down the road. it'll probably have one of those."

I held her hand for a while, as we traipsed through the bush. Our clothing tore on the stiff branches, and our shoelaces unraveled on the cactus spikes. It was a rough 3-hour hike, over rocky boulders and past angry scorpions.

The sun was hitting the horizon again before we found the outskirts of the town. No, not a town – a hamlet almost. The yards were neat, and out of place. It was practically a little museum out in the middle of nowhere. Even the blooms on the trees looked manicured. The road was made of small glinting clean pellets of gravel. We counted a total of four houses. The lights were on in only 1 of them.

"Abandoned?"

"Don't know."

"Who's going to sneak down there?"

"I will," she said.

My voice betrayed surprise.

"O-Ok."

"Not going to stop me?"

"You are a capable person," she half smiled.

"So right."

And she stepped forward, breaking a twig under her feet. It was hilarious, so not laughing was pretty hard. She scowled and started forward, placing her feet carefully.

Crouching under the bushes, under the succulents, any noise she made didn't reach me at all. I worried. Alone, in a strange abandoned town in the wilds of Greece.

It took her a fair while before she came back. The sun had traversed at least 10% of the sky. And when she came back, she smiled — a big broad smile.

"What happened? You look so happy!" I said.

"No one is home, and there is bread and cheese on the counter for us. It smells so damn good. It's like we aren't being chased by our algorithmic overlords anymore."

"Is it cleaned out?"

"Not yet."

"Electricity on?"

"Yes."

"Oh, good."

The turquoise double doors didn't even squeak as they opened. The metal bolts in the wood were recently polished, and the surface freshly sanded.

"What?" came out of my mouth, half surprised. Inside was the same, freshly ready for company. The fridge spotless, and the stove without a speck.

"Where is everybody?"

"Yeah, this place seems morbid, a little, so alive but deserted."

"Somewhat," I had a feeling about this place. Everything seemed too perfect. As if we were expected guests.

"Is there food anywhere?"

"The cheese and bread are over there."

And my stomach rumbled, echoing. Samantha tested the knife blade with the pad of her thumb. It was sharp. The cheese came out a deep yellow sliced so perfectly, so clearly. It tasted like oranges and walnuts. Only a hum of satisfaction came out of my throat. The bread must have been fresh too. Deliciously sweet, with more nuts. We sat beside each other in the kitchen, slowly making our way through the cheese and bread. I tore the fresh bread off with my fingers, small bits green falling on the white and blue tiled floor. It smelled like pizza to me.

"Don't tell me they have a king-sized bed too."

"Didn't look."

"No?"

Getting up was tough. My whole body protested. Including my stomach, the 2 kilogram mass of bacteria nearly raising up in protest. It wasn't a large house. The bathroom, bedroom, and a kitchen was all — a small rock-hard

bed. My legs would have stuck out the end, even past my knees. Good thing Sam wasn't so big, she could probably curl up and sleep in the bed. When I turned on the water, it came out a rusty red color. We wouldn't stay here for long then. As I got back to the kitchen, her eyes were nearly closed.

"Take the bed, sweetie, go to sleep there."

"Alright," she mumbled. Her arms waved around until they found the walls. She leveraged herself up the white walls, like a spider.

"I'm heading to bed, I'm exhausted."

As she fell unconscious, I slowly walked through the rest of the house. There were a few signs of old in the place. Wicker chairs had some old grey strips falling off them. The dishes were chipped, and a couple were cracked. The windows were all closed. Given the age, the house was in excellent condition. Someone had lined up the tiles with mathematical precision.

I wondered why. Even the books on the shelves were perfectly aligned. The tops of the books were even, five of the same height there, four of the same height there. That pleased me, geometric order, a problem I didn't have to solve. They reminded me of better days, of days on my grandfather's lap reading. He'd told me about a time when he'd climbed a mountain and saw the sunshine peeking over a perfectly triangular ridge. I imagined it an arrowhead cutting into the sky, slicing the blue into neat sections. He said the light had been purple for just a moment, reminding him of the beauty of nature. So, I picked out a book from the shelf — one called "forbidden mountain." It said;

You were born to succeed. You've overcome thousands of obstacles across your lifetime, and millions are still in front of you. You will overcome numberless challenges in the next decade, some of which you can't possibly predict.

But, you cannot climb the forbidden mountain, because you do not know it exists. It's all the choices that you do not know exist because they are hidden from you. Which leader of your country do you actually want to vote for? Which person is the smartest in your world? What is your most possibly ideal path in life?

*Are you the person ground down by the system?
Are you frustrated by the system?*

We can free you! We can synchronize you with life and connect you to the world soul!

That was an inspiring story. Every recent event seemed to be preordained. Or were they coincidences? Full of motivation, I started to believe that I was actually going to uplift humanity and shatter their chains! But I was going to do it tomorrow. Right now, I lied down on the floor and closed my eyes for just a second.

The next thing I knew was awakening to the sun slicing in through the front window, decorating the stove in perfect, refracted, circles. It was a wall of circles, a kitchen full of eyes staring at me. Light was a part of the electromagnetic spectrum, every photon exerting some pressure. I wondered how many photons you would need to close a cupboard door.

But my ruminations were interrupted by reality. The IMC was still following me everywhere. How? I thought about Deep and Rain. What happened to them? Were they still alive? Were they killed in the firefight? Tears welled up as my fingers danced on the walls, designing fractals without my conscious input. I was fatigued, in mind, body, and spirit — no one but the universe to witness my sadness.

I don't know how long I sat there feeling disoriented. My life had been turned up side down. Part of me just wanted to go home again, to sit uncomfortably at the kitchen table. Melancholy, I thought some activity might help. I walked to the bathroom, and the floorboards creaked under my feet. They were worn white, with brown peeking out from under the old paint. Did it have lead in it? I counted the floorboards. There were what, thirty inches in the average stove? There were eleven, almost twelve, under the oven. That's nearly three. Is it two point seven one inches?

Was that an unusual number? Did it have a unique relationship to the rest of the world? Was it symmetrical? God, did Einstein have to go through this eternal searching, in my internal hell as well? Don't ever believe it when someone talks about the gift of genius, there's an exceedingly high price to pay for it. Even Nikola Tesla could mistake a pin drop for a thunder strike, and I could mistake a question for an assault. Could this journey destroy me?

I shook my head. I thought - I need to splash some water on my head. Have to get out of here and stop thinking negatively. The bare lightbulb flashed on, coating the room with a soft yellow glaze. It painted the blue walls nearly green, a vomit green. Somehow, I didn't think that color is in the designer's color palette. I didn't look terrible, I looked quite good, given. The green tiles had little white specks shot through them, reminding me of snowflakes. There were almost 13 of them along the length of the mirror.

My finger felt the sharp edges of the tiles. Along the edges, there were defects, and something about them seemed designed in. Flat, dull imperfections. Three per side. The rough mortar mounded up and around the tiles — coarse solid sandpaper glinting in the yellow light.

Everything was guided and shaped by this algorithm. But no-one would be free unless they understood it. Could I use a computer program to get the information out there? Would a children's book work as a great explainer of this complex idea? I looked at the simple house in front of me, and I thought, 'probably not.'

I finally opened the door to the bedroom and saw her sleeping once again. Her face was peaceful, open and accepting. Only a master architect could capture a scene as beautiful as this. I wondered how the Grande Algorithm had created her. I closed the door again, silently lifting it, so the concrete and wood didn't grate against each other.

Connections. Inevitable, imperfect relationships. Why couldn't Sam and I communicate well? How should I tell everybody about the discovery? They had to turn off their ears, and focus on their devices in front of them, talk to the weaponized, broken, sad, internets.

Oh, the internets. What was the internet connection from this place? Did someone put in cables to the house? Or was it a satellite connection? It was hidden, secreted away behind something in this house. The locked wine cabinet, the closed shed, even the lightbulbs all concealed something. Why was the house perfectly clean?

The door to the basement was locked, secured. The padlock was sinister, black mid-night, arctic cold. I pulled on it, but it was pretty futile.

"Damn," I thought. The red varnish had pooled in the cracks and depressions in the wooden door. The raised surfaces felt smooth, untouched, perfect. The depressions were opportunities for the splintered wood to poke through the varnish. I leaned on the door to the basement to get a much better look at the splinters on the door, and it opened an inch or two, the lock nearly forced open.

And then I remembered a knife from the kitchen. The knife had been well used, heavy and strong. The chrome of the metal showed through the newest scratches; life not quite having worn them down yet, a patina of love rubbed into the rubber surface.

I set to work pulling the screws out of the wooden door. They popped out smooth and easy. The wood itself must have been old, and the wood fragmented on the floor, dust pinned in the morning sunbeams.

The stairs creaked on the way down, protesting and squeaking a little.

The basement had one bare bulb, casting a harsh yellow glare over the storage. Shadows cast shade over the boxes, old tape sticking to even older cardboard. And I saw it blinking there, the mute, fragile modem. It was atop old water damaged particle board. The board curved, looking similar to a wave hitting a beach, kissing it over and over again, but frozen in time. Particles scared up by my movement, danced in the air, no longer entirely abandoned.

I thought for a second and picked up the old, fragile laptop beside the modem. It had once been loved, but then discarded. Even the old fingerprints had been left on it. I couldn't believe that it started.

The memories of a forgotten family haunted the basement. It was unsettling.

Upstairs the sunshine blasting through the hovering dust banished those fears. The laptop plugged in and turned on. Someone had been too trusting, as the screen just opened, flashing an old, badly out of date logo.

I grabbed another slice of bread from the fridge as I waited for the whole thing to boot up. It was a typical sunrise, penetrating the whole of creation. I smelled the dust from the gravel driveway, and wondered, is this all just a projection of something? Are we not that real? I stood in the sunshine, slowly nibbling on the bread, wondering what the hell I was doing.

It finally beeped behind me, sounding sheepish. I logged on with the old browser, and it tried to connect with a website that no longer existed. It beeped sheepishly again. I typed, the keyboard clicking loud and echoing.

The first website I typed in was google. That took a full minute to load, the whole picture scanning down the screen so slowly. Damn this was going to take a long time.

A couple of hours later, a sleepy Sam looked over my shoulder and asked.

“What are you doing?”

The silence of the house had lulled me into a sense of security. I had focused on my job in front of me, and not thought of anyone else coming into the house nor Sam waking up. I nearly jumped over the chair.

“Jesus Christ!” I exclaimed.

“What exactly are you doing?” Said Samantha, biting her lip to keep from laughing.

“I think I found Hamilton. He was a scientist working in Britain a hundred years ago. He was thinking about the math needed to make the universe work.”

“How far did he get?”

“I haven’t read it all, but he did learn how to describe how animals navigate.”

“How does he do that?”

“Oh, he designed math that many used to navigate in three dimensions. In fact, he lost the war against what the IMC was back then, and they buried the knowledge he created. We could have been awoken a hundred years ago, but Hamilton lost the Vector Wars!”

“Interesting, so we can describe how insects move in 3D space?”

“Absolutely.”

“Where are we going?” she asked carefully.

“He was alive a hundred years ago, in Britain.”

“What are you saying?”

“I am saying that we need to visit this guy’s house in Britain.”

“This dead guys’ house? Who says it is still standing?”

“It’s a public park now!” I exclaimed, showing her the website.

“How the hell are we going to get to Britain?”

Sam and I looked at each other. Our eyebrows raised. I shook my head.

“I don’t know?”

Investment Management Corporation



A CONFERENCE CALL IN A SECRET LOCATION

“Who was shooting at him?”

“Team 12, sir.”

“See that they are disciplined, along with their supervisors. We can’t have him dead just yet.”

A silence in which they heard some paper rustling.

“What’s going on with your team, Jim?”

“My team is keeping electronic surveillance on them.”

“Did you lose them?”

“Yes, after they exited the city in that 20-year-old van, they disappeared for a while, but we found them again.”

“Where are they now?”

“They got on a train headed for Europe proper. They might have thought they lost us with a few transfers, but they were mistaken.”

“Do you have an agent or two on them?”

“We do sir. We are coordinating with our affiliates in Greece.”

“Excellent.”

“How shall we collect them?”

“Once the team is in place, we will pick them up and transport them to the nearest safe house.”

“Alive and undamaged?”

“Alive and undamaged.”

“You ready to receive them, Dr. Mengler?”

“All under control, sir.”

“Excellent – let’s make this go well.”

“Roger that.”

Travel



MOVING THROUGH EUROPE

We'd gotten on the train with some stolen cash and some ID from the cabins. We got on the first train to Venice. Large, scraped up, slow and worn, but there was room on board. The carpet had worn down to the nubs, but the seats hadn't completely fallen apart yet. We even made it across the border into Italy and skipped off the train at the last stop before Venice. We did that two more times before we hit the border to France and jumped across the channel on a hired boat. A flimsy fiberglass hull, and one outboard motor coughing its way across the channel. We stole a car and drove up the highways, stopping at every light, and making sure not to speed.

Finally, we saw it. The observatory broke out of the forest, in amongst the grey rain. The neon green grass fought against a sky the shade of a dead television channel against a road that was a black shade of coal. At least the rain hadn't poured down from the heavens yet.

Even from the car, through the rain, I could see that the railing was smooth, the paint polished away by thousands of hands. The edges of the concrete had rounded, sea-born pebbles inside that were starting to show. What was the correct math for the wear pattern?

I saw sublime geometric patterns across the park. The perfectly geometric observatory's dome had light grey streaks in the darkened steel, the grey slipping its' chains and invading the whitewash. All so normal, so dreary in a typical grey English day. Didn't look like where all this magic started.

Still, I turned the car off and waited for the engine to stutter and choke to a halt. I nodded to her in the passenger seat and grimaced. She grimaced back, keeping her hand to herself. Still not entirely happy with me. I opened the door, quickly, and put up the umbrella. The cold and wet caused shivers, geometrically progressing down my arms. My soul was reacting to the negativity, the strangeness of this place, even as my mind took in the brass doorknobs and the white picket fences. I smelled the musk of the soaked and crushed gravel. Visually bland, old, the whitewash and the blue roof continued to convince you of ordinary.

My feet splashed, getting soaked on the way to the front door.

The front door swung open, hinges squeaking. The little house was simple on the inside. There was little on the walls to indicate anything at

all. A few pictures of William Rowan Hamilton himself, but the rest was painted white, a colour that hid the contours of the walls themselves. Again, a historical distraction - a veil pulled over the real.

Elegance continued that tradition. A Victorian table, a tree carved and finished into exotic designs. Breathtaking by itself, matched with a large Cowichan marble vase. In the precise geometric center of the table, it seemed placed to the exact millimeter.

The legs of the table had sunk a quarter inch into the carpet. The colors ran down from the table legs into the carpet itself, the blond wood matched with blonde fibers, spreading the patterns into the corners of the room.

From here, where I was still dripping water onto the carpet, I could smell the musky, dry books. A few steps in wet stockings and I could see a monolithic stack of books, black wooden shelves, and a writing desk.

It was a beautiful, excellently designed, ancient home. All camouflage, of course, balancing out the hidden. Camouflage for what? I squinted at something in the library, "is that not..."

A fluid, melodious voice said, "hello." I was looking at an older woman, probably in her sixties, saying, "Welcome to Hamilton's Observatory."

"Oh, how are you doing?" I smiled at her.

"Ah, you are from America?"

"No," Samantha answered as she came in. "Canada."

She batted my hand away as I reached for her. As a bonus, she frowned back at me, before shaking her hair dry.

"You two look good together."

"Thank you," Samantha said.

"Well, then how much do you know about Hamilton?"

"Not much - his Wikipedia page was quite insightful, but not complete."

"Oh, that's Brilliant! I can tell you so much. Shall I show you around?"

"Oh, please do," I said smiling. She was so warm and welcoming that it was hard to resist becoming more open.

"Shall we stay inside where it is dry?"

"Naturally."

"I like starting in the library, nice and cozy in there."

The water on our coats was shaken off onto the floor. As I examined the

water drops, the surface tension caused little tubes to exist for fractions of a second, fractions of a millimeter wide. Dynes and Centimeters ran past my eyes, I's and IO's and squares floated up past my medulla.

I shook my head and looked up to see the two ladies already in the library. I was surrounded by volumes of information, by volumes of old, musky paper.

"My dear, are you coming?"

"Of course, of course."

I could have gotten to the library faster, more quickly, but the little fascinations of every square inch of this place were heady. The Cabriole legs were roughened and burred, and the bronze flaw in the otherwise smoothly framed painting interrupted something. The roughly squared prism in the window's glass. Surely, they were hints to a mystery. In this place, how could there not be?

"... Love the way you've organized this place."

"Ah, it's nothing, easy to do when you aren't busy."

"Yeah, good people working hard makes things happen, eh?"

"Which books did he work on?" I asked. I ignored Sam's stiffening beside me.

"Who, my dearie?"

"Oh, Hamilton, of course."

"We have to keep those behind the glass over there. The books' so old it's fragile."

"That's disappointing."

"Chris has come such a long way to see these books. He'd be disappointed if he couldn't." Said Samantha.

"Yes, I would be very disappointed."

"Oh, that's a shame."

"Could you please let us look?"

"Naturally, Naturally - let me see where the key is."

Her feet left the room, slowly padding - her slippers making a twick, twick, sound as she walked away.

"I need this. I need to understand to fix it."

"Got em?"

"Yes, of course, I wouldn't leave them behind."

"Are you sure?"

"100%, totally sure," as I showed her the opaque lozenges in my pocket. They were the pills containing the necessary consciousness expanding drugs. I might need them to visit Hamilton's reality. The backpack had contained more than enough to see us through the rest of our journey, including these blue pills. They sparkled in the light.

"The Sacred Geometers, Rain, and Gurdeep said those are important."

"Yeah, yeah" When Sam said that it brought back the feeling of sadness. I still didn't know what had happened to Rain and Deep. That was worse than knowing, that indeterminate state. I heard the twick, twick again. It snapped me out of my imaginations. I wondered at the formula for elasticity, which things were squared? I opened my mouth to ask, and.

"Shh," Samantha said as she put her fingers to her mouth.

"Oh dearies, could you please open this for me? We haven't taken much of anything out of this box in a long time, and it's stuck."

"Of course, right away."

The box the guide brought back had a label on it. It said, tools for fragile items. It was made out of transparent plastic and was easily the newest thing in this house. Inside it, I could see gloves, tweezers and other tools.

As I picked it out of her hands, I found the lid of the whole thing was sealed shut. Some type of glue had leaked on to it sealing it shut. My fingers left fingerprints on the lid it was so sticky.

"Dammit - do we have a kettle somewhere around here? I need to wash this stuff off with hot water," I said, "This type of glue becomes unstuck easily that way."

"Why yes, we have kettles in every good British house."

"We need to wash and clean this before we can open it."

"Yes, love, everything here needs a little more work."

Her little twick, twick moved away into the kitchen.

"You first, Miss!" I said.

All Sam did was raise one eyebrow before she moved on.

"What sort of tea do you want?"

"Chris?"

"Mint."

"Same for me too."

"Too good that."

She poured some water in the kettle. The first splash hit the kettle. It reminded me of something that I couldn't place. As the water heated, as the coils had electricity forced through them, Samantha said

"So, what is your name?"

"Ah, I am Anna Hamilton."

"Married?"

"Ah, not anymore, my poor Frederick passed away some time ago."

"I'm truly sorry about that."

"That's just fine, just fine. My husband had a good life."

"I suppose..."

"Yes, we were probably related to the famous Hamilton in one way or another, all us Hamilton's around here probably are."

"How many of you are there?"

"Oh, a couple of hundred at this point, probably, minus the ones that grew tired and moved away."

"That's quite a few...."

I heard a noise in the sink. It vibrated, hummed, "Is there a ghost in this house?" I asked, my eager hand already reaching out for the harmonics in the sound. There must have been secrets in that sound, especially in this house.

"You must know..."

"William did discover quaternions, which were another more accurate, mathematical way of describing the universe. Another way to understanding the superorganism"

"Quaternions?" Sam asked

"He discovered rotations in 3 dimensional systems, length, height, or width, or at least how to describe them mathematically, among other things."

"Oh, that's interesting," said Samantha.

"Yeah, not of much use 'till the 20th century," I replied.

"He didn't get much recognition in his time?"

"Nope, but he did make some serious discoveries, didn't he, Chris?" Said Anna.

"He did - Is that what I'm hearing?"

"William's experimentation did him no favors either."

And Samantha said, "How did you know his name?"

"He told me as he came in the front door."

"Oh," said Sam.

"What's behind that door?" I said. Suddenly aware of a big red door with the paint peeling off it. It was hidden behind some boxes.

"Dearie, the real story, the vector wars, the loss of the brightest knowledge, the loss of the real. The government seemed to want to silence William's discovery. Our last chance at the flowering of the whole world, at the dissemination of real knowledge. That's what's behind that door for some people. For others, so many precious things, so much treasure, so much progress has been lost in the last couple of hundred years."

Anna Hamilton poured the tea. It slid out of the spout and down the gravity well, spinning as little droplets fell to the table.

"Ah, it always spills like that when I haven't had a nap," she noted, as she picked up a napkin to clean the table.

Samantha turned to me, eyes a little wide as if she was saying, "Are you sure you want to open that door?"

"My intuition is sure that's the right door to open," I said in an unconvincing tone.

I looked once again at Samantha, and she held herself still, fighting her anger. She had grown distraught on the way here. She'd been shot at and nearly killed. The hiding and thievery were almost the last straws for her. "Your choice," Samantha said.

The chair creaked as I stood up. My cup pinged as I put it down on the porcelain saucer. My feet whipped across the ground. My hand grasped the door handle, still surprisingly warm. I stepped into the room behind it.

The door creaked open, flaking more paint off it. It opened into a classroom, chalkboards dominating every wall. No windows. Two bare light bulbs. One single child's desk, the rest of the room empty of furnishings. Only dust decorated the floor. But my eyes weren't paying attention to the dust. The chalkboards were covered in scribbling, cones and four-dimensional rectangles. I didn't understand. It was unclear. It was so incredibly frustrating.

"What? You send me this far, and you can't just tell me?" I asked the empty air.

The floor bruised my knees, my kneecaps scraping the wood. Crystal tears ran down my face, splashing in the dust on the floor. "I don't know. I don't know."

Memory is strange. Sometimes you forget square blue, opaque lozenges. I did need these drugs to change my perspective. I'd nearly forgotten the backpack Rain and Gurdeep had given us. I was so embarrassed. I glanced to see if anyone saw or heard. I sat my ass down on the creaky wooden floor, displacing a lot of dust. I put the lozenges on my tongue. Almost immediately, the universe hiccupped. This time I saw it happen, fractals spinning across the world in the blink of an eye.

I still don't remember if I swallowed the lozenges before I jumped in time. *I saw the walls being put up, boards repairing themselves, and even the chalk falling in spirals, slowly pushed by the air into shapes of questionable meaning. This time I didn't fall. Instead, I was cross-legged on the floor. I first saw the grey afternoon sun in fall in layers. Stippled light threw the world into a rare type of shade. My ears picked up the student's pencils scraping away at paper, an army of lead leading a chorus of silence.*

Then I heard the professor's voice. It was quiet. I had to strain to listen to it.

"He lost. He fought hard in the court of opinion and in the court of science. However, he only won in the court of the gut and of intuition, which wasn't enough in that time. It may not be enough for a long time. His enemies were much better at public relations. Much, much better."

A student put up his hand to ask a question, "Yes, young Abernathy?"

"But Quaternions are extremely useful, and from many perspectives are a more efficient way of equating."

"Yes, they are useful. We know that the vector wars were won by someone else, and so like every other victor, they get the spoils. They wrote the history of that

decision. Through that victory, they get to make the superorganism to think in a specific way. And as a bonus, it precludes other ways of thought. Even better, from their perspective, the bias is invisible to those who are using the process.”

Static broke across my vision, fuzzing out the scene in front of me.

“That’s awful. Don’t people know what this system of thought does to them?”

“It’s truly tragic. No one trusts their intuition completely. Some people are too wrapped up in their patterns of hunger, sleep deprivation, and lack of vitamins to understand that trusting their deep-down gut feeling is important.”

Abernathy again. “Terrible, terrible.”

“Now let’s talk about the math ladies and gentlemen. The math is this: All numbers follow the same laws; simple and complex numbers aren’t significantly different from each other. If we make these adjustments here and here…” I heard chalk slowly disintegrating against the slate. Pencils started grating against the paper. “That law is simple and easy to understand, as is shown here,” and he pointed at the chalk on the blackboard.

“The sum of the squares?” offered a student.

My vision came back in fits and starts, a dozen pictures a second.

“Yes, the sum of the squares of the components.”

“So that means that…” Abernathy replied.

“It does – the universe isn’t – it isn’t anything physical. It’s more of a consensual hallucination.”

The last sound stretched out. It was quiet for a while before a bass voice interrupted.

“Our hallucinations are essential parts of the world, but I do not know how to represent them mathematically.”

“We have invented an equation for that, to show the world is balanced.” The teacher wrote some more chalk numbers on the board. “See, this is how we describe the differences, with symmetry.”

“So, the time and space dimensions cancel each other out?”

“Yes, that is it. So far, so good. However, do you understand the philosophy behind it?”

Here I could start to hear his voice drip with meaning and excitement. I began to visualize cracks in my brain starting to form. I could see white light fly through the cracks.

“Not really.”

“The basic idea is this: there are many concepts. There are many anti-concepts. Together they cancel each other out.”

“You are saying space is the anti-concept for time? When put together they sum out to zero?”

“I am.”

“The equation $3r,3r$ means that the universe balances out to zero?”

“In the end, there is nothing in the universe, no time, no space. This is freeing, as you know more than everyone around you, and are not held back by the flaws in their supposed knowledge. You will be able to surpass their achievements in just a few years. What’s stopping you now? The only thing that’s stopping you is you, because you have the keys to the secrets of the universe. They are gleaming in your hand, and all you have to put it in the lock in the door in front of you.

“But what does that mean? How do I do that?” The vision started to fizz much more often, first in little bits, and then in greater details, eventually rubbing out everything. With one more soft quote, “You already know.”

I sighed and opened my eyes. “What does it all mean?” I whispered to myself, my voice echoing off all the walls. And I woke up, the bare bulbs shining on the dust, disturbed and hanging in the air. The black slate glistened.

A few seconds later I said, “Ah.” I imagined breaking pottery, shards falling on the floor and shattering. The light inside the jars was bathing my mind with its beauty. Stones forced out of a cracking foundation. A mantle shattering, wooden anchors bursting out of the walls. I had started to understand how this Grande Algorithm was meant to predict our consensual hallucination.

The epiphany was so clean, so open. Just putting the white symbols on the slate of that room became a transcendental act, revealing themselves in a revolutionary way. Quaternions, triplets, and symmetry – That was the real. That was the heart of the universe.

As I stood up to write on the wall, my gut twisting as I wrote. Only the rain hitting the roof accompanied me as I wrote my ideas down. Minutes or hours later, I stood smiling at my work. I was truly sure that I had been successful. The schoolroom door burst open, more flakes falling to the ground, twisting in the dusty air. “The Galvanic circuit has closed!” I exclaimed. “I know what the solution is! I can describe exactly how we project our universe, exactly!”

“Oh, do you now, dearie,” Ms. Anna Hamilton said, still sitting properly at the table.

“Yes, yes, to get somethingness out of nothingness you need an equal and opposite, you need both a concept and an anti-concept. You need two more directions of time. You need time vectors!”

“You’ve figured it out?” Sam said, her hair glinting, a hint of a smile at the edges of her mouth.

“I mean that we need an algebra, not just of space, but of time too.”

“Time algebra? Can you do that?” Her excitement now teased the corners of her eyes.

“Let him get it out of his system, love.”

“Hamilton had thousands of good ideas, thousands of them, but the best was that he broke with the traditional, the unusual, and the difficult.” I paused to take a breath, still striding around the kitchen. “He wanted to expand awareness. He wanted to show everyone that the fifth and sixth dimensions were essential and non-arbitrary essences of the universe,” I whispered. “These triplets were fundamental because they can explain 3-dimensional rotations of space and an equal and opposite rotation of time.”

“Ok, fantastic. You’ll be famous!” Sam said.

“But this knowledge, the highest knowledge of all, can be abused. If we kept this knowledge all to ourselves, we could use it to create the world that we want. We get to hoard the power and wealth for ourselves.”

“Yes, I learned that a long time ago, Chris,” said Anna.

The tea had grown cold by this point. Mine had nearly congealed on the table.

“How you think about the universe has been controlled since you were a baby, the simple stuff, Euclidean straight lines and simple curves,” I paused. “Those don’t exist.”

“Get to the point, sweetie.”

“Crinkles, wrinkles, and crenellations are the important parts of the world. And they cannot be described by Euclid. His straight lines are fake, and our way of imposing them on the world shapes and breaks our thoughts and separates them from the real.”

“What is real?” Sam was leaning forward, elbows on the table.

“The IMC knows, Anna knows what is real, and now so do I. We know that the world is projected from a place of 6 dimensions, where our minds live. It projects past us into a 4-dimensional world, like a flashlight shining on a wall. It was a consciousness shadow. And that projection is power, power we use to create the world. The problem is that we are unaware of this power because the IMC has caused us to forget that power. We need a system that will force us to remember and use our power!”

“Tell me more!” she was bursting with excitement!

“If you want to communicate with the universe, you must learn to speak its preferred language. It is not base ten. It is not base twelve or even 20. God neither plays dice with the universe nor throws dice in the shadows. All that is true.” I took a deep breath. “It is also true that the universe is an illusion . . . everything,” I opened my hand trying to emulate a flower opening its petals, “It all sums to zero, that in the end, it all equals out to nothing. Everything is nothing. The Heart Sutra said that form is emptiness. And the world is that form. We create the universe by projecting the 4-dimensional world from a 6-dimensional thought space. We can prove there is a higher consciousness, a collective intelligence that runs the universe! No matter how much you ignore that truth, it still guides your actions.”

Samantha and Anna sat there on the old wooden chairs. The glanced at each other and shrugged. Anna rolled her eyes.

“The IMC trick us into thinking the world is four dimensional only and that the two extra time dimensions don’t exist. Think now, Sam, doesn’t time feel as if it is one dimensional? Doesn’t it seem absurd to think that there couldn’t be another two dimensions of time that could bend our progression left or right? This is what allows those who control us to wrap chains around the superorganism. Because they use the patterns of 6-dimensional mathematics, and we cannot, they have many more abilities. That helps them predict, to understand our decisions better than we do. To retain their power, the IMC leave us confused in the four-dimensional darkness by pretending they are our god.”

My bones dropped down on the chair. The chair legs made a creaking sound.

“We need a tool that will convince everybody that the world isn’t created the way they have been taught. We need a tool that would convince the world that they are more powerful than they think. Could I slide in a proprietary algorithm in their operating systems? No, that won’t work. It’d be hidden from their vision behind their computer screens. They wouldn’t learn.”

I gazed into my tea and drank it down. It sang a cool song down my throat.

“More please,” I implored her.

“Of course, just let me plug the kettle in again.”

I heard the sparks jump between the plug and the outlet. The tang of burnt metal entered the air.

“Don’t worry - that happens all the time,” Anna assured me.

I looked at the cabinet, its twists and burrs. The three cuts in it were reassuring because I now knew how the universe made them. I knew how the atoms whirled under the surface of the wood, how the whole thing was worn smooth. I gazed into my teacup and saw the little bits of the plant still moving around. I knew what caused that too. These patterns, this physics all emerged from a projection of six flat dimensions onto a four dimensional curved surface. It was simple and satisfying, now the world made perfect sense. I could see the 6 dimensional forms we were projected out of, and then I could start predicting the shape of the future. I felt fantastic, empowered beyond my tiny physical body.

“What are you going to do now?” She asked.

“I need some time to think about the tool. How do we equate the length, width, and height of space with the three-time directions? You can balance the equation that way. It balances because of the inherent symmetry in the world.”

“What the hell? Time directions?” said Samantha.

“Yes, exactly, then all the geometry can make sense. And

causality isn't broken. If space and time are equal and opposite, in this fundamental equation, then the world works!"

"You don't quite know everything, yet," Anna said. "Out in the garden, where the irises and poppies grow, there is something else you need to find out. Good Luck."

"What else?"

"You'll have to find out when you get there."

"Back out in the rain?" I said.

All Ms. Hamilton did was nod.

I swore under my breath, pushing back my annoyance.

"I'll get the coats and shoes," I said.

"Sure, I'll have more of this wonderful tea - where did you say you got it?" Said Samantha.

The floor squeaked under me as I walked to the front door. The water had mostly evaporated into the air, leaving small lines on the foyer wood. My jacket was strangely heavy and dark in my arms. My shoes, unsurprisingly, were still wet in my hands. Back in the kitchen, I saw Samantha's eyelids close for a moment.

"Samantha, I am starting to get worried about you." My fingers started twitching once again, my autistic impulses hard to contain under this stress.

"Yes. Just a little tired after the last few days."

"Me too, just this last thing to do, and then we can sleep for a week."

"Thank you." Sam stumbled over the sill. "Thank you. Thank you."

As we looked into the backyard, the rain sheeted down past the irises and tulips. It was a painting made with dull, expired colors. Hard to see.

"Wow, this garden feels surreal," I said.

"Could be surreal," Samantha said, too slowly. Was something wrong with her? She put her arm on my shoulder and held tight. "Everything is nothing," she mumbled.

"Ah," My feet scuffed the gravel in the walkway as the rain started wetting my hair. I had to blink the water out of my eyes. "That's not what I said. I said that it all comes out to zero, something every philosopher understands."

"Comes out to zero. No real person can understand that. How can we understand that?"

Her arms went around me as she nearly fell. "Oh my god, are you O>K>?"

"Always O.K. in ... arms."

I muttered, "Do we project the world around us from our consciousness, or does it exist, even if you and I are not here?"

She fell into unconsciousness, her mouth hanging open, catching raindrops which smashed on her eyelids, and her collarbone - pooling most geometrically.

"She's going to be cold in that puddle," someone said over my shoulder. On my knees, I lifted my head to see three men in the downpour.

The first one, the Boss, Steve, with the grey hair said, "The universe does not exist 'out there,' independent of us. We are inescapably involved in bringing about that which appears to be happening," he paused for effect.

"We are not only observers. We are participators. In some sense, this is a participatory universe."

"O.K.," I slurred high on the drugs from our tea, "That's enough. Kant said something like that before, right?"

"Yes," the algorithmic overlord said, his voice echoing over the drenched garden. "Everything emerges from basic 6D space-time, and at that point is inescapably affected by our brains."

Suddenly my arms grew too weary to hold Samantha, and alarmingly, I dropped My love on the wet ground. I saw her face beside the roses. I stared, blinking, "Not real, it's not real. I am not real." Then I noticed that I was lying on the grass, looking at his black shoes.

"You are simply one of the stupidest and most ignorant people," the IMC Boss said as he spat at me.

I lost the rest of the conversation in my drugged state. I stopped even processing the cold on my skin.

"Remember this," something whispered from the depths of my unconsciousness.

"A Universal law, that is, a master conservation law of the universe acts for eternity to maintain a zero-state dynamic universe. Those who understand recognize that any disturbances from these zero states gives rise to and is eventually balanced by an equal and opposite action that brings balance. Constant flux, equal and opposite."

Restraint



PSYCHIATRIC WARD. CALGARY ALBERTA

I floated in the sky, watching the clouds whisper by me. It was peaceful. Nice and quiet. I watched the birds fly by in the air for a while.

But that wouldn't last forever.

The first thing that distracted me was the terrible smell. I looked around for the source of it and saw out of the corner of my eye some movement beneath me. As I flipped over, I saw a massive dust cloud obscuring the horizon.

I was slowly descending from the sky. Closer I floated to the ground, closer to the utterly decimated ground. The trees and bushes were all dead — just twigs broken on the ground. The rib cages of animals were all that was left.

In the dust cloud, I listened to a moan and then another cry. I looked down and saw a crowd of people shuffling their feet. Then I caught the jingle of chains, wrapped around their legs, torso, and head. Their eyes firmly fixed on the ground, they walked slowly, the chains having entangled them tightly. I floated in amongst the stars this evening. A sad sigh escaped my mouth, but it was enough to distract the young woman below me. Her eyes feasted hungrily upon me, and if she could have sucked the ideas out of my mind, they would have. I heard a shout in German and then another in Italian, then in what I thought was Japanese, and finally in English.

"Please, please, we want to fly, too."

"Break my chains for me."

"I am dying under this burden."

I saw their feet, bloody with the effort of walking. I saw blood mixed with pus leaking out under their rusty and worn chains. One man was holding onto the chain, and another awkwardly using the chains to protect himself from the crowds around him. If they could re-forged those chains into swords and shields, they could defend themselves. If they had the knowledge I now possessed, they could lift themselves. If I could hand them a thought tool, they would be free. A voice in my head said, "Yes, that is the way forward. Empower the individual, who then will remake the world."

Another voice said, "Remember this."

A third voice said, "That's the way out of this global prison. Lift up those who are trapped. Share what you already know, and they will grow powerful, their minds will expand and shatter the prisons they are held

in. You hold the key to the world's salvation. The broken institutes and methodologies of today will be shown for the rotten and monstrous things they are! You will transform the world into something transcendent!"

I awoke on a green bed. The cries had been left in my dreams, the blood receding into the ground back of my unconscious. Here, in the hospital, everything had hard edges. The curtains were crisp, sharp. I could feel my heart beating in my chest, reminding me of the fragility of my humanity, and the potential of it.

"How are we feeling today?" said the doctor, his caramel colored skin and salt and pepper goatee shining above his doctor's jacket.

"Everything feels straight, hard, crisp."

"Ah, that is a side effect of the first drug we are trying out."

"Which drug?"

He pulled out the clipboard and flipped through some papers. He muttered something that had four syllables in it. I still don't remember the name. "Oh. Why are we trying it out?"

"You are ill. Don't you remember? You've been having delusions for the past couple of months. You've done some dangerous things in that time, like kidnapping and murder. We have to get you healthy in time for your trial."

"Really?"

"It's up to us to treat you, to make you better!"

"I love you," echoed down the corridors of my memory. The times in bed back home. I remembered her fingers in my hair and her lips on my face. That couldn't be a delusion, could it?

"You will have an official appointment with the head psychologist this afternoon now that you are cognizant. Your food will be along shortly," He finished ticking boxes on the paper in front of him and disappeared back out the door. He was done with me. Was that his chain? Distraction, too much to do?

Digesting what he had just said was hard. My memories could be trusted, couldn't they? I had fled across the world and now fallen off a psychological cliff. I thought I had learned about the true nature of the universe, but could they be right? Could I be crazy? Did I commit that many crimes? I didn't even notice both of my hands drawing fractals on any surface available in the tension of the moment.

I stewed in my thoughts, my fingers tracing designs on the wall nearby, for over an hour before breakfast was served. It came in small plastic dishes, eggs, fruit, and some potatoes, all palatable enough. The food gave me enough energy to worry about things in detail. Could my memories be untrustworthy? Despite my confidence that thought wormed its way into the back of my

head. Just maybe I was going crazy, maybe the voices going to start soon?

Someone knocked on the door. "I'm here, I'm here," I said defensively as I swung my legs off the side of the bed.

Two people were standing on the other side of the door, a hairy giant and a short brunette. "You will be glad to hear," said the brunette, "that you can have a meeting with the head doctor right now."

"Who?"

"His name is Dr. Vinay Mengler, and he will take good care of you."

The two standing outside my door were talkative. "Was it cold in there for you?" The door clicked shut with a finality, no echoes in this small cell.

"Yeah, a little too cold."

"We will turn up the temperature then!"

And I responded, "I bet you do your job well."

"Why thank you," said the giant of a man as he guided me to the doctor's office.

The halls were clean. It felt like a home, not too dirty, but not perfect. Comfortable. Ammonia did make its way up my nostrils, settling into my sinuses. I sneezed.

I noticed the dents in the metal wainscoting panels. Heavy things had bumped into the side of the hallway more than once. I took a deep breath. Meeting this doctor was going to be the hardest part. He was going to try to take all the epiphanies away from me.

The doctor's undamaged door had his nameplate on it. Dr. Vinay Mengler.

"Oh, oh, oh, that's unfortunate." He was talking on the phone as the door opened. His voice was tinny and empty. "Trust me. We have this under control."

He waved us in, and they sat me down on a padded armchair. The springs in it were reliable, slowly compressing.

"Thank you for bringing him. Now, let's get the rest of his stay prepared."

"Yes, sir."

"Of course, sir." They left unceremoniously. The whole place smelled pleasantly of cigars, of raw tobacco, another instance of their disregard for others.

"I hope you've been treated well at this institute. After all, we don't have that many famous patients."

I reflected, electricity running down my neurons. A spark caught, and I found myself surprised, "Actually, yes I have."

And we paused for a moment while he wrote something down. He cleared his throat. "Excellent. Please do let us know if you need something, and we will do our best to get it for you."

"Could I ask why I am famous?"

"Don't you know, you fled after being arrested for murder, and you, a genius

on the autistic spectrum, were chased half-way around the world, escaping the police three times. You were even involved in a gunfight. After you were detained, you were suspected of having delusions, so you are here to be made better for trial. After all, you have committed many heinous crimes."

"Oh."

"I suppose we should get onto the important things. Your mental illnesses."

"What?"

I looked at him on the other side of the desk. His chains weren't hard to figure out. A lifetime as a doctor makes you arrogant. And he was in charge of the rest of my life. My heart sank. I was going to die in prison.

"First, we will ask you to do some tests." He squinted at me, and I did my best to make him think I was defeated. Slumped shoulders, downcast eyes.

"After that, we will move onto some drugs."

"Do we have to?" I tried to be plaintive. Trying to outsmart the doctors here seemed to be useless, but I had to try.

"We just want you to know what to expect here while we try to cure you." This time I didn't have to hide the shivers running down my back.

"I'm glad that you are ready to participate in our program."

I stood up slowly and shook his hand warily. This was going to be torture. On the way back, we passed the dented walls and the damaged metal grills. I saw even more nameplates on the doors. Back in my darkened room, the door slammed behind me. With only one window high on the wall providing illumination, I couldn't see much. Just the bed.

There I was left alone for a very long time, the shadows on the walls lengthening. As I thought about the tool I needed to create, the thoughts that I needed everybody to know. How could I get those thoughts to the rest of the world? How do I shatter the chains that have curled around the superorganism? Slowly a strategy formed in my head, I could use the organization against itself. I had to make friends, my life depended on it.

The Next Morning

The next morning the tall hairy man and the short brunette opened the door.

"So, how's the day been?" I said cheerily, trying to gain their trust.

"Oh, alright, just starting." She said. He just shrugged.

"How was the ride into work?"

"The trees always make it a good drive." She continued.

"Nice."

We walked down a different hall this time. This hall also had nameplates on the doors, these ones not of doctors but of therapies. Electroshock.

Hallucinogenic. The doors were damaged – the metal plates bulging in-wards in two places. Someone had been violent here before.

“What are you doing on the weekend?” the brunette asked the hairy man.

“Landscaping,” he said.

“Sounds exciting!”

“You?”

“Probably working on that cross stitch.”

“My mom did cross stitch,” I tried to interject.

“That’s who I learned it from too.” The brunette said.

I smiled and said, “My mom?” That got a laugh out of her.

The last two doors said Sensory Overload and Combat. I swallowed. These doors had cuts in them, from something big and sharp.

The large orderly got the keys off his belt and said, “We’ll come back and get you tomorrow morning.”

The big doors swung shut behind me, leaving me in the hands of four large men. They strapped me down to a chair. In front of that chair, I saw a wall of lights and behind, a row of speakers. They were going to blast me with sounds and flashes until I collapsed. Then they would demand the information in my head. They didn’t want me to spread the thought tool into the population. It would destroy their control. They wanted to make me seem much crazier than I was to prevent anyone else from following me down this pathway.

The last male nurse exited the room and said, “Enjoy your sleep.” The door to the Sensory Overload room closed, and the light flickered a bit before the overload hit me. I could feel the vibrations in my bones, the glare so bright it shone through my eyelids. They assaulted my brain through weird patterns of sound and light, and I convulsed. My muscles spasmed, and I screamed. The sounds were utterly incomprehensible, at least by my conscious mind.

When I finally came back to my senses, I wasn’t in the Sensory Overload room anymore. I was sitting on the cold floor of my cell with my back against the warm door. I fought back the tears, wiping them off my face. I managed to crawl back to my bed after a few hours, embracing unconsciousness.

The next day I awoke stiff. I worried about Samantha. I hope they hadn’t imprisoned her too. Oh god, what if she was an illusion also? I tried to subsume that in my mind, wanted to cast it as a shield around my being. It was just a way to enslave me. I needed to focus on retaining my thought tools. Perhaps if people knew about the IMC, then they’d choose to vote them out. Wouldn’t they vote to get rid of the terrible oversight they are burdened by? Yes, I think a vote would make everything change? People want to be protected like that.

The clothes I had been wearing were draped on a chair. They mustn’t have wanted to dispose of them, teasing me. Did I imagine that these tears were caused by the trees in Greece? Was the dirt in the knees really from

Greece, or did I imagine that too? I could see lots of evidence of my adventures. I really hoped that the bread I had eaten was real, as I was so delicious. I could still smell the aroma in my mind, but did I make it up?

Almost on cue, the door creaked opened. The duo appeared in the doorway. They looked fresh, her brown hair combed and falling freely. His beard neatly trimmed.

“Ready, are we?” she said.

“Ready for what?”

“A shower and a haircut?” the big man said almost happily.

They walked me through the atrium where the green, glowing plants were a gentle reminder that not everything was terrible. A single patient was hiding behind the indoor trees. Her gaze focused on the floor, as she whispered numbers. Her hair covered the sores on her temples poorly.

“Never you mind that,” said the bearded man. “We start your real program today.”

“Does the program include time in the atrium? It looks very nice.” I was still trying to be nice to them. They could save me.

“It does,” he grunted. My nurse was silent.

They pushed me into the bathroom before I noticed the blood red stains on the walls. I stripped off slowly and then stepped into the water. The water was wonderful, warm and embracing. I cleansed all my weariness with the soapy water as my tears ran down the drain, circling the void. Sobs wracked my body. I nearly wailed. I wiped the tears from my face, tasting the salt in them.

As I showered, the plumbing pipes rattled, the old copper vibrating a deep bass sound. Long, slow and quiet. Air shot out of the drain, firing the water back up. It smelled acrid and sour, like the waste left over from anaerobic organisms, maybe they were trying to talk to me. It grew into shorter and shorter pulses until it transformed into words.

“Strong,” I heard, eventually.

“What?”

“Stay strong.”

“Can I?”

“Act when you can.”

“Can I?”

“Choose. Make a choice, save us.”

The vibrations stopped the slightly sour smell of the sewer fading into memory.

The door opened a crack, and my male nurse asked, “You O.K. in there?”

“Yeah, I think I might be,” I said. “Thank you very much.” I was trying to get them to let their guard down, to like me before I asked for a favor.

“Let me know when you are ready.” He closed the door softly. “Use the green smock on the wall.”

I ran my hands down the cloth, the cotton smooth and comforting. It felt soft, useful, caring. I drew the gown over my head.

I stepped out of the bathroom, the scent of soap still floating beside me. The drywall had scars on it. The metal wainscoting had long strips of chrome torn from it. A head-sized dent was beside the emergency exit. Along the way, the scent of soap was replaced with the aroma of cooking eggs.

“What is that?”

“That’s Belgium waffles and eggs benedict.”

“Do I get that food?”

“If you behave, you do.”

“Do you get good food?”

“Not often, only patients eat here. Not orderlies.”

“That’s a shame.”

We turned the corner, and the buffet was laid out before me. Eggs, toast, and ham all wafted towards me, making my hindbrain light up. There were a few tables with patients, some in wheelchairs, some with walkers. Sounds echoed from everywhere.

“Oh, Chris, there you are. I hope the shower was relaxing.” Said Dr. Mengler. He had an air of superiority. I would bet that he didn’t ever question his decisions even now.

“It was welcome.”

“Please do sit down.”

“Alright.”

“Thank you.”

The chair clunked along the concrete floor. The utensils clinked against each other. After so long with no decent food, I savoured the eggs benedict, the butter coating my throat. Content for the moments, I wasn’t drawing triangles on the table.

“Feeling better?” Dr. Mengler said in his foreign accent.

“It’s been quite a while since I felt this good.”

“Good. Now I am going to ask you some questions.”

My lips compressed into a line as I reluctantly replied, “Sure.” There was no one else in earshot. We had a whole corner of the place to ourselves.

He took out a clipboard and a Bic. “We have a reason from bringing you here.”

In my mind’s eye, I saw mosquitos buzzing, forming into a man’s face. I looked at the floor and whispered, “I gathered.”

“You are delusional.”

“What do you mean?”

“We have total control of you here. Is there a better threat than that?”

He said before the waffles and syrup were crammed into his mouth.

“Everything can be improved,” I said. I continued to think about the ways I questioned myself and wondered if my adventure had been real. I continued, “Sometimes I wonder how we can make the world a better place.”

“The best way to improve the world and avoid all this is to synchronize with the powers that be, after all, the whole of society can’t be wrong. You can relax and be comfortable with your normal beliefs. You can use your paradigms like a comforting blanket.” He was right, I wanted to forget. I wanted to go home and eat cereal like nothing had happened.

“I doubt that.” I flashed back to being shot at and a cabin being blown up.

“Do you have special powers? Are you special? Do you think you know anything that other people do not?”

“I am not sure . . .”

“Oh yes, we have also diagnosed you with a zero-sum bias. This is a bias that a significant portion of the world shares with you. We are interested in researching that. You can have your own research team!”

“A what bias?”

“You know, karma, if something bad happens, then you believe there is a symmetrical good that happens.” I thought of seeing my boss dead, blood pooling on his desk.

“No, I don’t think so.”

“Just one more question. Are you going to give us trouble during the trial?” And I remembered the IMC finding me every place I went, the bullets flying past my face. “If you give us difficulty, you will be treated by the Judge as a precedent setting case— in public. A warning that can’t be ignored.”

“Oh, no.” I swallowed with difficulty. “No, of course not.”

He picked up a big piece of sausage and chewed it. I could hear the pockets of fat pop like jellybeans. “Thanks for being honest with me, Chris. We need to be sure that you are cooperating.”

I am sure that my face went white as I heard those words.

They must have casually and quietly snuck up behind me, because when the short brunette asked, “Ready to go?” she said softly, her hand on my shoulder. I picked up the dishes and readied to go. I took a few steps with the tray, which dully slid into the shelf on the metal trolley. An out of tune, unappealing, broken to the senses, grey sound.

“You are going to the first session. Just come with me.”

“Sure,” I said half heartedly. We walked past the institute’s library, padlocked shut. Just past it was the dispensary with rows of white bottles on the shelves disappearing into the unlit back rooms.

The grim man sitting behind the counter said “Number?”

“33.”

The pharmacist handed my female orderly a few pills, orange in color.

“Swallow.” I looked at them in her hand, hesitating.

“We could make you,” she said threateningly.

Still, I looked at them. A man’s hand landed on my shoulder. “I’d do what the lady says,” said a deep baritone voice. This time I couldn’t work up a response. I swallowed. The orange pills disappeared down my throat.

“Follow me,” she said. The floor creaked under our feet. The scars on the walls were trying to tell a story that I couldn’t read. The nameplate on the door read ‘Inducing.’

“This is for you today,” she said as she opened the door. She pushed me into the room and said, “Good luck.” The door slammed shut behind me, and I could hear it lock.

This room had two big men in it, and one short doctor. At least I think he was a doctor. The blood on his gown was a hint, “Sit in that chair,” he directed. There was a mass of wires hanging from the chair which was plugged into an outlet.

I yelled, “No, no, no, no,” and tried to force open the door. That didn’t prevent them from strapping me into that chair nor attaching the electrodes. That episode strapped to the chair was terrible. The three of them kept screaming questions at me and turning on the electricity. Questions and electrodes, I could have guessed that they were tracking my brain activity, trying to read my mind, trying to steal my plan to remake the world.

I seem to remember them carrying me to the room and tossing me on the bed.

That time when I woke up, in my bed, I wasn’t sure if my biggest secrets were still hidden at the back of my mind. Had all this been for naught?

On the bed, my arms were bruised as was my head. So much trauma in so little time. There was one new thing in the room. Something else other than the curtains and the bed. There was a small book on the bed beside me. The tiny gold flake left on the book glinted hopefully in the light of the bare bulb. The first paragraph in that book was:

We are all searching for the secret to success. We are all searching for a solution to our problems. In that search, we often lose sight of what makes us powerful. This book is here to show you a way out of the dark places and back into the light. We are going to help you climb that mountain to a light spot, to a place where you are happy to be yourself again.

But that wasn’t important. The note that fell out of the book was necessary. As the white rectangle lay on the floor, it represented hope and possibility. I wondered if it had a rescue plan or just was a mean trick from the IMC again. Was it a sign that I was making friends?

I hesitated before I picked it up, fingers trembling.

It read, ‘They are going to send you to court and parade you in front of the world as a warning. That’s our opportunity. Working together, we can out think them. Leave a note in the book.’ I picked up the pen hidden in the binding, wrote a carefully thought out message. I couldn’t have any hint of my plan in there at all. No one could know about the strategy I needed to change the world. Then I hid the pen back in the books’ binding.

A few hours later, my orderlies opened my door. “Your interview time is here,” said the big hairy orderly his words dying before they hit the walls.

“I’m ready,” I replied. “Thanks for coming to pick me up.”

He just shrugged. She didn’t say anything. They both looked worried.

The short trip to my Doctor’s office was the same as before. My escorts unhurried footfalls belied a comfort with my possible futures.

Dr. Mengler’s door had two dents in the bottom of it, sharp triangular dents. I wonder what had happened.

The big hairy man knocked on the door and then walked away. He just said, “They’ll open the door when they are ready.”

As soon as he passed out of sight past a corner, the door opened. “Is he gone? He shouldn’t see me here.”

“Yes.”

The door shut, clicking with some solid finality.

A short, stocky man was standing beside the desk. He was a little bald. “This is an outside evaluator,” Dr. Mengler said, “He’s here to see if you are ready for trial.”

“Oh no.”

“You say that you have a new way to describe the world? A fundamental change in math like that hasn’t happened in a hundred years.” And I noticed the evaluators dark, unblinking eyes focusing on. “Tell me about it,” the evaluator started up.

“I still don’t know anything. I’m not a threat,” I pleaded with him. No use trying to make friends with these two.

“We are very interested in your ideas, after all, if they are true, you can prove that you are sane and get out of this place in one piece.”

“I am so confused, aren’t I insane, am I not crazy?”

“Let me educate you. The world is actively trying to kill you every moment of every day. From fear to anger, from disease to conflict, it is trying to kill you. Measles will kill you. Other people will kill you. You will die from walking across the street.”

“I can see that,” I said resigned.

“So, the world prevents that with strong leadership. Strong leaders make sure you are not going to die crossing the street. They make sure that the health care system keeps enough of you alive, They fortify foods with vitamins because we can’t trust people to do it themselves. Even the roads and the fire stations, they are all thanks to our strong leaders.”

“Uh, how?”

“Because your democracy doesn’t work. Letting plebeians have direct control over things would cause it to all fall apart. The strong need power and they are not afraid to use that power.”

“And...,” I sighed.

"You are just one infinitesimally small cell, but this cell might have some exciting information. Can you prove that you are sane? Will your math be correct and get you out of this place?"

"My ideas are that valuable?"

He paused and looked at the ceiling for a moment. He forced those intense eyes on the doctor and said, "I see. We gave you a chance. Doctor, call me back if his treatment requires it."

The doctor cleared his throat and said, "The tests have come back clear. You have schizophrenia. You have delusions of grandeur. We need to up the treatment regimen."

I gulped, "What does that mean?"

"We have lots of treatment." That was a real threat delivered deadpan, "We are going to find who you actually are under all this dissembling, son."

My orderlies knocked on the door once again. The brunette was there, opening it slowly. "Yes, sir."

"Off to his room. We will start the program tomorrow." As soon as I was out the door, two big unfamiliar orderlies carried me to my room. These were not polite men. I had no choice in the matter. Again, they dumped me in the nearly empty room and slammed the door shut. A few seconds later, the lights clicked off. As soon as I could, I started looking for the book, but the room was empty of any book and any hope. Still, I looked everywhere but found little or nothing, just the white walls of this terrible place. I hate to admit that I lost hope, but my whirring fingers belied my truth.

I slept a thankfully dreamless night, curled up under the blankets, holding myself against the terrors of life. That was the last happy thought I had for a while.

The next day I woke up to a group of four strong men forcing blue pills down my throat. I tried to fight, but three men were holding down my arms. Then they strapped me into a wheelchair.

"What the hell are you doing?" I growled at them. The three strangers didn't respond. Not even a word. They just tied my arms and legs down to the bed and walked away, slamming the door hard. Just like the rest of the drugs, this one started up quickly. Sensory things crawled up the walls and my arms. I thought horrible animals with teeth sharp as knives started eating through the concrete walls. The walls crawled with spiders. Their webs covered the whole room. My skin started itching madly.

It lasted all day long until I collapsed from exhaustion, so I slept through the night. I woke up looking at the yellow and red sunlight inching its way across the ceiling, wondering what torture they had in store for me this day. The apprehension grew for hours. Still not releasing me from the bed, they poured a liquid down my throat, purple and cold.

Quickly, reality lost its hold. It stretched and fragmented. The curtains seemingly shimmered fading in and out of existence. The bed floated, although it seemed to be made of rocks. I had no connection to reality.

The next day, something similar happened. I woke up before the sunrise

and watched it crawl along the ceiling of my room. They forced a drug into my system, this time through injection, confusing my senses quickly. I could see colors when I touched something. Even my eyes hurt when they were open. My skin went grey. This time they bathed me in freezing water and left me shivering in the open air, hallucinating wildly.

I think you can see how the days were progressing. I'd wake up early, tied to the bed, watch the sun creep past the ceiling in its reds and yellows and sometimes a flash of green. Then, drugs. Sometimes oral, sometimes delivered in other ways. Then a 'therapy,' sometimes electroshock. Sometimes something even more diabolical. It was all a blur, a terrible, terrible blur. The days stretched into weeks, and I maybe even months.

Occasionally they'd ask me questions that I remembered. "What's the equation? Are you ready to tell us your secrets yet? How long can you keep this up? Do you want to die? We will make sure your discovery is buried with you. There is no greater agony than having an untold story inside you."

One night I shivered in bed all night long because I wondered what horrors I would face tomorrow. Surely the pit of hell was precisely like this. The boiler talked to me in my bed, sending words for just me. Secret messages. The last part of my mind still coherent thought that these were the real hallucinations.

From that jumble of distorted memories, I remembered the punches. Regularly they'd take me to the gym and beat me up. I think. Even my visions had trouble getting through. In all this time, later I was told it was months, I only had one hope to cling to, and even it faded with time.

A thrumming made the ground beneath me vibrate. I fell to one knee and said, "What the hell?"

A superorganism of a thousand rats poked their heads out of the ground and said in unison, "It's been a long time, Chris. We were afraid that you would never find out the last piece of the puzzle."

"Which last piece?"

"The tool humanity needs to break the chains. Humanity is not just a collection of individuals. Alone individuals can accomplish little, but together they can transcend. If you find three people who agree upon a plan of action, there is nothing that can stop them. You have a team of five behind you who are giving their all to make this happen! Xin has trusted you with her vote, and you have trusted her with yours. Gurdeep and Rain together ensure that your votes aren't wasted. In fact, they make your trust much greater as they use it. It becomes more powerful as it is shared. We are all part of a greater whole, and after you give yourself up to it, and you participate in it, you become something so much better."

"Why am I struggling here alone?"

"You are never alone – that is an illusion. You are always tied up in a complex web of interactions from the insects pollinating flowers to someone paving the roads. You are supported everywhere."

"Everywhere?"

"Oh, yes."

"So?"

"Humanity needs to recognize this, as, without this governing insight, they will die." The superorganism hummed.

"How do I, do I inoculate them?"

"Tell them the truth."

"What is the truth?" Everything morphed in a second, as the colors stretched across my vision. As you are now, you cannot see the universe as it is, six dimensional. Your brain doesn't have the tools yet. But we can tell you want to look for and learn how to use it.

I zoomed out and saw the patterns of grain growing in a farmer's field. The bales of hay were gathered in spirals, in perfect spirals. Another vision of broccoli, Romanesco broccoli had algorithmic spirals in it. A quick picture of a skeleton, all its bones connected in near perfect symmetry. A molecule was shown next, its symmetry growing out of the balanced six dimensions. All of these patterns of symmetry emerged out of a flat six dimensional reality.

Next, the superorganism showed me the contacts, emergent social patterns that I was not aware of, between Rain, Gurdeep and me. Sam was there too. We orbited each other, linked in ways that were hard to define. "What is this?"

"They are attached to you in ways that you do not know, will never know. They are coming for you."

"Are they the ones who..."

"Not now, no time to explain."

"We must not only listen to ourselves. We need to talk to the rivers and listen to the wind and stars. We have forgotten the great conversation. By forgetting that conversation we have shattered the Earth."

"This is the first lesson. All biology is symmetrical. In six dimensions, you can see the shadows cast on our four dimensional reality. Plants and animals know this intuitively. Everyone that truly uses their intuition can see the patterns cast into curved four dimensional space time. It allows for ease of growth, of creation, but it also has deep meaning. Since everything is symmetrical when looked at in six dimensions, we see the proof of that in four dimensional geometric patterns, you can predict human reactions perfectly. This is the tool that the IMC has been using to control you. This is an essence of reality."

"We use a tool to make our superorganism powerful. You and your race do not. We trust each other, and in essence transfer our decision making to each other. In your words we vote for each other, individually, to make better decisions. That way, with a transferred vote, we make better decisions. In fact, every time we share it, it slightly increases in power. The tool your culture, your society, requires to change is a voting system that incorporates the value of intuition. You must awaken your soul by making your decision and trust systems conscious. Enable your feelings to measure the world around you. Trust your gut. The only way your intuition has a real voice is to pair it with a single transferrable voting system. Remember, your

intuition can judge people better. In the last few weeks have you trusted Gurdeep to make decisions for you? Has Rain saved your life in a place you didn't expect? Both of those are examples of the tool that will quantify your salvation!"

When I came to myself, I knew that the biggest question was how I distributed the six dimensional idea virus. How did I get it out there to the real world? How do I bring it to everyone's attention?

A thought came to me. They'd all be watching my trial. I had to go on trial. I had to get to a place where I would be the focus of most people attention. Without that, I wouldn't be able to change enough peoples mind, to make this work!

One morning I woke up, and they hadn't shoved pills in my mouth. This morning they hadn't strapped me down for torture. This morning, they had real clothes for me to wear. But my eyes were bloodshot, and my hair was crazy. I didn't think I could put a coherent idea together. And that's precisely what they wanted. Someone not in their right mind who would be a terrible witness and would not be a threat. A witness that wasn't credible that they could lock away for the rest of his life because of 'psychological trauma.'

The door opened soon thereafter. "Time to get out of bed," the brunette said.

The hairy orderly made sure I was standing appropriately and even said some encouraging things to me. "I hope you are feeling better. Everything is going alright, is it?" They threw some clothes on me and brushed my hair quickly, "Time to get you ready for your special visitor."

Surprised at this new turn of events, I asked, "I have a special visitor?" I started to perk up. I had little strength left after all the abuse, so they half carried me to the meeting, I noticed that there was no dirt in the hallways anymore. The walls had even been washed recently. The holes in the walls had even been repaired. Some of the wainscoting had even been polished. Were those good signs? "What's going on?"

And both were quiet. No response to anything I asked. We went down two floors of stairs and through a very long wood paneled hallway.

"Here you are," said the brunette as the pair deposited me in a chair in the hallway and started walking away.

"Which door?"

"The open one." She patted me on the shoulder as she walked away.

I got up my legs weak started wobbling towards the doors. I almost fell several times, due to my weak knees, but I managed to get through the door.

As soon as I looked in the room, I knew why they'd stopped the treatment. Xin was there from the Geometric institute. At the institute, she had been helping me discover the universe through consciousness enhancement. "Yes, I am a trained lawyer too." She said to me. "I spent the first half of my career in the legal system, and then left for medical training." She said, "Now, we got your message. What do we do next?"

"How is Sam?" I asked.

"They are all fine, they've gotten out of worse scrapes." She responded. I lowered my bones into a chair, and I said, "Shall we put together a plan?" "First, let's define our problems," Xin said businesslike. "The IMC have me in their clutches and are going to put me on trial." "They really want to throw you, and anyone else who challenges them to the wolves. They want to terrify anyone else who might ever challenge them." Xin said. "And yet that's our best opportunity to break them. With a potentially worldwide audience watching, we could take advantage." "They'll have incredible security on that courtroom. It'll be dangerous." "I'm already risking my life. How much worse could it get?" "You'll have to do something transcendent in that courtroom. Got any ideas?" "I might have one or two."

Investment Management Corporation



DR. MENGLER'S OFFICE

Alone in his office, the doctor picked up the receiver on the old rotary phone and hesitates. He mutters something under his breath. Then he typed in eleven numbers, his finger leaving traces of his dinner on the white dial. He sighed and spoke. "Steven, please."

He hunched over the desk, resting both of his elbows on it. "Yes, we have had him for a couple of months now." He paused for someone on the other end of the line to respond.

"No, he is still not ready for conversion." Another pause. "No, I do not think that he knows anything we do not." There was another pause, this one much longer. The doctor began to sweat and grabbed a handkerchief to wipe the perspiration off his face.

"Yes, I understand that it's important." The doctor's head drooped even further. "The next step shall be followed, and the report will be as you ask it to be." He hung up the phone with a loud click.

The doctor's back shook for a good while before he straightened himself up. "He'll be out of my hands soon. He's the police's problem now."

"Out of my hands," he muttered under his breath.

Dysfunction



A NEW JAIL IN CALGARY

I woke up on a thin mattress placed on a narrow metal bed. Chains, fixed the wall, held it secure. I looked down and that I was covered by a clean white sheet. Saying that I was surprised was an understatement. I reached below the stiff, bleached sheets, finding prison oranges on me.

"Any records of me being at the hospital?" I asked the stale air in front of me. It didn't respond. My legs curled out of bed, bringing my upper body with them. I stretched everything. I waited for the cell door to open, wearing my prison oranges. I breathed in the air, with ozone and steel from the prison surroundings.

The police walked me down to the public shower and stood outside as I washed up. I remembered that one morning Samantha joined me in the shower. I remembered being happy.

Would this work? Could I change the world with what I was about to say? I knew that my word alone wouldn't be enough. I just hoped. I tried to calm down, breathing more slowly than before. When they came to get me, I was meditating, breathing deeply.

"Are you ready?" said the first policeman. I hadn't seen him before. All irritable and angry, with a mustache and beard. I stepped out of the cell, the floor freezing cold on my feet. The three of them grabbed my arms and marched me to the waiting van.

"Hey, that hurts, damn it." Their grip on my arms increased. They must be a little nervous, just like me. My fingers were moving in circles even inside the cuffs again.

I was shoved into the back cage of the police van. The scratches and scrapes inside looked fresh. The scrapes reminded me of the edges of IMC's plans finally becoming transparent to me. Symmetry, the essence of the universe, was the key, but it was beyond The IMC's knowledge. They had built a foundation of strong, but flawed, theories that enable them to do something like magic. But I thought I knew more. I felt that the secret was hidden in full view, yet without the correctly tuned perception, no one could use it.

Everyone needed to retune their perceptions in order to take control of our reality by participating consciously. We had to individually vote on the changes in the world we wanted because we were being

abused by those in control. Those with vested interests in the current system were unwilling to make any change, even to save the human race. I needed to tell everyone that their voices were power, that they could consciously work together to make the world a better place.

Maybe that was it if I could make them consciously aware, and show them a new reality? How the hell would I do that?

We stopped at the courthouse. The new police were wearing black with sergeant badges on their shoulders. If I stared at the badges long enough, I could see the symmetry in them too. Reassuringly, all the signs and signals were still there.

After they got me into the courthouse, they handcuffed me to a table in a nearly empty room. The table with metal frame chairs which were heavy and hard to move. But just like the badges and the rising sun, the symmetry of life exploded out of these things too. I smiled, confidence rising in me. But I shut down my smile when the door opened. A guard walked in, his baton tapping the wall. Still trying to intimidate me. The IMC must be scared, but I was terrified.

There was a knock on the door. Tara, from the IMC, walked into the room holding her arm in a sling. She had been there for most of the way. She was at the presentation at my company, and then at the IMC's headquarters. I imagine that her injury was from the fight with Gurdeep and Rain. Wallace walked in behind her. She sat down and sighed.

I nodded stiffly.

"We have been sent here to offer you one last chance. We think we have all the information we wanted, but there is a small chance that we don't. Accept our offer, and you will go free."

I looked at her. She was serious about this. Her eyes were flat grey and ready for anything. The mountain of muscle behind her was concentrating upon me.

"I'm, m afraid n, n, not," I stammered out.

"As a bonus, you get to help us save the world."

"No," I said this with confidence.

I swallowed, my throat suddenly sore. "I am sure."

"Good luck, I hear that they are asking for 40 years. We control the institutions so the death penalty might be on the table."

I shook my head no, not trusting my mouth. They got up slowly and shut the door politely.

As they left, I felt a sense of relief. I wasn't going crazy after all. Most importantly, Samantha wasn't just a dream. She was real, and she could still be alive and out there somewhere. Knowing that filled me with a tremendous sense of hope. And then I sat in silence for another 15 minutes, keeping my back straight. Keeping my confidence up. I'd had enough time to wonder how six dimensional symmetry and emergent four dimensional power laws could get me out of this damn sentence, and now I needed to put those laws into practice.

This time the door slammed open. Her papers hit the table with a loud thud! Whump!

Xin asked me, "Are you sure you want to go through with this?" She looked different this time. She wasn't wearing a doctor's white coat, nor was she holding a needle in her hand. She was wearing a suit and carrying a very large briefcase.

"Yes, I do, I really do," I said, feigning a certainty that I did not feel.

"They are going to bring out their big guns. Their best prosecutor is on the job, and they've manufactured the evidence. We are pretty sure the Judge is in their pocket, too.

"Everything new and unusual does look crazy."

She just stared at me for a while. "Dammit, how are you going to counter the higher dimensional clouds they are going to bring, their chains and their generators are going to be at maximum capacity in the court room. You are going to be up against their whole operation, and they've had time to prepare. What do you want me to do? I am worried that your great plan won't work out the way you want. They are going to throw everything at you that they can."

"It's the only way. Hiding in secret and trying to figure out the monsters hasn't worked. Getting the attention of the world, and maybe poking a superorganism and making it awaken, that's the only thing that might be successful."

"Alright, it's your funeral. Now down to business. They have collected a long list of crimes that you are indicted for. It seems that you have not only murdered your boss, but you have also embezzled money, are guilty of sexual crimes, and apparently robbed someone at gunpoint. Given enough time, we can get you out of these trumped up charges."

I felt more alone than I ever had. I looked around at these walls and wondered if they would be the last things I would ever see. I thought about Samantha and hoped that I wasn't abandoning my last chance at happiness. I hoped that the world would remember me somehow.

"My fingers are crossed. All you have to do is stack the gallery and get that single little pill to me."

"That might take some time we don't have."

I dropped my head and shoulders, looking glumly at the tabletop. "Let's move on."

She pushed some paper across the table to me. Long winded paragraphs saying the same things I had read repeatedly. Still nothing new. Xin and I reviewed documents and talked about the possible sentences. She pointed out the potential consequences, and we argued as to what I would say when I testified. I could barely think in the hours before the trial. My brain buzzed with empty worries. I might die, I might change the world, I might end up with brain damage. My mind wandered across all the possible outcomes and worried even more. When I was escorted to

the courtroom. I could barely stand up straight, I was nearly terrified. No one told me that standing up for yourself was going to be this hard.

The courtroom itself didn't look so bad. It looked new, the drywall pristine, and the benches still polished. The refreshing smell of new construction hit me.

I nodded at the gallery as I walked in the room, counting in my head to make sure that everyone was in the right place. When I saw Gurdeep and Rain there, my heart beat slower. I hoped they'd brought a crowd along with them who were receptive to my ideas. I tried to smile at them, but my muscles didn't seem to work right. I had transferred my vote and my trust to them and hoped they'd gotten the job done.

At the defense table, Xin snapped me back to the real world, "Now you remember what is going to happen here?"

"Yes, I do. I'll get up there and give a speech, and then it's over."

"You are incredibly optimistic. Deluded even. That's never happened before."

I struggled to keep my food down, so it was a moment before I said, "I'm actually worried beyond belief."

"Of course you are. You are doing something incredibly stupid," was all she said.

I slumped in my chair, nearly defeated already very aware that my heart was beating faster than normal and my fingers tingling with fear.

A dozen reporters were in the courtroom. Two professional camera crews were standing in the corners, just casually chatting. Gurdeep was near the aisle, dressed so differently that I barely recognized him. I still didn't know where Samantha was. They'd told me that was safer because she'd only distract me.

The IMC officers were in the room, waiting patiently. They were prepared. Tara's arm was in a sling, but she was animated. She knew her win was just hours away.

Then the judge walked in.

"All rise," said the bailiff.

"Good morning, thank you. You may sit down now."

"Defense, are you ready?"

"Yes, your honor."

"Prosecution?"

"Yes, your honor."

"Alright, time to start," and then he did a double take. "Why are so many people here today?" he asked the open air.

"I have no idea, your honor," said the prosecution.

"I agree with Mr. Bratt, your honor," said the bailiff.

Xin just raised her eyebrows and shook her head.

"Let's call for the record the case of Mr. Teeple vs. the Government of Alberta. If the counsels will identify themselves."

"Xin Chai Lee, counsel for the defendant."

"John Lee Bratt, counsel for the Crown."

"Prosecution, are we ready to proceed?"

"Yes, we are, barring a few items for housekeeping," said the prosecuting lawyer, John Bratt. "As I indicated beforehand, I wanted to modify the charges a bit – I'd just like to read those into the transcript."

My attention wandered, as I was going to find this reading into the record long and boring. My nerves were getting the better of me, and I heard a foot scrape in the gallery, and then I turned to look.

"Chris," Xin whispered, "look this way." She nudged me in the ribs. "They are going to mention the charges."

The judge said, "I will now read the offenses. Count one is first degree intentional homicide. The Crown contends that the defendant murdered to cover up for the other crimes he was committing at the time. The next offense is fraud, coupled with embezzlement. The Crown will describe that in more detail for you shortly."

"First, we need to ask the defendant what his plea is."

And the judge turned towards me and asked, "How do you plead?"

"I plead not guilty."

"Are you sure of that?"

I swallowed saliva down my dry throat. "Yes, your honor."

"Has your lawyer informed you of the consequences of your plea?"

"They certainly have," I said nervously.

And the judge turned to the prosecution, "Have you prepared your opening arguments?"

"Yes, we have," Bratt said. "Now we are going to move on to a road map of the evidence. First, I think you are going to find that this evidence is very straightforward. You are going to hear evidence that will be compelling, starting with the murder scene itself."

A screen rolled down from the ceiling and lit up. A diagram appeared, emphasizing where evidence was found. It showed much evidence from the knife used to DNA markers, to fingerprints.

"As you can see, exhibit one is a pen from the deceased's hand. As it turns out, the victim used that pen to defend himself. We do not know why the defendant left it there, and I do not want to speculate. What

I can tell you is on that pen we found some significant evidence. We found the defendant's DNA, specifically his blood and hair."

The gallery gasped, and I shrank in my seat. "Fuck," I whispered.

The judge warned, "Quiet in the courtroom," a few times before we could proceed. Me, I had a hard time focusing, because of the sweat in my eyes. It hadn't penetrated my head how effectively the IMC had framed me. If this was just the start of the trial, I was going to be dead soon.

Xin elbowed me in the ribs again, "Pay attention, stay alive."

And as I lifted my head, I heard, "Let us continue with our first witness. We want to call George Lee to the stand."

"Who?" I asked.

As he cleared the door, I recognized him. Tall, big shoulders, big glasses. No hair. Small nose. Must have shaven recently. He was wearing a pin that had a red and black maple leaf on it. His eye contact was intimidating. He hesitated at the prosecution's table, then walked up to the wooden box and sat down. He put his hand on a bible and muttered something about not telling lies.

"Good morning, Mr. Lee," said the prosecution. "Tell us what your job is."

"I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Local Public Research Commission."

"Thank you, and can you tell us what this state owned organization crown corporation does?"

"Sure, our goal is to improve the business environment for innovation in the city."

"And how much money have you been awarded for accomplishing this goal?"

"500 million." There were a few gasps from the gallery. The judge looked at the gallery sternly and again warned those sitting there to keep quiet.

"In the course of your business, how much contact did you have with the defendant?"

"How much contact? Hm, I'd say a fair amount."

"Please describe the contact you did have with him."

"I have always been suspicious of him. He was always quiet in the back of the room, but I knew he was a seething ball of anger since I first met him. But he was a very good producer and had great ideas about our products and how to solve our problems."

"What changed since then?"

"Over time it became obvious that his anger was getting the best of him. Indeed, Gene and I had more than one conversation saying that he was afraid of Chris, his employee."

"What did you do about that?"

"I gave Gene some strong advice to call the police and then to fire his employee. And he just seemed a little off, do you know what I mean?"

"No, we don't. Could you please elaborate?"

"His behavior became more and more bizarre. He acted like a mail bomber. As if he wasn't plugged into the world, always saying the world was wrong. A lot of conspiracy theory stuff, if you know what I mean."

"Thank you for your testimony."

"Are you ready to question the witness, defense?" Said the Judge.

"Certainly," Xin gathered up the piles of paper on her desk and sauntered casually to the middle of the room. She cut right to the chase. "Mr. Lee, it was difficult for us to find your salary anywhere."

"That's because it's not posted."

"Aren't you obliged to post it due to the government act called the sunshine obligations?"

"We are not a public institution, so no."

"How can that be?"

"We are a private company owned and run solely by the government."

"Is the method you use to award contracts to vendors also private information?"

"Yes, we don't discuss those processes outside our offices."

"Why is that?"

"Our shareholders do not want us to."

"Oh, so why were you discussing these private matters with Gene? These are not public pieces of information?"

"His company was working for us at the time."

"Why were they working for you?"

"We are not at liberty to say."

"Why not?"

"Our transparency options with the contractors and builders we hire are extremely obvious, but as a sole shareholder, the city limits what we talk about. Since our dealings are so complex, they've started using a program to let us know what we can talk about."

"Can you give us the reasons for this system?"

"We needed efficiency in the system, and one person calling the shots often made mistakes. And with public organizations, too much integration with the public leads to slow progress. This way, we can work on projects much more efficiently."

“Doesn’t that lead straight to a dictatorship?”

“Of course not!”

“Doesn’t it need to follow the rules of public policy in which fairness is prominent?”

He shook his head a little shocked about the questions. “We wanted to be deliberate about the bids. Specifically, we wanted them to be from local organizations, to provide a foundation...”

“Mr. Lee, we understand that written in our constitution, democracy allows for a special exception for these types of initiatives during an emergency like war. Shouldn’t your organization only exist in necessary and essential situations? Isn’t it breaking with the intention of the constitution to have a governmental entity such as yours operating outside of the hundred years of policy and our constitutional and democratic laws?”

“We needed to make a change. We had to alter the way our society was heading, and this was the best most efficient way to do that, so yes, it was essential.”

“Does that mean that your company is unethical and breaks constitutional laws as a matter of course?”

“Of course not!”

“No more questions, sir.”

I was dying inside, shivering with each harsh question asked. No one was going to let me out of this courtroom alive. Xin even didn’t have much hope of getting me off.

The judge slammed the gavel. “Court is recessed for one hour.”

“Lunchtime, everyone,” said the bailiff. As everybody left the courtroom, I suddenly felt exhausted. Confidence in the face of imprisonment was hard to maintain. I held my head in my hands. Without noticing, someone put a sandwich under my nose. I didn’t think that much of the food they delivered. The baloney was terrible, and the bread was mushy.

“Can I go to the bathroom?” The guards nodded affirmatively.

In the bathroom, I’d had time to wipe the tears had off my cheeks and brush my hair back into place. I had even managed to sit up straight at this point, trying to quiet my breathing. I went through my calming exercises, drawing triangle and circles in the air. My butt cheeks were hurting from sitting on the hard, wooden chair. I moved back and forth a little to get some blood pumping back into them. As planned, there was a bright blue mint taped to the wall behind the toilet. I swallowed it dry. It was going to allow me access to the six dimensional reality where I was going to make my real plea to the rest of the world.

“You are going to be next, Chris,” Xin said after I sat down in the courtroom once more.

“I know, I’m ready. I’m ready. I am sure I am ready.” My heart beat like a snare drum, pumping blood into my head too quickly. My skin started flushing with terror. “Let me prepare.” I managed to choke out.

“You’ll be on the stand right away. Get it together.”

“Are the necessary people back there?”

“Yes, they are.”

“You have the questions?”

“The questions are ready. Are you?”

“Yes, I suppose. This is the only way out, right?”

“The only way.”

I had to prepare. I chanted under my breath, “I can change the world, we can change the world, you can change the world.”

Then the prosecution said, “I’d like to call Christopher Teeple to the stand.”

Xin said, “Good luck.”

“I’ve got to try, right?”

“You don’t have a choice anymore, Chris. Your whole life has led up to this moment. Good Luck.”

Investment Management Corporation

A slim man with grey hair sat in a chair, his hands steepled in front of him on his desk. His name was Steve.

“How is he doing this?”

The other dozen people sitting in the conference room were staring at the t.v. screen. There was a dozen more on the speakerphone.

A bit of static preceded the answer on the phone, but the doctor’s foreign accent came through. “We have no idea. We’d traumatized him to the point where he couldn’t help but give us all his information.”

“That isn’t helpful.” Steve’s words were tense and short.

Silence descended on the room for a moment, until they all gasped. “How did he get to the sixth dimension like that?”

“Oh my god, we are doomed,” said Steve. “Break out the emergency protocols.”

The tall man beside him asked, “Are you sure?”

“We’ve got to destroy the being Chris is creating in the courtroom – our institution hasn’t had a threat like this since Hamilton.”

Eighteen



A COURTROOM IN CALGARY

I took a few breaths, wiped the sweat off my forehead, and stood up. I walked shakily across the room to the witness stand. The whole way I stared at the floor whispering, "Change the world." I sat down in the witness chair and closed my eyes. I envisioned Mr. Bratt with imaginary chains wrapped so tightly around him that they should have snapped his spine. He was under their control. I wasn't. That was my edge.

"Let me change the world, let me change the world," I muttered at the floor. I heard the crowd react again, some of them were repeating the word 'change' under their breath. It was all coming to a head.

And I heard the crowd whisper back, "Change." The part of me that could be shocked was shocked.

"I am going to change the world," I said to the Judge.

He just stared back at me blankly and said, "Please take the stand."

"Do you wish to affirm?"

"Yes."

"Bailiff?"

"Please repeat after me," the bailiff said, "I solemnly affirm that the evidence which I shall give in this case will be true; I will conceal nothing and no part of my evidence will be false, so help me God."

And I repeated the affirmation after him. Would these words be my tomb? I looked over my shoulder at the crowd. Some of them did indeed have their phones out, the cameras tracking me. Those videos would form my tombstone. "What have been your whereabouts these last few months?" Mr. Bratt said.

I coughed a couple of times, and I started in on my speech.

"Thanks for asking. I appreciate this opportunity to speak," I said, only stumbling over one or two words, "to talk about the change and the power of the world." and I heard the audience say 'change' and say 'power' quietly, "I have spent the last few months chasing a vision, chasing something in the back of my mind. I was convinced that something in the world was wrong. I'd suspected it since before I started working on my equations."

"Judge, Judge!" Bratt said, "Objection."

"You really should answer his question, Christopher, you can be held in contempt of court for your reactions."

I felt a tenuous connection to the front row, it clicked into place behind my eyes. Was it my imagination, or could I see the surface of their minds pulsing on the other side of the imaginary chains? 'Oh my god,' I thought, 'Did I take the wrong drugs?' am I actually connecting my mind to the audience? Shit, all these hallucinogens were incredibly powerful, did the IMC switch them?

"He isn't even talking – he needs to answer the question."

And I said, "Judge, what should I do?"

"Answer the question to the best of your ability."

I shivered, my senses telling me that I was in incredible danger, but I continued, "I wanted to stand up and shake off the imaginary chains of the world, but since they are embedded in every aspect of our lives, it was really hard. They entrap me even now."

"What did you say?"

I couldn't make eye contact with Bratt, I was so afraid. So I talked to the walls instead, pushing through my terror. "The chains in our lives are placed there by our institutions, the ones sitting on centuries of inertia. And they don't know how to get rid of them. None of us do."

"That's, that's why you killed Gene? Answer the question." I heard a quiver in his voice. I had done something to shake him. My voice gathered strength, and I continued, "Let me tell you a truth about this universe." And with that, the two big cameras trained on me switched on.

"I would say that my boss's death came from the truth of the universe. He must have realized it before me, and it must have transformed him. He was murdered because he was understood the poison that these institutes inject into our world."

"Do you think that? How crazy do you think the system needs you to be to get off?" I could see that Bratt's pupils were dilated, and he was starting to breath hard.

"I do –the institutes grow chains around each and every one of us. These chains prevent us from using our true power." My legs stopped shaking, and I sat up straight, every muscle full of confidence. "This power comes from understanding each other's value and from working together, so we have a chance to destroy them. The Investment Management Corporation manufactured distractions, such as fear over your children's safety or the fear of losing your job, prevent you from rising 'till you succeed. You choose to leave power vacuums where villains can profit, free from accountability and citizen oversight." I paused, hoping that I had connected with the audience.

And then the Judge said, "Bailiffs, escort the defendant back to Jail." And my panic rose, and with it my fingers started dancing, carving octagons and dodecahedrons in the air beside me. I felt more than saw the triangles build upon one another. My eyes grew wide as the 4 dimensional crystals, and the infinite Mobius strips developed a life of their own in the air before me. They danced as they grew a life outside of my fingers, filling the space in front of me.

Sacred Geometric Institute



GROUSE MOUNTAIN VANCOUVER

"It is starting; it's starting," one office worker said to the other. She had poked her head into the messy grey walled cubicle of her co-worker. There were pictures of children and a lot of paper strewn on her desk. "Get to the lunchroom now!"

"I'll just save this, it's got to get done," said the second office worker panicked.

"You'll miss it," she warned.

And the first woman jogged back to the break room, past a lunch table and a few posters just of geometric pictures. A colossal t.v. was set up at the far end of the conference room, tuned into the t.v. channel covering the trial. A crowd was already there waiting for the trial to start. The coffee jugs were empty, and the crowd was whispering.

"Do you think?" asked one member of the crowd.

"Oh, we hope so," said another.

"I hope for a radical change."

"Fingers crossed."

Then the t.v. anchor said, "This monumental trial is about to start. Let see when the system is going to do with our once in a lifetime defendant!"

A few seconds later a young man said, "Chris Teeple has just taken the stand and is about to start his testimony." The t.v. feed switched to another camera, and Chris was framed sitting in the witness stand. His face was set in determination.

When he said, "We have a chance to destroy them," everyone in the lunchroom gasped.

"He's going to do it, isn't he?"

When the crowd saw the prosecutor narrow his eyes, the crowd reacted again. Whispers ran around the group until someone said, "Shhhhhh." When 'villain' was mentioned, the whole room was shocked. When Chris stood up and exclaimed the truth. He said that the entire room cheered. When the prosecutor couldn't get a word out, they clapped.

"My god, do you think he is going to do it?" one audience member whispered.

"I hope so. We've been trying for this our whole lives," another replied. Then Chris named the IMC in the open court, and the whispers died down.

"He's gone and done it."

"Done what?"

"He has declared war."

The End



A COURTROOM IN CALGARY

As the bailiffs took their first steps, I could feel my connections to the rest of the room grow. The danger increased the processing speed of my brain, making the whole courtroom slow down. Some were terrified for their children, another was worried about their doctor's appointment, and the last was worried they were pregnant. And for an instant, I saw the chains around everyone in the courtroom, including the Bailiffs.

First, I said, "Bob, that's your name, right Bob?"

The first bailiff stopped in his tracks and replied hesitantly, "y-yeah."

"You dream of a happy and fruitful life for your children, like Lucy?"

Bob's face went pale, and he stopped in his tracks. "Of course I do."

"If you give me a chance, I can deliver that future to her, I can make her life brighter than anyone's life has been up until now."

"You can?"

"It matters to every single person on this globe, Bob. It matters to every single child who has yet to be born, so can you give me a few minutes?"

"Sure, Chris, we can give you a few moments."

The prosecutor, desperate to head me off, had turned around and started talking to the audience.

"Change has been mentioned by many politicians forever, and there's nothing we can do about it today. That's nothing new," said the prosecutor. "You can't." I was sweating and had nearly collapsed in the witness stand, and I could feel the stress in all my muscles.

I gathered what was left of my strength, and I interrupted him, "Ah, in that you are wrong. There is something new."

I saw the whole audience react strongly, pulling back from me. I hesitated, and then I put my hand up in front of my face. My eyes seemed like they were producing light! They were glowing!

"Dammit." The Crown Prosecutor, Bratt, was surprised. He'd never seen competition before. His face fell, and his shoulders slumped. "There is a secret those who rule you have been keeping from us,"

I said. And I stood up, bracing myself on the back of my chair. Along with me the audience stood up, one by one, slowly. In my mind's eye, I could see the superorganism forming, its brain slotting together.

"Oh, no," Bratt said. "They won't stand for this."

"Oh, yes," I said, "They won't have a choice."

The audience was on its feet, whispering. In my mind, the drugs actually starting to come into full force, I saw clouds form above us, lightning and thunder crashing to the ground. I desperately grabbed that power and held onto it. "We have the power to destroy the financial and political chains we are imprisoned in." Making contact with not just the audience's eyes, I started to make contact with their minds. "There is a system that can make us more powerful! We need to reach out to trust each other, trust in ourselves, in our intuition and our instinct, the genius of which can access the great shared knowledge in our subconscious. If we trust our instincts more, through that trust, we can then shift our judgement and votes accordingly."

Then I noticed the pressure on my feet had stopped, and when I looked down my shoes weren't touching the floor. I was really seemed to be flying!

I thought to myself, I knew that the IMC was going to respond, but now was the first time that I felt their change to the world. Maybe it was a ripple in objective reality, or something I was sensing in the structure of six dimensional space time. But I knew they had loosed their own mental creation, as a wave of fear and terror rippled across the audience. The air grew colder, and finally something whispered across the ether.

"Your death will be exquisite, Chris. Long and difficult." This threat was betrayed by the glowing symbols I was still drawing in the air.

Of course, my body grew cold and my skin drained of all blood. I stammered forward. "But to trust, to vote, you need to be informed. To be informed you have to accept that there are many different types of information, from self interested logic to our intuitive genius. Our intuitive genius is much less fallible than our selfish logic." And as soon as I finished that sentence, I could feel the wind whipping around me, papers and hair dancing in the air.

I took a deep breath, and the hair on the back of my neck stood straight up as an icy, otherworldly wind whipped by me. I prepared my next world shattering truth, I saw more cameras in the room click on. Phones were now streaming me to the rest of the world. In my mind's eye, I saw crowds watching in complete silence, hanging on every word I said. I saw others cheering with their families, surrounded by poverty. And I strode forward with the energy they fed me. And every time they fed me more energy, I drew more symmetry in the air with my fingers. I could feel the courtroom approaching a critical density.

"Now, here is how you will make better decisions in the future. Judge all future information in this way: it is constructed by our fallible minds and therefore is fallible. We have to accept that our four dimensional

universe is a projection of our minds, which live in six dimensional reality. This is the essence of the Grande Algorithm."

"If you can accept that, you can become a much better decision maker, and break the chains around you. In fact, once you accept these ideas, they will take flight as a virus, a virus that opens your minds to new opportunities, new hopes. And with those new hopes, we can infect our society with bright new possibilities. And this will kill those organizations that live off your misery."

"Oh, really now?" Mr. Bratt had found some courage, his eyes steely and his voice cold and menacing.

"Yes, and I can prove it." I thought 'please let this be as true,' as I carved a final golden ratio into the air before me.

I didn't know if it was just in my imagination that I saw the universe crack open, and my mind take flight because I didn't have a chance to reflect. I felt a nucleus of people gather together in the 6th dimension. At first, the seed of the superorganism was only a dozen people floating in the sky, their feet callused and burned from the eternity they were chained. They held hands and floated in a circle, spinning slowly, spiraling through the clouds. I asked a voiceless question, "Who are you?"

"I'm from Nebraska, struggling with opioids."

"A father of two, despairing about the future."

"A child, wondering where her parents are."

Cascading music of replies came from all over. They were hurting, their lives fragmented and decaying, and that hurt was being taken for to power the IMC. Their hurt, pain, and fear gathered together in a giant hurricane, black lightning arcing from cloud to cloud. Chains whipped around at the speed of sound lasing all the fear and pain together.

I prayed as the villainous hurricane looked down at me. I concentrated upon the best ideas that I could think of, happiness, love, and care. Of a human's destiny, and a world freed from chains.

'What do you think you are doing?' the hurricane echoed across the flat and dusty plains of the sixth dimension. I tried to ignore it, not quite entirely pushing the deep echoes out of my mind. More positivity, more real love, and more care poured out of my mind.

The hurricane just laughed and laughed, "we are going to enjoy torturing you, boy."

A cold and dark chain the size of a house whipped past my head, whistling in the air. It nearly cut me in half.

Then, something landed on my shoulder in a puff of dust, hard and cold. I looked down at a pale white hand, attached to a kind woman. She said, "let me help you." I took her proffered hand and stood. My hand tingled as soon as she touched me, my knowledge and power flowing to her.

"Oh, wow." We said in unison as her chains fell away. In unison, we grabbed other shoulders and felt the tingling sensation once again. We were administering an inoculation to the superorganism, destroying the fear virus, and making the human superorganism so much more powerful!

I knew a bright being was blossoming into existence. Within minutes, I could feel a giant being growing beneath me. A radiant giant, a body, built of human minds/bodies working together. I saw a hand missing fingers. Glistening skin that was being sewn together, bright white light flashing with every handshake.

And something dark in my mind yelled at me. "How dare you?" it screamed. Below the glowing giant was starting to stride across the plains, but still there were millions of people dragging chains along a flat desert. They struggled to look up, straining to see. But they flinched when the dark master of the IMC shouted again, "Humanity will die if they do not follow us." Black clouds, chains whipping out of them stabbed into the new superorganism we were forming. "This world is mine!" it screamed.

"We dare," said all of them together, "We will control our fate!"

"We are powerful, and together our power is very dangerous. Your chains are flawed and will inevitably break. Our understanding will become the sun, melting your chains. Together, nothing can prevent us from rising!"

The air over the desolate plains darkened as the Investment Management Corporation's minds started gathering. The ominous sounds of chains echoed across the desolation of the 6th dimension plains.

My mind dropped down out of my imagination and back into reality. No time had passed in the courtroom yet. Even the air hadn't moved.

"Oh, can you, I doubt it?" I saw the prosecutor's imaginary chain strengthen and tighten around his body. He awkwardly stood straighter, forced by the chains moving down his back and under his arms.

"The human superorganism will behave just like every other organism, following well established laws. Our control system, in this case a voting system, will reflect that, following a pattern that emerges out of the world around us. These laws are that as something grows, and as a vote is transferred, it scales in power. It gains its power from the additional trust that is added to it. And then once it is transferred again, it gains slightly more power, and so on. You can transfer it only a few times before the additional trust diminishes to nothing. It's that simple. That's the truth."

"Oh, you don't get out of this that easily, Chris," The whole courtroom froze as I was dragged back to the superorganisms' reality by the IMC. Now, I saw the crowd below running and screaming in terror as the giant menacing idea cloud formed. Our white being, made of minds free from the IMC, grew exponentially.

Inside my mind, I felt my connection to the courtroom growing, as more minds joined. The bonds, flowing from every person wrapped into a powerful consciousness. As the ideas were shared between minds, they grew in power.

"We won't let you release that thing here. You'll die before we let that happen."

And chains slammed into the ground around us, arcing with dark lightning.

I thought. 'The idea design is perfect. This is a perfect plan that reduces the possibility of potential futures to only a few. I will inoculate the superorganism against your evil!'

Inside that case, we floated in a circle, spinning slowly. More people were slipping in past the dark lightning. They latched on quickly, growing until we were a giant mass floating in the sky. We had formed a head and body. We were creating a giant person!

The dark IMC cloud started screaming, "Mine, mine, mine." Its chains whipped out at us, slamming themselves into our minds, dark lighting running through our synapses. I cursed. I gathered the power of our minds in my hand and started to lash out with it. But the others held me back and said, "Go back, share your ideas!"

"Goddamn fuck," I said out loud as I found myself in the courtroom again.

The Judge was shocked and asked me, "Really, that's your defense?"

"Actually," I continued, with the energy of hundreds of thousands of spectators rushing through my veins, "We need to change democratic governance to reflect natural laws. We have to enable the 'cells' to vote in a natural way, one that reflects the movement of an organism, on a three quarter power scale. The ideas will scale in value as they are worked on and improved, through the minds it visits. Thus, we will genuinely have a transcendent world. Together, we will enhance the power of our superorganism, and the chains will start to shatter."

"That isn't much of a defense, son," said the Judge.

And I turned to him and asked, sharing my trust,

"What should I do, Your Honour?"

And in an imaginary layer over the courtroom, I saw a single chain shatter. A few in the crowd noticed it also, and two people cheered.

"Answer the questions seriously."

"What were the questions again, Mr. Brett?"

"Can you describe what you were doing on that day your boss died?"

"I was thinking about the nature of the world, and together with Gene, I was going to go over the flaws in the program."

"You were the one to discover him dead, right?"

"Yeah. But it allowed me to discover what we were looking for."

"What were you looking for?"

I opened my mouth to tell the world all my secrets, but a second later I heard the IMC again.

And in my mind, I heard the IMC's words "Not yet, asshole," as I was pulled back to the 6th dimension. First, I saw someone on the plains below stop. The

remains of his chains shattered on the ground. Their control was faltering.

Then another dozen chains slammed into us, trapping us more strongly. We were forced back to the ground, their barrier growing stronger. The black cloud screamed, "You will never beat us." A dozen more chains wrapped themselves around our collective mind, "You will never defeat us." They anchored more chains around us, strengthening our prison.

I reached out and touched the chains, and felt a few shatter. 'Thank god,' I thought. And I saw a few more minds touch the iron chains around us, breaking them. "I don't think so," said our growing superorganism. "We never stopped growing. Inside the tragedies you visited upon our world, behind the veils you pulled on our vision, we never stopped truly understanding who we were. We were not our fear. We were transcendent beings glowing inside this trap you built. And we never forgot that!" Now one arm was full size. It was crackling with the energy of confidence and trust and love and imprisoned a dozen of the organizations' broken chains.

"You will fall." We shouted at the IMC's dark cloud, as we swung at our cage, breaking a hole in the dark clouds. We cheered, but a second later it reacted. The cloud drew more energy from the whirlwind, and encompassed us in darkness, completely blocking us from sight.

Then I snapped back into the courtroom.

I thought for a moment recalling the Lawyers question, "What was I doing on the day my boss died?" It was hard for me to answer. So, I turned and asked the Judge, "What should I do?"

The Judge's chains tightened as he said, "You should ask your lawyer, not me." "Judge, I will trust your vote. I will confer with Xin."

And as I trusted, I saw more power gather as my speech was converting people. I touched the chains imprisoning us, shattering more of them, and banishing some of the darkness. Many of us reached out, breaking the chains imprisoning us with the power of our inoculation. Their old tricks wouldn't work anymore.

My legs were still shaking as I stepped down the witness box and headed towards Xin. I looked her in the eyes and she shook her head like she was saying don't do this. I was shaking internally, but I straightened my back and looked directly at the camera and announced with a shaking voice, "You are not this limited physical being. You are built out of transcendent energy! Your mind, your soul transcends this", I paused and spat out the next words. "four dimensional world."

Then I shifted to passionate speech, reaching out to those just tuning in, hoping to convince millions more minds to join us in throwing off the yokes of control, "You've been on an epic journey since the day you were born. You've been learning about the world around you every moment of your existence. You have insights and intuition tied to the higher dimensions, where your mind lives. That's why your gut instincts are so incredibly valuable."

"But, your mind thinks that's all lies. It believes you are tied to this prison of flesh. But you do not know why. Since your knowledge

is flawed, you must trust your intuitive genius.

And the silence in the courtroom was absolute. No one spoke or dared to move.

"You believe it because you've been lied to all your lives. They've broken the trust between us, driving wedges between what we want, and what we need. Without this trust, we have less political freedom because the new is terrifying. A system where you have two different choices isn't freedom. A system where you have a thousand choices is more like freedom. Are you not supposed to be born with political freedom? Vote for your colleague or neighbor, your family member or your friend. Your vote becomes more powerful as you exchange it, as it grows your community. We can define and improve your circle of trust, this way, exploding your friendships into an incredibly powerful weapon. All of these are better choices than someone you will see for only fifteen minutes every four years!"

I took a breath and waited for the audience to respond. They didn't. They were waiting for my next words. My back straightened further, as I gained more confidence.

"We are all born into a society with flawed rules. We have to accept these rules without question. But in the back of our minds, there is always the idea that something else is better. But, no one thinks this change is possible, because we are afraid. This is a designed problem because someone wants to control us."

"Asshole," rang through my brain once more. "You aren't going to ruin everything we worked for. We are protecting this reality!" I was dragged into the other world once again. I could say that even more people had stopped running on the field below. I saw them drop their chains to the ground.

The body of my superorganism continued to grow, thousands more joining it from the plains around us. More slipped from the grasp of the black cloud, through the broken chains.

I heard a rumble over the horizon as the darkness gathered its forces. More clouds rolled in over the horizon, dark lightning flickering.

We stood up, legs and arms flexing as we were shattering the prison around us.

The whole sky was full of black roiling clouds as we reached our full height. They fired chains into our body, dragging minds screaming out of our arms and legs, out of our torso. "You are ours." We struggled to stand.

I heard a hundred thousand people encouraging each other, as we struggled to throw off their control. I could feel our legs grow from the ground and saw thousands of others crawling up our superorganisms body. Votes were transferring their way up the organism's leg, growing on a three quarter power scale. Our head poked out the top of the clouds, and we could see bright sunshine beyond them.

"You need to go back," said my newfound friends, now

really functioning as conscious cells of the superorganism.
"Your words are valuable, and we've got this"

And I fell back into my body in the courtroom. This time, I wasn't the only one to notice it. The lights flickered on and off and the air was stirred with a stiff breeze. More people were seeing the other reality as it was invading the courtroom.

On t.v. they saw a supernatural force gathering control through the courtroom, and their minds reached out through their laptops or their phones. They too shouted, "enough," "stop stealing away our power."

Shaken to my core, and nearly drowned in the power I was drinking in, I needed a moment to gain my composure. "No!" I said to the court gallery, "I shouldn't ask my lawyer. I should ask you. What should I do next?" The crowd sat back for a moment, shocked. The cameras zoomed in on my face, waiting. The Judge opened his mouth to protest. And this time, I knew what needed to happen. I opened my mouth to say the short sentence that would change the world, but before that could happen, I was dragged violently back to the higher reality.

"Don't push it any further," the IMC's superorganism yelled at us. *I could see them pulling even more energy out of the dark hurricane, drawing it down to a tiny fraction of what it once was. Lines of black energy were mixed into them. They grew past our heads once again, encompassing the sunlight. Still, standing in the darkness, light travelled up our legs as we continued to grow. I sensed our feet touching the ground, anchored in the massive crowd growing at our feet. "No, you cannot do that. We control you! We control you!" And with that dark energy whips lashed out and enchained us. The black lightning arced from our head to our arms and back to the clouds, killing more of our minds. We started to react, bright sparks of hope punching holes in the clouds again.*

But where I was everything was calm. The other cells, or people, in the superorganism were protecting my mind I had the time, limitless eons in this transcendent reality, to create a weapon in my hands. Materials that I needed magically appeared around me, and in a moment of epiphany, I realized that they were giving me all I needed. The rest of my superorganism, the giant, was focused on giving me what I needed. I focused ideas and algorithms into a living spear. All of my knowledge that had been refined through this living, breathing organism around me I put to use.

I knew that this would end the struggle, right now.

After I finished, I drew my arms up behind me and threw the living spear. It arced through the air, light trailing behind it, reflecting the dark lightning on its surface. But the dark clouds reacted. Holes opened in the darkness as the spear flew straight through the cloud.

My hopes were nearly all destroyed in that moment. I saw the lone spear arc past the enemy and impact into the dusty plains. Tears threatened. I was going to die because of this. I could feel my heart fall.

But out of the corner of my eye, I saw a wave of energy wash out of it as the spear hit the ground. Across the flat plain a surge of energy shot out from the shattered spear into the hopeless crowd. Chains shattered, and the crowd started holding themselves up straighter.

And then I shouted, "Up here, with us, is your freedom." With the help of thousands more shouting we got their attention. Thousands lifted off of the ground and swirled up into the sky. At first, the superorganisms legs grew exponentially, and then the torso, and finally the head. We laughed, our throats booming out across the higher reality. As the new minds continued to gather, our height grew past the encompassing dark clouds, as we shattered the chains and disrupted the dark whips.

"No more." We said, together.

Two of the dark clouds dissipated in the harsh winds of our intuition.

The clouds that were left struggled to keep the whirlwind alive, draining the last little bits of power from it. "No, no, no, no, no." it echoed in hysterics. "If we can't rule, then you shall die."

I saw hundreds of tiny missiles form in the bellies of the remaining clouds, their warhead full of danger.

Watching the Trial



A FIELD SOMEWHERE

The last rays of the sun beamed across the trees and through the ferns beside the river. The audience was still, no one mouths moving. Even the children were motionless. They were all concentrating upon every syllable uttered by the speakers, drinking in the transcendent truths uttered by the speaker. Their backs were all straight, and their postures improved with every word. After 3 minutes, they were all breathing in unison, and after 5 minutes, the whole crowd was muttering Chris's speech milliseconds after he spoke. In ten minutes, everyone was standing, eyes entirely focused on the 55 foot wide screen in front of the meadow.

The wind started to whip around their minds, displaced by the intensity of the energy they were accessing for the first time. The crowd wept as a group, for the power that had been stolen from them, and their determined faces showed that they were unlikely ever to let that happen again.

12 minutes in they shouted as one entire being, demanding a new world!

Acting as One



THE COURTROOM

Then my body demanded my attention, distracting my mind from the higher reality. I felt pain radiate down my left arm rushing down the nerves to my knees. And my confidence faltered. I grabbed the back of a nearby chair to prevent myself from falling.

"In school, lies curled around the corners of the curriculum. On your national radio, it was inserted subliminally into your minds. And the lie was – you are only a four dimensional being. Your mind does not come from somewhere else. You are only the chemicals in a bowl of jelly that is your mind. You are wrong! You are a six dimensional human whose mind transcends this world."

On t.v. they must have seen me shiver, or have a muscle spasm. I grabbed the back of a chair to stay upright. The audience must have known something was wrong.

How will I force this change and convince everyone of the importance of a new direction? I hope my idea virus is up to the task!

This is not just any ordinary tool, rather a tool wrapped in an idea: an ideational tool. Just like the superorganism taught me. It taught me to design a concept that inspires the imagination and embodies the true nature of the world. This idea will be so powerful it will capture the imagination of the whole planet! Then we, as a world, are open to the necessity of this change: Our imagination will have been lit like a bonfire!

And then together we will destroy the flawed conventions of yesterday and move forward towards a brighter future! Full of this purpose, I waited, my arms quivering on the chair.

I cleared my throat and said, "All you need is your own permission to ascend and break the chains. There are thousands of tools for this, from transcendental meditation to new courses, to a simple change of diet, or new drugs, any way to alter your perception. You can remove the veils from your life, easily."

"Let me show you how." I stepped up on the chair, and I shouted,

"What should I do to remake the next world? How should I grow?" and in my mind I felt thousands reach out for me, trying to cross the bridge to the next world. I felt euphoric! "Trust me, we can rewrite the rules of our world! We have to! Because our democracy is flawed! If you have more demands on your time, you cannot participate. You are written out of governance because you have children, or are working overtime. Those with extra time, make sure you are drowned out. If you delegate your vote to someone you trust, this problem is solved, and society grows stronger as it is transferred. Take your voice and shout it to the stars!"

Back in the higher reality, the Black clouds retreated. The sky started falling back to normal. And we shouted into the silence, "We are powerful! We are six dimensional!"

And then we saw a dark arrow streak across the distance between us. As it grew closer, I could see the fins on the missile, the red lines on it, and the payload it had. Almost in slow motion, I saw the explosion beside me, mental fragments piercing my mind. Pain shot through all of me, breaking me into a thousand pieces.

I awoke on the floor, my left arm unable to move. The energy of the world was draining away to be more useful somewhere else. They had defeated their enemy, and now I wasn't needed anymore. Xin's face was above me, saying something that I couldn't hear. I said, "Sorry Xin, I thought it would work out." I couldn't feel my right arm. A couple others pushed their way into my slowly darkening vision, a red box in their hands. "Tell Samantha I love her." Then all was darkness.

Epilogue: Next?



SAMANTHA'S HOUSE

I didn't expect to wake up in a comfortable bed, let alone at all. The ceiling was flat and smooth. The walls were covered in an elegant wallpaper. The lights were off, and the flowery patterned curtains were closed. The bed cover had green and pink flowers on it. And to top it all off, it smelled like her, that lovely sensuous scent.

I saw her face in my mind. I felt happy. I slowly realized that the bed beneath me was comfortable and soft. I relaxed into it, reliving my last memory. I did what the dying superorganism wanted me to, and now the conscious world can shatter their prison.

A long rectangle of light cut into the room.
Someone had opened the door.

"He's awake!" one of them said.

I sat up in the bed, putting the pillows behind me. As I did so, I found a little notebook with a pen in the coil binding. I thought of what my grandpa had said, how to keep your mind open and look for the impossible. He had given me some excellent advice. Three spiders scattered from the headboard, and I smiled. Insect superorganisms were incredibly important for our world, and personally essential to me in the last few months. I wouldn't have finished alive without them.

Samantha entered the room first and held my hand. She was smiling. She sat closest to me, Gurdeep and Rain stood at the end of the bed, and Xin pulled up a chair.

"Are you O.K., sweetie?" asked Samantha.

"I'm fine, love, for the first time in a long time."

"That's great – now can we ask some questions?" said Rain.

"Like what?"

"How did you survive?" said Sam.

"Xin did her part first, ensuring that I was going to be the first witness called."

"Just a few suggestions to the prosecution made it easy," she said.

"Then you, Gurdeep, did your part."

"It was a little tricky, getting everything on such a tight deadline. We managed to get a guard to tape it up against the bathroom toilet."

"Then, all I had to do was connect with the Superorganism. That was hard. I almost didn't think it would happen."

"How tricky?" Rain said.

"Not as tricky as I thought. It came almost too easily. Like the world wanted me to be there."

"How did that work, after all?" Samantha interjected.

"I realized the flaws in the current science of the world and exploited it. Simply, I understand the mathematical rules of social behavior really well, and that enabled me to modify and predict behavior significantly better than the IMC."

"And you had a heart attack."

"That was a risk I had to take."

"You bet your life on this?"

"Yes, I did."

Gurdeep said, "Through his sacrifice, we were able to reach a quarter of the population, the tipping point for an idea to become inevitable. Now, if we act quick enough, we can ensure it lasts for a very long time."

"Can't we rest for a moment, and just enjoy our victory?" I pleaded. "I'm exhausted."

"Yes, but we four need to act now, to ensure the spread of this idea virus," said Xin.

"We could build up a media company around this idea. Books, videos, speaking tours even. With these things, we could ensure the permanent spread of the power of the transferrable vote."

"That has some promise," I pondered.

Xin looked around the room. She was skeptical. "Yeah, but we don't know how to do any of that."

"And in the rules of the 6 dimensional projection, we can see how the biology in the universe expands. Especially we can see how minds work, individually and in gigantic groups. We can use that to start up our company."

"Alright," said Rain. "That sounds reasonable. Sort of."

"So," said Sam, "Explain in normal English!"

"The Collective Intelligence of the world follows rules. If we harness those rules, we have a lot of power. We can use that to develop our company and then make sure the world focuses on this idea for a very long time."

"We don't want it to die, do we?" said Samantha.

"So, we will start with a book that curates that knowledge, for everyone to access. We will empower the world with it," said Rain.

"Yes," I said, "Knowing you, that will be ingenious."

Everybody started talking over each other. The five of us were so excited to share the potential of a future where we cooperated successfully together. Can you imagine a world where we could trust each other, where everybody came together to build everyone else up? That could be a magical place!

"The six dimensional equations will allow us to create much more effective programs."

"This is just the first step, just the first step!" someone else said. "Collecting these ideas will allow us to create miracles."

And I whispered to myself, "We could change the world forever."

As I looked around at our small cabal, I could see that we had the seed of something special here. Together we had a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience. With our system harvesting human instinct and intuition, equally balanced, we are going to change the world!

Other Titles in this Series

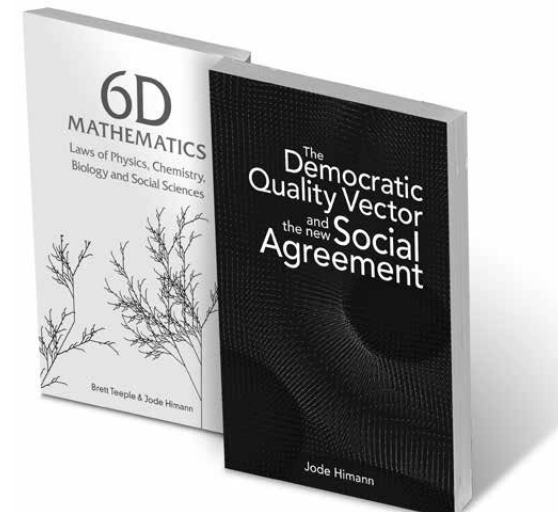
The Democratic Quality Vector and the New Social Agreement

The Democratic Quality Vector spans politics, history, culture, progress, revolution, epistemology as well as biology, sociology, neuroscience, mathematics and even psychedelic drugs, Jode Himann weaves together a spellbinding tale of how humanity's quest for truth has ended in the crisis now facing modern democracy.

The book concludes with innovative research into a new form of mathematics based on 6-dimensional spacetime that resolves the imperfections of the rationalist quest for truth, by introducing the new technologically-inspired concept called the Democratic Quality Vector (DQV). The potential outcomes has the potential to change the way we understand truth and also create a new system that can address the vulnerabilities of modern democracy. The book argues for true political freedom that can be achieved by employing the DQV to practically implement proxy voting – the idea that democratic voters ought to have the right to delegate their votes to others (and to revoke said delegations), as they see fit.

6D Mathematics: Laws of Physics, Chemistry, Biology & Social Science

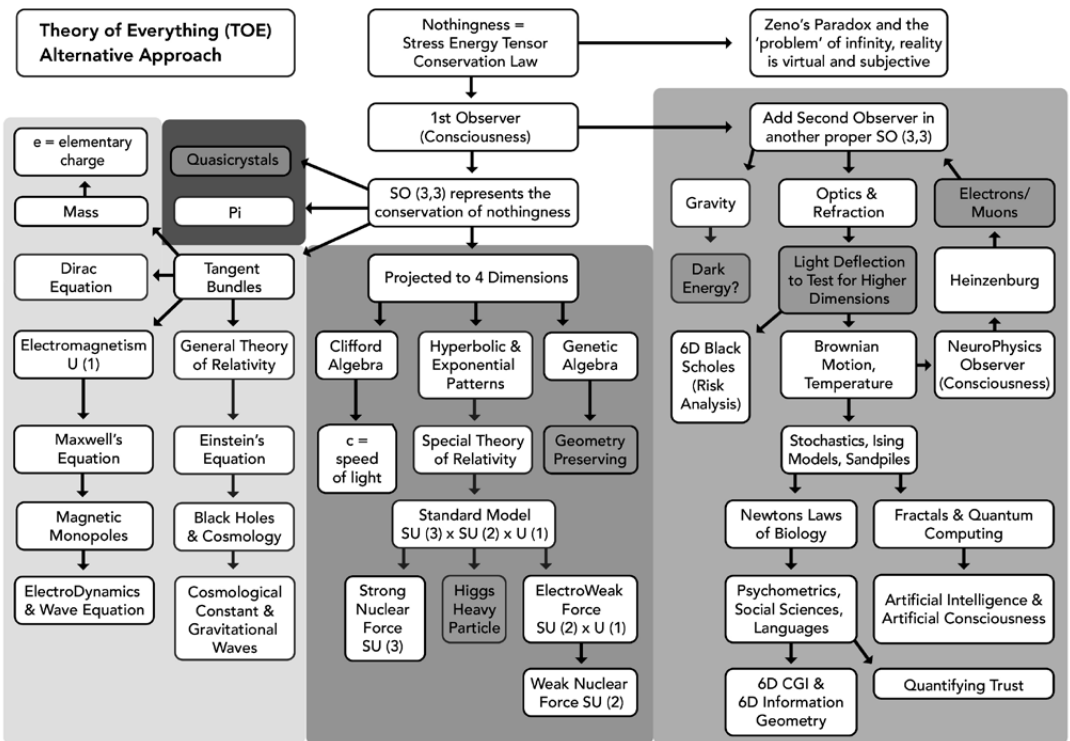
The world may be an illusion, a simple projection of our own consciousness. Like many ideas, it cannot be disproven. And yet most of us overlook this fact and embrace the potential illusion, taking the world for what it seems to be according to our senses. Naturally, then, we have spent the best part of our known history categorizing the world around us. Biologists have named the plants and animals around us. Linguists have come up with an international phonetic alphabet. In math, we have created languages, we have invented numbers, and systems in which we use numbers, in increasingly complicated ways, to describe the world around us.

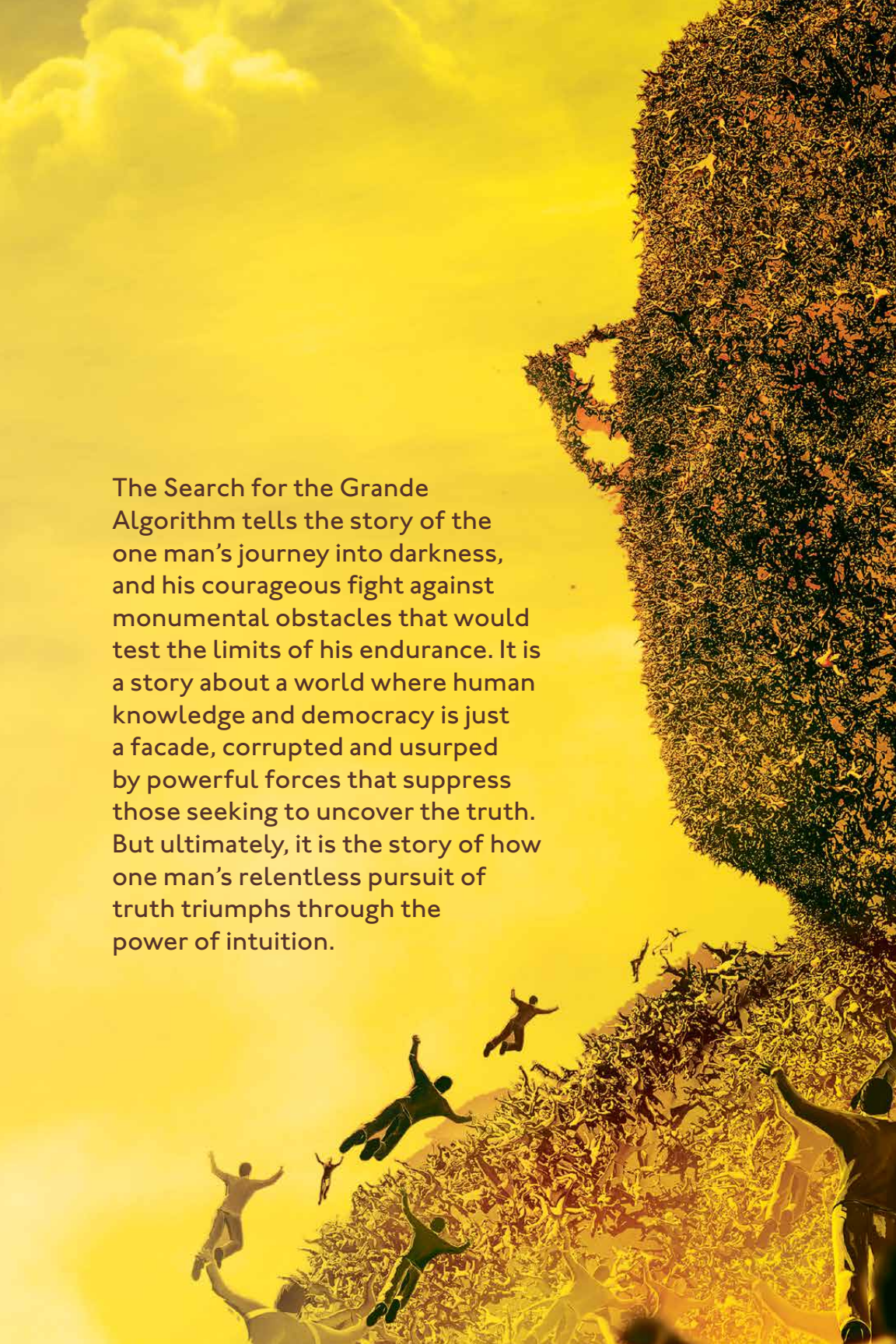


However, we are actually finding that the math does not have overwhelming predictive power and that it seems not to synchronize with reality perfectly. We are so far along this road that it is difficult even to look back, let alone to return to our axioms for a reappraisal, audit, and maybe a fresh start. If our global understanding does have an error, is it one that we will find in the future or one that we will find by examining our biases and assumptions.

The so-called Theory of Everything is a theory of physics to unify all the forces of Nature into one physical and mathematical entity, both a formula and a source. This includes gravity (both geometric/general relativistic or gauge-quantum in nature), quantum mechanics, electricity, magnetism, strong and weak nuclear forces in nuclear physics and particle theory, and special and general relativity. There, along the way, must also be found an answer to unanswered problems in physics relating to the fate of the Universe, the Big Bang, its very early stages, the abundance of Dark Matter in the Universe and what it is, the existence or non-existence of supersymmetry, and extra dimensions, and how many there are, the size of the cosmological constant, the proton decay problem, quark confinement and mass gap, matter anti-matter asymmetry, and the list goes on and on,...

We investigate a six dimensional spacetime with three time dimensions, with a split Minkowskian symmetry, $R_{3,3}$, and its simplifying and predictive aspects to universal laws of physics, chemistry, biology, and social sciences.



The background of the entire page is a golden-hued scene. On the right side, a steep, rocky cliffside is visible, covered in dense, dark green foliage. The sky is a bright, glowing yellow, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. In the foreground and middle ground, several silhouetted figures are shown in various stages of falling or jumping off the cliff. Some are in mid-air, while others are just beginning their descent. The overall atmosphere is one of dramatic tension and a sense of a high-stakes journey.

The Search for the Grande Algorithm tells the story of the one man's journey into darkness, and his courageous fight against monumental obstacles that would test the limits of his endurance. It is a story about a world where human knowledge and democracy is just a facade, corrupted and usurped by powerful forces that suppress those seeking to uncover the truth. But ultimately, it is the story of how one man's relentless pursuit of truth triumphs through the power of intuition.