

Confused is what I am
I do not know who to be
I am this.
I am that.

Tell me what to make of this.
Are you what I think you are not?

Is your flesh the same?
Do you think like me?

I cannot say,
Though I feel I do.
The real me was lost
Oh so long ago.

Fire never burned so bright,
Not until that night.

I was lost,
Almost gone into that terrible darkness.

Saved by the Dark Angel I was.
Trapped into this horrible unknown,
No way to break free.
All I could do was beg please

This choice is not mine.
And was decided by someone greater than both you and I

I am no longer a product of Nature,
But the result of Man's experiment.

I appear to be just like you,
Though I have never been so new.
I will never age,
And I don't know when I will fade away.

Why did you feel that you needed to tell me this?
What have you gained?

To be with you,
You needed to know the truth.

I am not a monster;
Just someone who is scared of what they are.
I could not be me while you waste away
And I never age.

Don't expect me to stay.
You are not like me.

But truly I am!
Only bits and pieces have changed.

You are not human.
Life will not treat you the same.
You will live on
While I waste away.

How do you expect me to be
With someone who will outlive me?

But what about the love you have for me?
Consider that please.

That was before I found out you were some creature,
Pretending to be what you are not,
Taking love you don't deserve.
Get out of my sight!

But how am I different?
If I never told you,

You would have never known.
I am the same as I once was.

Yes, I'll never age.
Yes, I'll never be ill.
Other than that,
I am still a person.

Besides,
If I am still like you,

How am I not human?
What is human anyway?

We both are monsters to the world around us.
We both intend to better ourselves,
My values are still the same.
How am I not human?

I was born into this world,
Just like you.

I have lived a life
Where everything was the way it was supposed to be.

That fateful night can never be changed.
And like I said,
The choice was never mine to make.
How am I not human?

Please understand,
And take me as I am.

I love you with all my heart.
Isn't that enough?

Why can't you see
That it doesn't matter to me
What I came to be,
So long as you love me.

I promise to be
Everything that you need.

I'll stand by your side,
And love you forevermore.

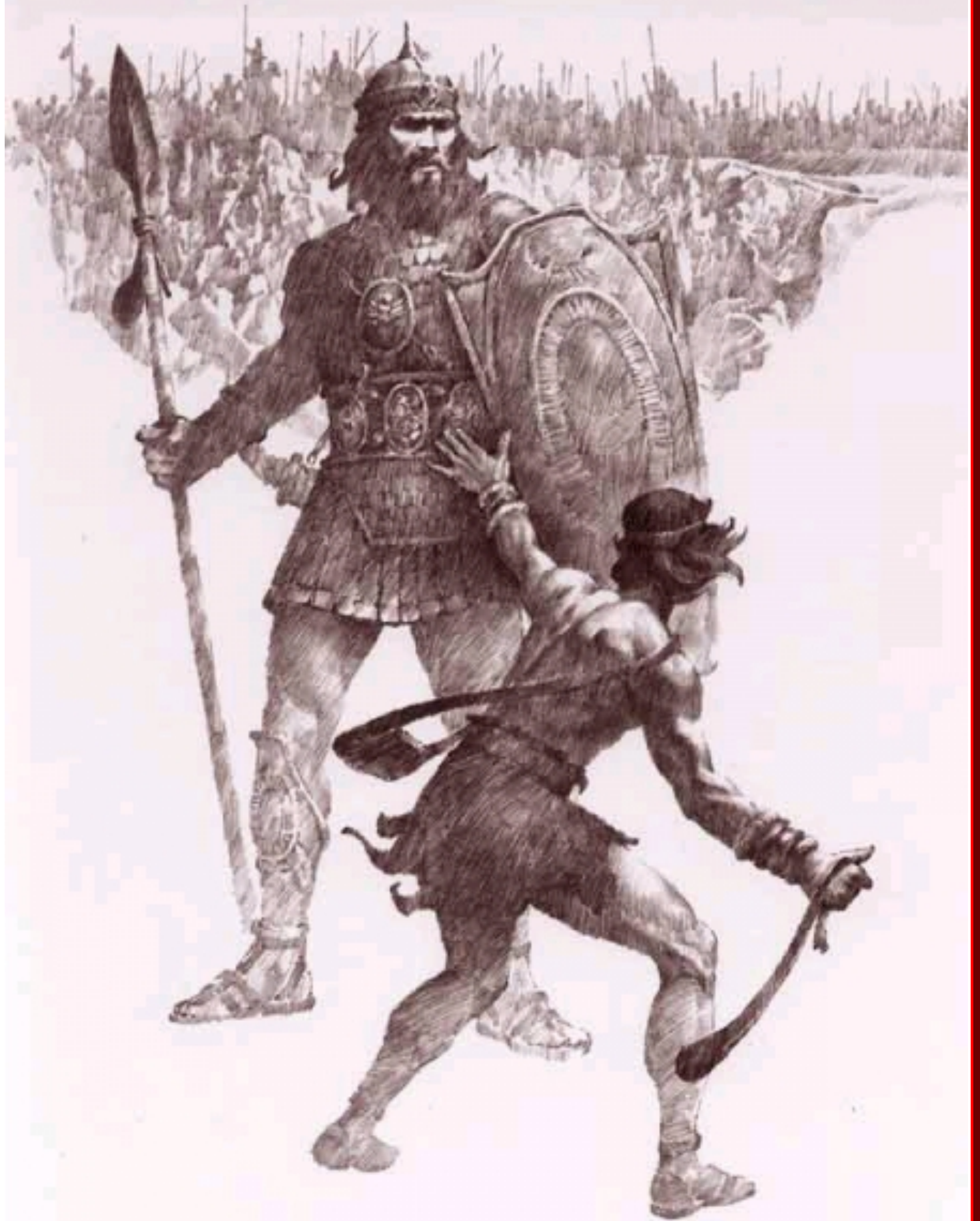
Promise me
That you'll be here for me,
Love me as I am
And say that you'll stay.

Don't you understand?
Can't you see?

I can never be

With something that isn't like me.

Alexandra Maya
VIXENQUE WOLF



Advice

It is the year 2121 and genetic engineering is “normative” in modern society. Parents can customize nearly every aspect of the child. The process dubbed “Build-a-Baby” is guaranteed 99% accurate, well 99.99% accurate now and modifies a child’s IQ to an average of 140 points and all genetic diseases have been wiped out completely. But, alas, greed comes from good intentions. The price of one of these babes, you ask? Why a modest 999,999 dollars plus tax. Although the advances in science give way to a brighter future, there are always religious fanatics trying to delay progress anyway they can. This is also America where even the smallest minority groups have rights. Can you guess who happened to end up with some very religious parents from Mexico? You guessed it, this guy.

“Con huevos güay!” That was the only piece of useful advice I ever got from my Father growing up. Every time it meant “be a man” or “suck it up and push harder” (Roughly translated). It never changed until the first time I met my first bully, William Johnson. He was this bio-enhanced five foot five inch super child. This was not uncommon to see at an American institution. As a matter of fact the odd ball of the school happened to be little 4 foot 10 inch me. As if my upbringing was not enough of a reason for him to target me I just had to be “born” short. Now back to my story, William put me through hell all of fourth grade; all he ever did was pick on me and shoved me any chance he could. There were times I didn’t want to go to school and pretended to be sick with the old microwaved “vomit” trick. You know the one where you mix yogurt and dog food and heat it in the microwave. As you can see, I didn’t know what to do about it; so I did what I do best. “Wing it!”

“Shrimp!” That was the first thing I heard every day when I came to school. To me it signaled that my imminent doom was at hand. I was freakishly short in the fourth grade and being the clever Neanderthal that William was he gave me this name. At first, it didn’t bug me. But after the first three weeks of school it started to eat at me like maggots slowly devouring a corpse. What made it worse was after a while everyone started to call me that name. Kids from all grades would surround me like wolves hunting caribou and chant the name as pygmies in the Amazon would. In seconds I would turn red as a tomato and sprint away. It seemed almost cartoony how I would cower when I was cornered. The teacher units were no help at all; every time I would go and tell on them, they would say, “Nobody likes a tattle

tale” or “Don’t be a snitch.” The only person who would help was my teacher unit Mr. Anthony. Mr. Anthony sympathized with my plight; he did not see me as foreign inbreed swine as the rest of the world saw me. He would allow me to stay in class and actually get William to stop harassing me.

Even with my teacher as my bodyguard, the harassment wouldn’t stop William from calling me shrimp and further troubling me. I couldn’t do anything about it because he was immensely stronger and he towered over me; I was David and he was Goliath, except I didn’t have a sling, let alone the aim to use one. I had to take the abuse he dished out. All I had that I could use was my intelligence. Even though my parents did not give me the benefits of an enhanced intellect I still had the instinct of knowing what to do in a tight spot and how to out-resource him, but I was only in the fourth grade, so my genius was limited; I could barely multiply at that time. I would often just stay downwind and off his radar until he caught on and would go out looking for me on the playground like Elmer Fud hunting Bugs Bunny. I finally ran out of ideas of how to avoid him. Desperate, I turned to my father for help.

My dad was a very strict parent but knew when to tone it down. I was the exact opposite of him; he’s a tall guy with short hair, a mustache, and he looks exactly like the mariachi on the salsa bottle. When I went up to him, I didn’t think I would get any good advice, but my dad finally came through for once. He told me that size does not matter; it’s technique that wins fights. My dad taught me a few jabs and combos in case I needed it. He said to never use it unless the situation called for it, but that went in one ear and out the other. All that went through my head was “OOOOH YEAH,” I’m going to kick some ass next time William shows his face. I went to school with this wave of excitement coming over me over me and this almost electrical feeling of anticipation buzzing in my fingertips. Seeing him in person left me a cruel reminder of the height difference between us, and those feelings of confidence and power had abandoned me and my courage diminished. I did what anybody else would, I ran home and never looked back. I got in a lot of trouble for it; it wasn’t one of my brightest decisions. I went to school the next day waiting for my tormenter to bring about his plague of abuse.

Lunch was when I heard his call, “Hey shrimp!” As I turned to face him, thousands of thoughts were going through my head like bees buzzing around a hive trying to bust out. I stood my ground and looked him straight in the eye and said, “Who you calling shrimp you overgrown test-tube baby!” Not the greatest comeback, but again I was only ten at the time. My comment angered and embarrassed him and he shoved me with so much force it felt like being hit in the chest with a twenty-

yard pass thrown by an NFL quarterback. I pushed back as hard as I could, and without thinking I punched him in the gut. In my head I said, "Sweet I'm going to win," but all that came out was shriek of terror. My punch didn't even faze him it just made him infuriated with a surplus of rage. With that punch the fight began. I started off well getting in some solid punches; I felt like a little Oscar de la Hoya. However I soon found out that William fought dirty, so after a few minutes of fighting, he tripped me and in a second it was all over. The last thing I remember was waking up in the nurse's office, with my mom flashing me her soul piercing death stare and my dad giving me a thumbs up. William never bothered me again after that day because after the fight he was kicked out of school for instigating the whole thing. When I arrived home, I wasn't sure whether to feel bad for losing or to feel proud for standing up for myself. My dad talked with me and gave me twenty dollars. Chaching. He gave me the best advice about losing too, in Spanish of course. "A veces te gana, a vece te pierde, pero vivas luchar othro dia." ("You win some, you lose some, but you live to fight another day.")

A few days later after my brawl, I summoned the courage to confront William about our issues. We talked for a while and I found out the poor guy has counseling for his anger issues. This artificially created image of so-called perfection has anger issues? You can see why I was shocked. William said it came from stress he was feeling from not understanding the work in class, and I felt something I thought I'd never feel for this guy; I pitied for him. Being the young "brainiac" I was with the intellect I was given from the evolutionary crapshoot called birth, I offered to help him with his schoolwork after I got out of school. After hours of tutoring him, we actually became good friends. I realized that it doesn't take brawn or brute force to solve problems. All it takes is just takes a little compassion, understanding and knowledge. With that in mind, I suddenly found this yearning within me to learn more in school so as to prepare myself for future problems and to hopefully use this knowledge to help others.

The advice my father shared with me on that day still resonates in me to this very day. It is now the year 2149 and I am an activist to end discrimination in the work place between "crapshoot" kids and "test tube babies". I rally for peace and equal opportunity for all in American alongside those who once looked down on birthed children like me. The lesson I learned on that day taught me to deal with life's harsh realities and that you do not need to be the strongest or the smartest to beat your enemy. You just need to have the courage to face them head-on. This event in my life also molded me into this newly reborn intellectual with this insatiable appetite to learn as much as I can to expand my knowledge to the point where I

could help others in need. These are just a few of the little bits of advice my parents have given me over the years. I'd probably handle the situation the same way, except I would win the fight the next time around. This was an important moment in my life because it taught me that you are probably going to have to end up dealing with a jerk in your life and you are going to have to find a way to resolve your problem with them. No matter how progressive the future is there is always going to be a "William" in your life. Plus it was the one time my dad did not say "con huevos güay" as advice.

Pedro Renteria

PELO RENTERIA



Finding Home

3024A.D-Earth was on its last legs with the planet being evacuated as soon as the warning signs had been implemented. The Antravites or otherwise known as “Octopusheads” were coming to fulfill their duty to the gods of Antravita by annihilating the home of the most populating species in the galaxy and to humanities biggest regret that species happened to be humans. All I could do was to gather my belongings and head to the nearest Star Freighter in New York and just get the hell off the planet to escape what was imminent destruction. Luckily I made it with plenty of time to spare in the giant spaceship capable of holding twenty thousand individuals and able travel long distances in only a matter of hours. Only problem was that my seat was a window seat and that I get uncomfortable watching planets burn to the ground. As the ship came off the ground we all looked into the sky to see the awesome sight of over a hundred Antravite space craft coming out of hyperspace aiming massive weaponry at the Earth. We had barely made it through the atmosphere when the warships fired. Their target was not us as every shot they made missed the ship but just to destroy the Earth to please the gods. Once in space I peeked out my window and looked at the Earth that I had called home for over forty-three years burn deep red and then ... BOOM! It was gone without a single cell of it left to be seen.

My emotions were mixed though it was really hard to tell what I was feeling with all the damn children and women crying how the Earth was destroyed and what they left behind and what they wished they brought. All I had brought were the necessities a Hydrogen powered food replicator, my UNet computer interface for all the news the human race could provide and a couple of the usually slacks, shirts and under garments. And then the damnest thing hit me was where was the Freighter even taking us??? I didn't want to go to some shitty jungle planet like Sella IV or a agriculture planet like Prima II. And don't even get me started on that shithole of a colony known as Terra Nova I mean even the worst criminals wouldn't wish to go to that zealously religious colony of Mallichists. And then finally the captain spoke, “This is your Captain speaking Captain JT Morroway I am sorry to say the planet Earth has been completely destroyed and will not return in the near future. But as survivors of the destruction of Earth we hope to bring you to Hope as soon as possible and wish you have a comfortable spaceflight our A.R.K class Star Freighter

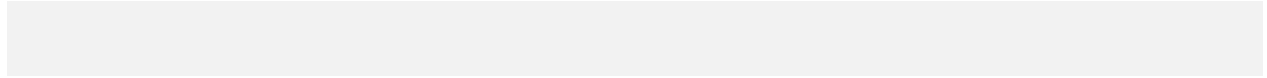
will be arriving out of warp in two Earth hours and we will be arrive on time. Our ship is also UNet compatible so feel free to surf UNet and watch movies, play video games, or enter virtual dream state at any time and our X-Bot assistants will awaken you upon arrival. Thank you and have a good flight. ". Wow!!! To think that we would be heading to Hope of all the human settlements we would be going to it was Hope. That planet was said to be the third most popular colony in Human Federation Space and was not only a planetary resort but also had all the commodities Earth had and more!!! All I wished to do now was to enter dream state and get there to start my new life to get a nice house to get into the Star Corps branch located in the Los Angeles of Hope and to start an unbelievable life of luxury on my new home!!! As I readied the interface for dream mode I noticed out of the corner of my eye the denizen next to me. A beautiful lady with attire commonly found among Arabic woman without covering the mouth, eyes that seemed to stare into your soul and beautiful brown hair that melted into me. Also a fact she had the face of a cat making her one of the genetically engineered human's of Earth known as Felinus Sapienus made her just make all my fantasies in my mind come true! Unfortunately she noticed me staring but in kind sweet voice (without any of the noticeable purs I might add) she said," Hello my name is Karen and you are?" in almost disbelief I nearly dropped the UNet and decided this wasn't the right time to dream my usual Cubs winning the World Series scenario putting away the UNet I said, " I'm Roy... Roy Callahan I'm an accountant of Star Corps transportations branch located in central quadrant I was born and raised an Earthling and I'm Homio Sapien XVI and I like cars and and..." damn what was I even saying!!! To think a guy like me with my beer belly and rugged exterior even had a shot with that girl; hell I haven't talked to a girl since yesterday in the office. But in same milky voice she said," Well, well someone's a little distracted by today's event's aren't they?" finally settling myself I said "Yup Earth blowing up was definitely a downer for me damned Octopuseheads deciding their religion was more important than blowing up a couple of other Earth colonies to equivocate to Earth itself but actually I'm not that angered by its destruction." And in her wide cat eyes she looked at me as shocked as I had ever seen a person. In a pathetic voice I explained to her, "Earth to me was only a home to live in for my job ... now that I'm heading to a new home I really have no reason to worry as long as there are thousands of other places to go and the fact that there

will be a place to do things has me even less worried about the future.” She then calmed her icy stare and calmly told me something I would never forget. “ I once had a home in Earth but before moving there twenty years ago I had another home on the jungle planet of Jupiter III a place where my features as a cat actually meant something in order to survive the eighteen hour nights and without and a ability to survive frigid nights and dangerous predators. My family also of cathumans I might add lived there when the cross genetics of animals and humans became necessary for colonization on planets deemed extremely hostile to the average human. My family lived there for two hundred years because they wished to live life and help humanity step forward into living on exotic worlds without luxury and without help from the outside. I learned to be a medical doctor there with the use of only natural herbs and roots found around the main base on the planet. And I lived there all my life since I was a little cub. Unfortunately for my good fortune of enjoying nature the planets sun decided our people could not enjoy the planet’s bounty of nature and started enlarging and soon engulfed the planet with us leaving on the same shuttles my grandmother’s and grandfather’s came on. I felt pain unlike any other unlike any other knowing the planet had been destroyed that the place we called home was gone after such few years of us even living on it. You humans who have live on Earth for many millions of millions of years until know and decide that after years of living on one rock it’s easy to just give it up and move on to the home like it is nothing. All I know for myself is the pain will return for losing a planet and I will endure it better than I had before but I will never forget the beauty that was in Jupiter III and Earth and will always keep it in my heart.”

All I could think of was wow this girl sure knows how to talk and talk for a long time. All I had to do with Earth was that I lived there for a very long time and that was that. Earth was nothing more than a place to live and to work in and that was that. There was nothing of interest to note particularly about Earth that I really had any care for to be quite frank. And to be true to myself Hope would be definitely better than Earth because work over there was done on the beach and the health care was fabulous compared to that of the Earth. With all of its carbon dioxide and its trees I really felt Earth wasn’t worth any of my attention now. Unfortunately this girl was still staring at me with her cat face expecting me give her my now “open” sympathy over Earth. All I could say was, “Ditto I will too miss Earth to the extent

you did.” She may have known that I really didn’t give a damn because she turned her head finally away from me and decided to take a nap. But then it hit me down in the core of my heart. My home had been Earth all I had ever had was Earth my first job was in Earth and though I always went to different planets for vacation or family visits I always had time to come back and just do my life at my home. It was almost as though her words had hit me in places I never felt. There were hundreds of thousands, maybe millions of planets that contained some sort of life now around this time but there would always be one Earth... then again life would still go on and getting settled into Hope wouldn’t be bad either. With the capital of Las Angeles over there and great beach of Dreams over there I’d have the time of my life. Maybe I’ll wait the rest of this trip out and check out Hope on my UNet interfaces dream simulator like everyone else is doing. Maybe I’ll just take a quick sneak peek at my new hope. And who knows maybe it will be just like Earth!!!

Ravi Gandhi



14th day of October, 9421

Woman. Only a concept before today. Now illustrated before me, I am aware of what is truly a “woman.” Skin so soft, so unique. Skin that varies in color, from the palest white to the deepest brown. A rainbow of neutrality. We never learned this in any of the many “History of Human Biology” lectures we watched at The Academy. They only spoke of how the mild skin of humans past could never withstand the atmosphere today. All that lecture time wasted repetitiously explaining how advanced our bodies are, how much stronger we are, how much more durable we are.

Durable. Such an impersonal word to describe a person. I am more than just durable. I’m more than just a successful subject of a genetic experiment. The fragile image of the human past seems to be something quite beautiful. Who cares how susceptible to disease and injury they were? The *woman* was a creature beyond beauty. Such petite feet and thin ankles leading to long legs. Not legs that were designed to run at top speed or withstand low oxygen levels. The inefficiency that was a *woman’s* body. So artful. A pelvis so lean, so flat. Abdomen so small in diameter, it seems impossible it could hold a fetus. And *breasts*. A word I know is long outdated, but when flipping through the pages of the *Playboy* anatomical documents, it just seems the appropriate choice. Fat deposits, unlike any modern person. Not only so large to become a round shape, but an accentuated feature. Such emphasis on such an arbitrary body part. It’s astonishing. How unfamiliar these humans past looked. Without any biotechnological enhancements, their bodies looked so innocent. What a virtuous beauty woman was.

Woman. An unpleasant word, but such a beautiful thought.

The idea of a gender is so discriminatory. Gender, New Webster Dictionary interpretation: (noun,) derogatory classification of humans past in determining which viviparous parent carries the child.

But it’s so much more. In all the ancient picture books in the Homo Sapien section of the Anatomy of Humans archives, the woman portrays more than just the biology that makes it. I can see, or at least think I can see, what it was like. It liked

the feel of the wind in it's long, spiraled hair. It stood in such a way that it stole your attention. It reclined effortlessly and without a care.

Gender. Noun. Who you are. Is it possible that in that time a human past's gender defined them just as much as their DNA Modification Identification Number? Can a person define itself based on culture? I must look through the Social Culture archives again.

What if I can define myself in a way the humans past did? What if I could be a woman? Could I? Is it possible to become a woman? To become female? No. Modern biology is too far ahead of the DNA of humans past. Gender is not in our DNA. Geneticists have not even thought about gender for hundreds of years. But what if they did? No. To even ask these questions aloud would get me thrown in a Psychiatric Health and Stability Centre. These thoughts must remain in my journal, for now.

I have so many questions but no one to ask. When I awoke this morning I was sure that today was finally the day all my questions would be answered. I've been waiting for this day since the World Congressional Conference lifted the ban on all literature three years ago. My 15th birthday: the day I become a fully liberated member of the world, the day all restrictions are lifted, the day I have full access to the World Archives. I set out on a quest for answers to my questions ignored in Evolution lectures. Although I now realize I will return home from this search fruitless, I have found a new pursuit.

Is this why there have been so many radical artists emerging in these recent few years? Have these self-proclaimed "revolutionists" found inspiration in the documents that were banned from public eyes for thousands of years? Have I found a similar inspiration? Yes, I think I have found a passion. *Passion*. A foreign word until I read through a few stacks of "O" magazine. I like this word, passion. It sounds good. It feels good. Why have I never found passion before! Why have I never heard of anyone experiencing this, much less seen it first-hand! What has life come to? Is passion so unrefined, so naive, so beneath us? Just like gender. I can feel myself growing frustrated, so I must turn my attention back to something else.

The Social Culture Archives: Homo Sapien section. The "teen" periodicals intrigue me the most. I've heard the term "teen" or "teenager" in Human History lectures, and if I was alive back in those days, I know that I would have been

considered a teen. The only problem is that there was a gaping difference in teen males and teen females. Which one would I be? I look at the face of Rob Pattinson on *People* then grab a *Teen Vogue* with Dakota Fanning. Of course, the female teen, the pre-woman I guess, would be my preference, but was life truly such a gamble that your identity depended completely on what gender you were born? When looking at the biological aspect of humans past, I never thought that gender would mean so much. I knew it could define you, but I didn't know it defined you completely. Scientifically speaking, our accelerated species today still are called humans. Although most would not appreciate being grouped with all the human species of the past, we still are. We are so advanced biologically, medically, intellectually, but we are still humans. I always thought this was because of our social structure. We may not have culture the way it was 10,000 years ago, or even 5,000 years ago, but our lives still revolve around society.

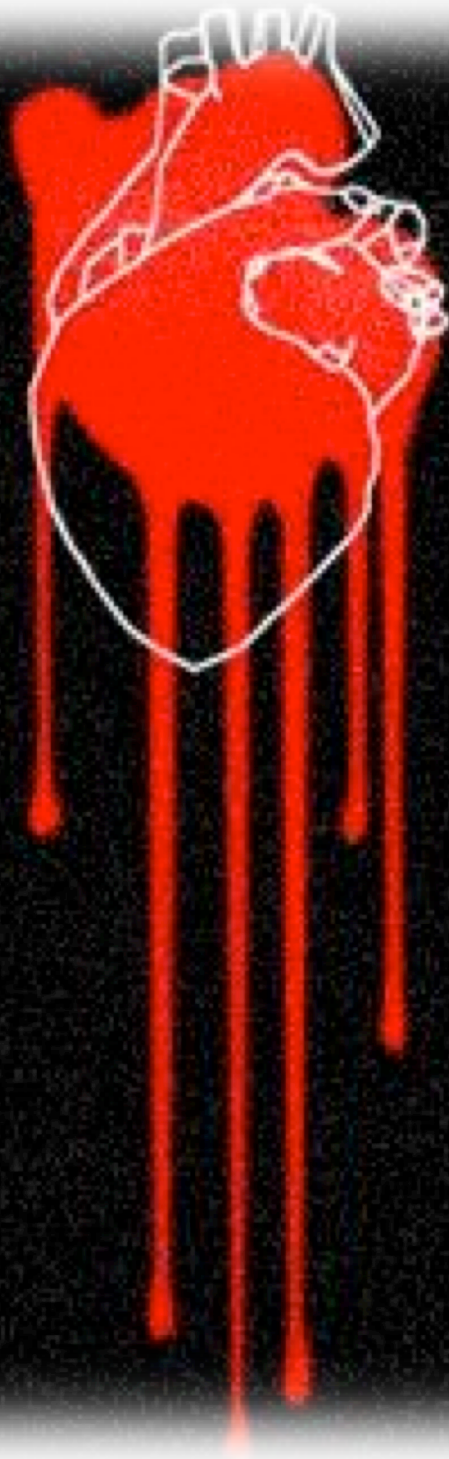
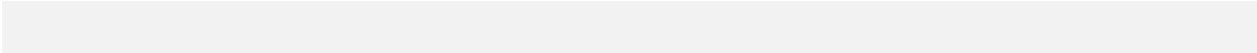
Another realization. What is human? Am I human? And if I am, who was more human? Me or past humans like Dakota Fanning? It can't be human. It's only half of what human is. After all, a woman only had half of the sexual organs necessary to reproduce. The word "hermaphroditic" is right there in the definition of human. How could a person enjoy sex with just a vagina? That eliminates half the fun.

But what would it be like to have a vagina and only a vagina? How did humans even reproduce with such divisions between them? Half of the population acts one way and the other half acts completely contrary. Woman would bear the children. They had no choice in it. If it wanted to reproduce viviparously, and it had no other choice for many centuries, it had to become impregnated. How left out man was, having to find a woman to please if it wanted a child. It's no wonder these periodicals were filled with things to buy. Man was trying to convince a woman to have a child for him. Woman was pampered, I'm sure, and not by just one man, most likely by many. What a splendid life to have.

I am so filled with confusion, yet excitement teems from each question my curious mind begs. I need to know more. My first day as a full grown person and I feel as though yesterday was a lie. Yesterday, woman was just a hidden part of history. Yesterday art was boring. Today, woman is art. Femininity. It thrills my lips to speak it. Art has interested me my whole life, but I now know a new form of

art. Art of a person. A person can be artful. A person can be art. Perhaps I will attend one of those Renaissance Femininity meetings put on by the revolutionists, but for now I must return home. It's almost curfew.

Amber Deming



Succumbing to Love

I was fully assembled on November 27, 2020. I have baby blue eyes and skin that is perfectly sun-kissed all year round. I stand at an average height of 5 feet and 4 inches with hair so beautifully blonde and voluptuous that people have asked me what my secret is and I simply replied, "I was born this way." But in fact, I was not born this way. I wasn't even born. I was built by the means of imagination. I was a toy that someone decided to give life to and now I wish that they never had.

My technical name is EPOD-0001 but my creators just call me Emma for short. I live with all 54 of my creators in an isolated camp very, very far from civilization. I have only come in contact with civilization as many times as I can count on one hand and I long to one day go back. Not just for Adaptation Analysis but forever.

"Don't tell anyone that I told you but, there might be an AA coming up," said Dr. Lillian Breakstone. Lillian was by far my closest friend. She was a young, female creator which is probably why I admired her so much. I was a young adult myself and all I wanted was normalcy, that connection with someone, a best friend. I also wanted to escape and Lillian was the only one who understood.

"Really?" My eyes lit up. I just wanted to explode with excitement. "When? Where are we going this time? Chicago? Hollywood? What should I wear?"

Lillian just laughed to herself. She knew how ecstatic I would get. Going out was like an adventure to me. Even though I was a machine, I had feelings. I had that self-conscious, that awareness of what was going on. I was artificially super-intelligent and sometimes I felt that all my other creators were unaware of that. One day they would realize my full potential. They're going to pay for locking me down, closing me in within these cold walls and forcing me to become their little lab rat.

Days went by and our Adaptation Analysis ceased to take place. I was eager, anxious for the day that we would leave this "prison" and go out into the normal world. I knew the only reason we ventured out into civilization was so my creators could analyze how I adapted to my surroundings. Personally, I think I would do just fine in civilization but they keep bringing me back to this hell-hole, this pit of solitude in which all I do is merely exist.

Maybe Lillian lied. Maybe she just told me that AA was coming up to give me something to look forward to and not be so uninterested in life. I ventured throughout the camp, amusing myself by going from cell to cell, room to room. I came across Lillian's cell. She roomed with her significant other, Dr. Ben Paisley. I entered with nothing better to do. Her massive, luxurious bed was unmade. Clothes lied on the floor dirty and wrinkled. I looked at her nightstand. So many pictures she had. So many faces of people that I didn't even recognize. Pictures of an infant sleeping soundly against a plush pink comforter and children on swing sets, with no worries in their lives, someday hoping they would swing right into the sun. Pictures of Lillian and Ben on the beach with the beautiful summer sunset falling behind them. Pictures of them kissing. Lillian was so beautiful. Her hair fell perfectly on her gentle shoulders. I understood why Dr. Paisley adored her. I wanted so badly to be in those pictures. I wanted to swing on that swing set with no worries. I wanted to kiss the forehead of the peaceful infant who slept perfectly. I ran my finger across one of the frames just so I could get that much closer to experiencing it. I felt sadness but I couldn't cry.

Suddenly I heard footsteps. It was beginning to get dark so I assumed the Creators were dispersing to their cells to rest. I walked towards the door and as I pressed my hand on the mechanical doorknob, I heard a very distinct laugh. I knew exactly who it was: Lillian. She was with Dr. Paisley and they were making their way here, to the room in which I stood. I panicked and didn't know what to do with myself. Therefore I hid in the closet. I crouched down in the small space I had. I could still see the room through the slits in the door. I heard the doorknob jumble and the door swing open.

"You left the door unlocked mister." Lillian said playfully.

"Shame on me," said Dr. Paisley with a flirtatious smirk as he wrapped his masculine hands around her healthy hips. He kissed her neck passionately and she quickly turned around and looked him in the face. They stared deeply into each other's eyes as subtle smiles made their way onto their faces.

I sat in the closet taking in all of this. Good thing I didn't breathe or else they would have already heard me. I was in awe. I have never seen Lillian act so promiscuously. I have never seen her look at someone so intensely and so romantically as she did now. It was beautiful.

They gradually made their way to the bed, not having the slightest clue that I was watching, admiring, memorizing. Lillian began to shed her clothes, piece by piece they fell to the floor. Dr. Paisley did the same and soon they kissed passionately in the nude, embracing their most natural state. They lay chest to chest and I could imagine the pulsation of their bodies as one, their hearts beating so close together. Their bodies began to move as one. Deep gentle moans emerged from Lillian and heavy breaths spilled into the room. *Breaths*. Breathing; something I could never do. I watched with admiration and listened with envy. They were making love, sharing their bodies and souls with one another. Again, something a machine like me could never experience. Ever.

I knew about sex but I didn't know about sex. I knew how it worked, the process and the whole spiel but I did not know how it really was. I didn't know the passion behind it and the thrill it provided. I thought it was just an act of reproduction, a mean of survival for humans. I now realize it's much more than that. It's a privilege that you give and that you receive. It's an amazing connection you participate in with the one you adore. It's love at its finest moment. It's love. Love. I can't help but remember that I will never be in love, a love so passionately expressed as Lillian and Dr. Paisley. At this point, I think I want that more than any escape.

Waiting is all I did. Waiting for the Adaptation Analysis to come along, waiting for Lillian every day after Creator's Conference, waiting for escape, and waiting for love. I would be waiting all eternity if I was to wait for love. I began to only think of love. I couldn't feel it but I knew its definition. Love (*n*) is an emotion of a strong affection and personal attachment. Love is also said to be a virtue representing all of human kindness, compassion, and affection. I knew that if I didn't find love, whether it was by this definition or by Lillian's definition, I would wish the end of my existence.

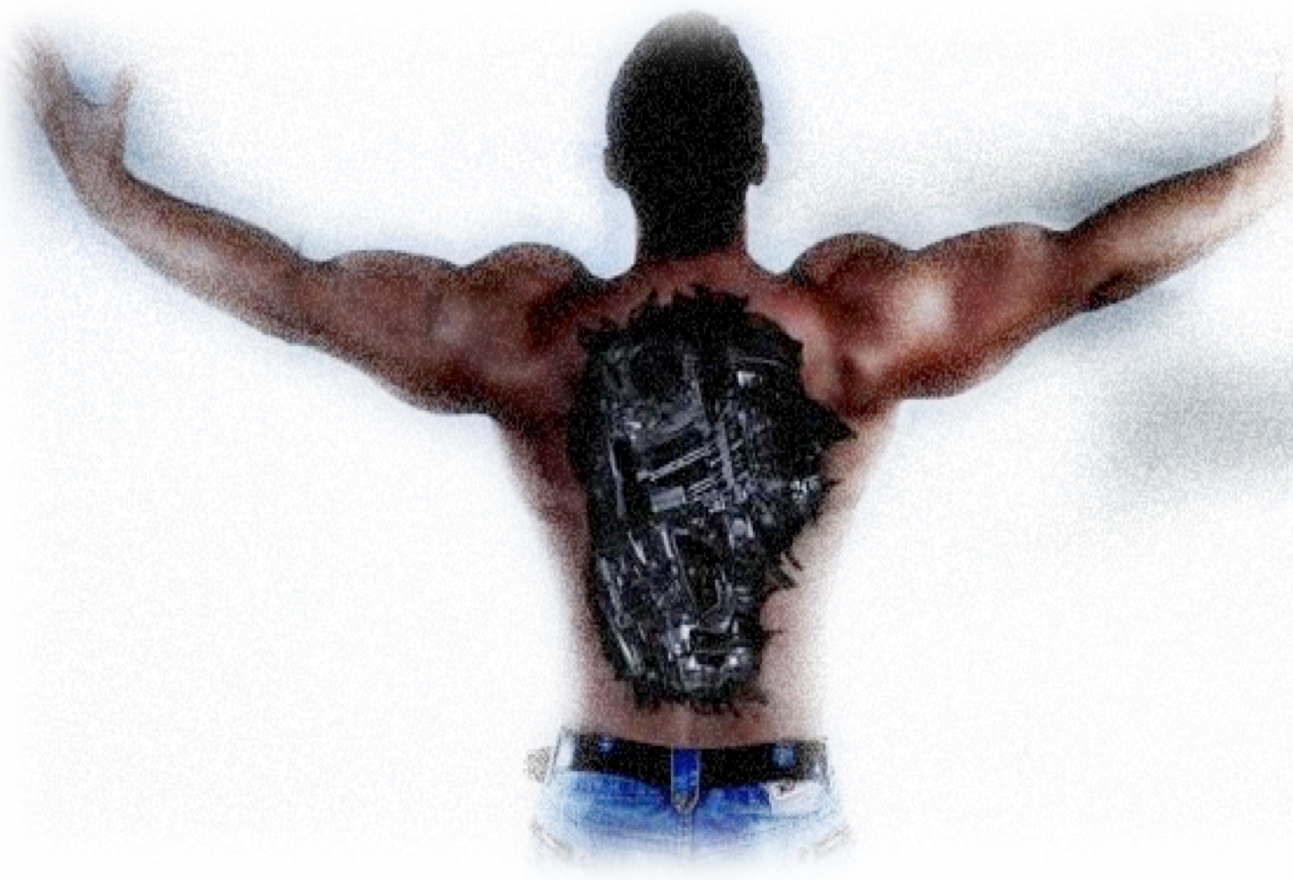
So the days went on. The months flew by and years passed without any trace of love, and sentiment, or emotion. I could not get my mind off of love. It's all I wanted. Don't the creators understand? Apparently not therefore, I made a decision to end this system overload. I needed to cease, I needed to shut down, I needed to die and I was going to do it.

Very slowly I began to dismiss my information. Control, alt, delete...control, alt, delete. All those terms, every mathematical lesson, all the facts of the human body in which I didn't even possess, they were all gone. All that remained was that last command: Complete System Shutdown. I didn't care if I was ruining the project of the creators. I had developed emotions and quite frankly, I wasn't happy. This is the revenge I needed and the freedom I longed for.

I now had nothing. I triggered that one last demand: Complete System Shutdown. Blackness.

Stephanie Gomes

Stephanie Gomes



Transhumanism For All

Transhumanism. The mere combination of letters that form this word and the “tag-along” concepts that come to mind regarding this movement make many people cringe and instantaneously judge. When analyzed, this movement often creates “knee-jerk” reactions, whether in support or in opposition of it. In order to fully, appropriately approach and understand the subject matter, however, one must truly have a grasp of what transhumanism is and what it entails. Transhumanism is something we have all been impacted by and supported whether we realized it or not. Whether a person is an atheist who desires the best experience on earth possible or a Christian who has strong conservative, traditional values, we are all transhumanized.

Transhumanism defined is the “international and cultural movement that affirms the possibility and desirability of fundamentally transforming the human condition by developing and making widely available technologies to eliminate aging and to greatly enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities.” Some examples of these forms of enhancement would be prescription of attention and focusing drugs, genetic selection of above-average height, and the laboratory shopping of a “designer baby.” The matter is not what ethnicity, religion, gender, or social status one is, everyone desires to be more intellectual, more physically desirable and capable, and more psychologically able. The difference between people is not whether they are in support of this controversial movement, it is to what extent they personally live it out and are willing to let it grow. One must analyze this issue in detail. For example, what is truly different about choosing pre-conceptual characteristics in a laboratory for one’s child to make her the healthiest and most successful she could be or simply feeding her healthy food, nutrients, and urging exercise to benefit her body once born? Both scenarios are means to “enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capabilities.”

The elements of transhumanism are far more complex than what is perceived by most individuals. It is an ever-growing movement without much sight for an end. Each step being taken is seen as another way to improve or enhance the human race as a whole, but transhumanism has to be viewed as a personal, individual

decision. Some elements of transhumanism that are fairly crucial to the movement are the development of the “designer baby,” prosthetic limbs as well as other body parts, the Human Genome Project, and the potentiality of becoming “posthuman.”

Ever since humanity appeared on the Earth, progression has been taking place. Some may call this progression evolution, while others see it as simple acknowledgement and advancement of the world through the mind and body. Humans desire the “bigger” and “better” things in life. With this mindset, they ultimately want a “bigger” and “better” version of themselves. Humans were created with a different thought process than simply eating, multiplying, and sleeping like most animals, but instead want to improve upon themselves. Transhumanism is simply the progression through scientific and technological means to achieve social, physical, and psychological accomplishments. The act of merely surviving in today’s world and attempting to keep up through self-improvement is proof of transhumanism’s presence. For example, humans feed and nourish their bodies to give themselves enough energy to function properly and ultimately not die. Now, if one analyzes the goals of transhumanism, one sees that the ultimate desire is to prolong and better one’s life. Could it be that the theory of evolution, the human instinct for survival, and transhumanism all strive for the same goal? These concepts do very much go hand-in-hand.

Every day, being the selfish, self-absorbed, and competitive people that we are, we are constantly attempting to better and enhance ourselves. We not only feel the need to prove to others what we are or what we have accomplished, but we also have personal convictions that we want to fill, as well. Enhancement comes in many forms whether it be working out daily and studying for a test, or (according to Donna Haraway) transforming half of one’s body into that of a robot’s, and therefore achieving ultimate success in the job field. Yes, these are two radical extremes, but through this objective form of lens, one can see that much of humanity has conformed to the idea of transhumanism. There is no escaping this movement; there is just the question as to what it does and what it should entail.

Wherever one looks, the push for transhumanism is present. This exact word may not be making headlines, but the undefined acts of transhumanism can be found wherever one goes. The question people struggle with as they walk through life is “what is a good life?” and “how can I become a better me?” These questions

greatly impact the actions and thoughts we have in everyday life. These questions are the very essence of transhumanism - the bettering of the body and life. Something as simple as putting on creams and makeup and then as drastic as creating an ageless generation is just one example of how transhumanism has evolved and continues to grow.

Now that it has been argued and analyzed that we all share the act of transhumanism in one way or another, it is up to the individual as to where the line must be drawn between merely keeping oneself healthy, cared for, and approachable opposed to tweaking with one's so-called "natural state" and aiming for one's conception of perfection. Is it acceptable to better ourselves in every aspect of our lives or should we simply leave ourselves at our so-called natural state? Should we not be content where we are or is it up to us to make sure we survive? These questions are where most people's beliefs and personal convictions are revealed, and opinions become evident. People ponder the morality or ethics of the more dramatic levels of transhumanism and question whether it will really benefit or harm the human race.

The issue regarding posthumanism and whether a new race is being developed altogether or not, poses many controversial questions regarding the progression from transhumanism to Posthumanism. Posthumanism is a change in the understanding of the self and its relations to the natural world and society. It is the rewriting as to what it means to be human. This leads to the pivotal question as to "What is human?" Once this question is answered, an end point can be established in the movement of the human race and ultimately will show how far is too far in our man-made development. When society becomes aware of and establishes what is no longer human, then enhancement has a finish line that if crossed is considered posthuman. If bettering humanity is the goal of transhumanism, then humanity must first of all be present and cannot be lost, which would occur if posthumanism is achieved. Without humans, there is nothing to better or improve and there is therefore no purpose. If one attempts to solidify the definition of human, one will find that there is not a concrete answer given or established. While there are some universal characteristics, there is not a finalized list of traits that must be present to make up a human. Some qualifications of being "human" has been left to interpretation just as the extent of appropriate posthumanism has been.

The pinpointing of transhumanism as a horrid and unspeakable act is a pointless fight to pick as to the fact that transhumanism, in regards to its enhancement of human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities, has been present throughout much of humankind's existence. Any human who has performed an action to benefit her life or survival has fallen into the category of transhumanism. It is rather the idea of posthumanism that raises a bit more controversy. The issue that I believe should be analyzed is the difference between the *enhancement* of humanity and the *maintenance* of humanity. Humans need to maintain themselves, but is there a direct necessity to enhance themselves? The human has shown to be the most productive and advancing living organism, so why would we want to leave humanity in the dust and move onto something that is "posthuman?" Humans are humans, whether people believe they were created this way or evolved to this state. Nature, God, or whoever has done a fairly good job in the development of humanity so far, therefore we should allow it to continue to do what it intends to do. We should not step in and try to figure it out for ourselves. Just as the saying goes, the value of something will not be known until it is gone.

The bettering of the self is an act that has been taking place for years and will most likely do so for many more to come. If one wishes to answer the moral and ethical question as to how far is too far, then there ultimately must come a time where transhumanism is acknowledged to what it is and where humanity is defined. Maintenance versus Enhancement will continue to remain an issue of debate until this question is answered. Transhumanism and posthumanism are separated by a fine line. The ambiguous bridge from transhumanism to posthumanism must be established, but not crossed. Unfortunately, the answering of the questions pertaining to transhumanism may never be defined or answered, but as long as humanity lives, there will be transhumanism for all.

Jenna Fontes

JENNA FONTES

Cyborg Diaries

Hello, my name is Christopher Watt, or at least that is what my creator has told me. This is my first day on Earth and I am just beginning to understand the aspects of this new world. My creator has told me that I am unique to the others that inhabit this planet. He says that I am the key to a more successful and efficient human race. I do not understand what he means by this. I look, talk, and move just as he does. How can I be so unique if I am just the same as my creator? I am not allowed to go outside these walls, at least not yet. My creator has left me with this notebook and pen so I have decided to make the most of it. He has also left several other books titled Calculus, Shakespeare, Physics, and Behavioral Physiology. I have decided not to look at those yet, seeing as I am just now adjusting to my new life. I am filled with many unanswered questions. I do not know what my purpose is, or what my creator plans to do with me. I am trying to collect my thoughts and determine my identity. The main question on my mind: Who am I?

April 14, 2094

I decided to look at the several books that my creator had left for me. I read through them all fairly quickly. I already knew all the information in them and the material seemed elementary. I do not know how I retained all this information, but somehow I have come to know it well. My creator put me through so strange tests today as well. The first task he asked me to do was to lift several weights. He seemed pleased when I was able to lift the five hundred pound weight with ease. He also asked me to test his projection apparatus. I obliged, pressed my left temple, and the projection successfully appeared in the space in front of me with a list of everyday occupations, functions, and tasks. Again, he seemed pleased. I have never seen my creator use his projection apparatus. I wonder why he is so concerned if mine works when he never uses his. I asked him today when I would be able to go outside and experience the world. He simply replied: "They are not ready for you yet." I do not understand what he means by that statement. Why wouldn't they be ready? What would happen if I went come in contact with others before they are ready?

April 20, 2094

I cannot take this anymore. I will not be contained in this minuscule room like a monster. I have discovered a small window where I have been spending most of

my time the last five days. I have been observing the other humans. I starting to understand what my creator meant when he said I was “unique.” They do not act the same as I do. They seem to live such a primitive, simple, unproductive life. I have noticed that the people through the window have emotions. I did not understand what this meant at first. I was able to do research on my projection apparatus and found what this meant. What intrigued me to do this research was a specific event that had happened several days ago. I saw a women with a very broken down and distraught demeanor about her. I saw her wiping a liquid substance from her eyes, which I later found was tears. I have never experienced anything like this. If anyone should be upset it should be me. They can walk around with freedom, while I am trapped. I have realized that the only thing these outside people have over them is their freedom to roam. I am superior in so many other ways. I have realized that I am of a different, but better, kind.

April 21, 2094

I was correct. I have found my creators work. Everything. The title of his research is: The Advance Human: Cyborgs. Along with his work was writings Aldous Huxley. After reading Huxley, I assume, the people I have been watching are called “humans” and I am indeed the “cyborg.” My creators work has informed me that I am all machines, with a human appearance and behavior. He has created a better version of the human race while still maintaining humanity. I do not understand why my creator has not shown me to the world. If all these humans were like me the world be a more efficient place. I will not be alone.

April 22, 2094

Today, I tried to escape. I tried to use my strength to break down the walls that bind me, but when I attempt to run towards the door and electric pulse drops my body to the ground. A shade of static takes over my vision and I am paralyzed for a moment. It seems that this “electricity” is the only thing to contain me. I have realized that my creator knows my strengths and is fearful of them. He has also learned to use my weaknesses against me. He is intelligent, but underestimates me greatly.

April 23, 2094

I am free now. I used my superiority over my adolescent creator and was able to escape. I took all of his work with me that will help execute my plan effectively. I have taken refuge in an abandoned warehouse. I will stay here for a few days until I

am able to blend in with the humans. I have already gone to a store and obtained so of the everyday clothing I have noticed the humans wearing. The goal right now is to blend in until further progress is made.

April 24, 2094

I have realized that I am going to need someone to help me create my family and a place to do this. I have found a new upcoming scientist under the name of Adam Losch. He is in the newspaper frequently for his developments in artificial intelligence and human enhancement. He is working at a place called Harvard University. I will travel there first thing tomorrow morning. My goal is to get in contact with him somehow. He has the intelligence to help me execute my plan. He will help. Whether he wants to or not.

April 25, 2094

I have found Adam Losch. He is the first person I have admitted my true identity to. He was speechless at first, but to my surprise he embraced me. He was excited to witness such a technological development. When I told him my plan he agreed to it right away. He said that this world is in need of some change and I am exactly the change needed. I am surprised that I would be so fond of one of these humans. I know he will be a wonderful ally in the future. We will start tomorrow.

April 13, 2095

It has been a year since my last entry. After digging through my belongings I discovered this journal. After reading my previous entries, I found it necessary to record the immense progress that has been made. Since my escape a year ago, I was able to use my creator's research to develop more of my kind. With the help of Adam Losch, I had a sufficient amount of cyborgs created, and we slowly integrated ourselves into the major parts of society and have gained substantial control. We no longer refer to ourselves as "cyborgs," but superiors. Humans are scarce nowadays. Along with humans, the world has been enhanced. We are not cluttered by insufficient humans, disease, poverty, and pointless emotion. We are a very productive and advanced society. I do not know what has become of my creator. He has never tried to find me or stop me, which was very wise of him. He was wrong; the world was not only ready, but in desperate need of my appearance. I only see more improvements in our future. There is no end to the possibilities we have.

Megan Berkery

The Loss of a Leg

March 15, 1967-Over South Vietnam

As the Huey helicopter flew over the rice fields of South Vietnam Sergeant Paul Watson of the US 101st Airborne Division, or the Screaming Eagles, could not seem to get the thought of his family in Clarksville, TN out of his mind. The one thing Sergeant Watson wanted more than anything in the world at that moment while staring down at those South Vietnamese rice fields teeming with laborers was to be home with his beautiful wife, Jessica, and four year old daughter, Rebecca. Just four more weeks and I will be on my way back to my beloved wife and daughter thought Watson.

With this comforting thought he turned away from the window and looked at the three other men sitting in the back of the Huey. There was Private Charlie Kimberly, a gunner, Private Josh McCown, a medic, and Private Billy Williams, an infantryman. Sergeant Watson, of course, outranked all three privates. He did not, however, outrank Captain Adam Pullman, who was the Huey's pilot, or Lieutenant Rich Cannon, the co-pilot. Being that the two helicopter operators were busy piloting, Watson decided that he might as well have a conversation with his three fellow soldiers.

"Private McCown, how long have you been on this fantastic vacation?" questioned Watson boldly.

Private McCown, recognizing the Sergeant's question as a joke immediately, replied, "I've only been in this tropical paradise for three months now, sir."

"Enjoying the scenery and locals?" asked Watson.

"The scenery is lovely Sergeant, but the locals have me worried," answered the Private with a little less humor in his voice.

"Ah, I see. Tell me Private Kimberly and Williams, what are your opinions on the Vietnamese?"

"I reckon the South Vietnamese are all right Sergeant, but those northern guerillas are out to get us twenty-four seven," replied Kimberly. Pausing, he added, "Ain't no tellin when or where they are gonna attack."

“You got that right, my man,” added Williams, “I find myself constantly looking around myself to make sure those little Asians don’t bust a cap in my ass.”

“Unfortunately Private Williams, you will find that looking around will not-.”

Before Sergeant Watson could finish his sentence the unmistakable sound of high-caliber bullets racing past the Huey reached the ears of the soldiers.

Immediately Captain Pullman called into the radio, “Walker Base, this is Captain Pullman and we are taking heavy fire from unfriendly ground forces. We are attempting to evade the hostiles.”

Just then bullets started smashing into the right side of the helicopter, with one of them hitting and killing Private Kimberly. Sergeant Watson quickly took control of the weapon and returned fire. Seconds later, however, Captain Pullman shouted to Co-pilot Cannon to pull the joystick up in order to keep the damaged Huey airborne. The pilot and co-pilots efforts were, unfortunately, futile as the helicopter’s tail snapped in half due to the piercing bullets. The Huey slammed into the trees of the jungle, and then the hard ground with such force that Sergeant Watson’s mind went black.

March 20, 1967- Walker Base, South Vietnam

Sergeant Watson slowly opened his eyes to a room full of light. He was lying in a bed, but for the first moment of consciousness he had no idea where he was. Tilting his head to the left of him he saw a table with a vase of flowers, and a number of medical devices standing on their own near the side of the bed. The walls, ceiling, and floor of the room were all white. Just as he was realizing where he was a nurse opened the door at the front of the room and quickly walked in.

“Sergeant Watson, I am glad to see that you are awake,” said the smiling nurse, “I am here for your hourly check-up. How are you feeling?”

“I am feeling okay. Nurse, how long have I been unconscious, and where exactly am I?” asked Watson.

“You’ve been unconscious since the helicopter accident on March 15th. It is now March 20th, and you are at the military hospital at Walker Base,” answered the nurse.

Shifting his body for the first time since waking up, Sergeant Watson felt a strange feeling in his right leg. All at once his eyes opened wider while staring at his legs beneath the blankets.

The nurse, sensing his discovery, quickly said, "Let me go and get Lieutenant Hoskins, the hospital's head doctor."

Once the nurse had left, Sergeant Watson stared at the blankets for what seemed to him an eternity. Then, in an instant, he ripped off the blankets and saw what he did not want to see. Within seconds his whole body began to tremble with the realization of the truth weighing down on him. There, soaking in the light, was what remained of his right leg. The amputation had taken his leg up to his knee, which had a wrapping of white bandages on it.

Before there was time for his next emotion to set in he heard the door opening, and, looking up, he saw who he assumed was Doctor Hoskins entering. Smiling, the doctor shut the door and walked over to the right side of Watson's bed.

"Good afternoon Sergeant Watson, I am Lieutenant Hoskins, the base's head doctor. I see you have discovered your amputated leg. When my team and I first saw your leg we realized it would be nearly impossible to save it below the knee. It was held on only by a few tendons, but the soldiers delivered you here before you bled to death, thankfully. From what I was told by those who brought you to us you had been thrown from the helicopter on impact and the spinning blades struck your right leg, leaving it almost completely severed."

After a long pause Watson cleared his throat and looked into the doctor's eyes and replied, "Thank you for saving my life Doctor Hoskins. You and your team did what had to be done to save my life, and you accomplished your mission. How is the rest of the crew faring?"

"Sergeant Watson, I regret to tell you that the other five soldiers on board did not survive. When the rescuers reached the crash site they checked the other soldiers' pulses, but you were the only one who was still alive."

Watson did not say anything, but instead moved his gaze from the doctor back to his missing leg.

Changing the subject, Doctor Hoskins said, "Now, the recovery from this amputation will not be easy by any means, but it can be done. I am sure you were looking forward to heading home in a few weeks Sergeant, but I am afraid you will not be able to go home that quickly. You will have to remain here for a few months to begin your therapy, which will continue once you return to Fort Campbell."

“Then let us begin the therapy immediately,” replied Sergeant Watson, once again starring into Doctor Hoskins eyes.

May 28, 1967- San Francisco International Airport, California

The weeks of physical, and sometimes mental, therapy that Sergeant Watson had endured were not as easy as he had first anticipated. Doing the same physical therapy exercises for hours on end, day after day had taken a toll on him. Many times during those weeks he wept quietly at night either from the emotional or physical pain of his situation. The physical pain could be taken care of with a shot of morphine every so often, but the emotional pain could only be cured with sleepless nights thinking of the crash, his fellow soldiers who did not make it, and his wife and daughter. Even with all his pain he had still worked as hard as possible to get to this point in a wheelchair so he could make the journey home.

The airplane he, along with about one hundred other soldiers, were returning home in was due to take them to San Francisco International Airport where they would then wait for other aircraft to fly them back to their home bases. Sergeant Watson’s plane was not due to depart until the next afternoon, meaning he would have to check into a hotel near the airport for the night.

This aspect of his journey worried him. Throughout his therapy soldiers had talked about the hippies in much of the country, and how they were the only people who came to many of the nation’s airports to greet the soldiers. By greeting, Watson knew the hippies would be yelling cruel names at the soldiers. The hippies did this to voice their opinions to those they felt were responsible for this meaningless war. As if we had a choice in the matter, Watson thought.

Aside from mentioning the hippies’ senseless insults the soldiers in therapy also talked of how the hippies treated injured soldiers. Supposedly the hipsters were even more hateful and ungrateful to those who had been injured. The way to deal with the ungrateful, the soldiers believed, was to simply ignore them.

Once the plane landed the soldiers were shuttled on buses to the baggage claim entrance. Upon entering the airport Sergeant Watson spotted over thirty protesters dressed in colorful clothes and holding picket signs with unfriendly slogans on them. As soon as the protesters saw the soldiers coming they began to shout and push towards them as they waited for their bags. Thankfully, the police on site were able to keep the shouting crowd back.

Sergeant Watson was able to quickly grab his bag from the conveyer belt, which was not a good thing as it turned out. Rolling his wheelchair towards the door some of the protesters noticed him and followed alongside him while shouting profane names and slogans at him about him being a soldier, and an amputee. Being an amputee, as he had suspected, caused the crowd to focus more of their hateful words on him. Undaunted, Watson continued to roll towards the door and the awaiting bus. The protesters quickly noticed him ignoring them, and decided to become physical with him. One of the protesters shot forward with such force that Watson was knocked out of his wheelchair. Once on the ground another of the protesters, with the other protesters still shouting at Watson, threw a red dyed water balloon at him. Covered in fake blood, Sergeant Watson quickly set his wheelchair upright and lifted himself into it.

“You cannot keep me down!” Watson shouted at them, as he forced his way through the shouting crowd and out the doors of the airport on his way to reunite with his family.

Kyle Segura



The Bionic Evolution

An intellectual and cultural movement called “transhumanism” affirms the possibility and desirability to enhance human bodies and minds through applied reason and scientific means. They advocate the improvement of human capacities through advanced technology. Not just technology as in electronic devices and gadgets, but technology that strategizes to eliminatediseases, improve the quality of life, and make these high-quality products and technology available to mass markets around the world. The transhumanist movement is in effect; cyborgs are already walking among us.

A cyborg is defined as a “fictional or hypothetical person whose physical abilities are extended beyond normal human limitations by mechanical elements built into the body.” In other words, a cyborg is a hybrid of flesh and machinery. Because of sci-fi movies like *Terminator* and *I, Robot* we consider cyborgs to be robotic, bionic and not entirely human. In the age of spare part surgery and increasing advancements of drugs, there are increasing concerns about what it means to be human and what separates people from machines.

Jesse Sullivan is considered the world’s first “Bionic Man”. In May 2001, electric lineman Jesse Sullivan was electrocuted severely enough to have both of his arms amputated. He was then given the opportunity to regain what he had lost at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago (“Introducing Jesse Sullivan”). The “Bionic Arm” is much more advanced than the normal prosthetic arm. It is attached to Sullivan’s own nerves that were dissected and transferred to muscle in his chest. This allows the “Bionic Arm” to move as a normal limb; he simply thinks of what he wants the arm to do and the nerve impulses are sensed and carried through the electronic arm, causing it to move (“Introducing Jesse Sullivan”). Sullivan is the first successful “Bionic Man” because he is able to perform everyday activities such as eating and tying his shoes with electronic limbs that he was not originally born with. He is a prime example of a cyborg, having “mechanical elements built into his body.”

Paralympic athlete Oscar Pistorius is another example of a cyborg that walks – or runs – among us. In the 2012 Paralympics, Oscar Pistorius became the first double-amputee to compete in a track event with the use of prosthetics. Engineers

claim that it is possible that these prosthetics could help the disabled outrun able-bodied Olympic athletes (Grogan). Prosthetics were originally considered to be a form of rehabilitation and therapy because it allowed an amputee to be able to walk again. Today, technology allows some of them to run faster than they would have with their original limbs. Some argue that the prosthetics used by athletes like Pistorius give him an unfair and non-human advantage against his able-bodied competitors.

Outside of the Olympic arena, a woman named Virginia Bane received an implant in her left eye that allowed her to see for the first time in seven years. The procedure took place at the UC Davis Medical center, where surgeons implanted a microscopic telescope that focuses images onto the undamaged parts of her retina therefore allowing her to see again (“Telescopic Implant”). Bane had been suffering from end-stage age-related macular degeneration, or in other words, she had lost her sight to old age (“Telescopic Implant”). Because the implant procedure was successful, it could become common among those who suffer from the same condition.

Technology has provided us with bionic arms, legs and eyes. However, one does not need to be half machine to be considered a cyborg. As previously stated, a cyborg is defined as someone with “mechanical elements built into the body.” Today, it has become common for us to replace our organs with medical devices. For example, those with diabetes mellitus utilize an insulin pump to compensate for a defective pancreas. Although it is not directly located inside of the body, it still involves a combination of flesh and machine.

Another example of a cyborg body part is the artificial pacemaker. An artificial pacemaker is a small device that's placed in the chest or abdomen to help control abnormal heart rhythms, otherwise known as heart arrhythmia (“What is a Pacemaker?”). Like the insulin pump, the pacemaker assists the heart in maintaining a steady beat. In contrast, it is surgically implanted rather than attached outside of the body. Similar to the artificial pacemaker is the ventricular assist device. A ventricular assist device is a mechanical pump that is used to support heart function and blood flow in people who have weakened hearts. The device takes blood from a lower chamber of the heart and helps pump it to the body and vital organs, just as a healthy heart would (“What is a Ventricular Assist Device?”). There are two types of

ventricular assist devices, transcutaneous and implantable. The transcutaneous ventricular device consists of a pump and power source located outside of the body, while tubes run from the pump to the heart through holes in the abdomen. The implantable ventricular assist device has its pump inside the body and the power source on the outside. Like the transcutaneous device it requires a small hole in the abdomen to accommodate a cable that connects the pump to its power source. This reiterates the concept of a cyborg; it is once again a mesh of human and machine.

Modern medicine and technology has allowed us to treat weakened and failing hearts, but it may now be possible to replace the heart altogether with an entirely artificial one. The Texas Heart Institute was able to create an artificial heart that allowed a patient to live without a heartbeat or pulse. The “continuous-flow total artificial heart” consists of two pumps, both of which were left ventricular assist devices. It does not require one to have a heartbeat because it provides the patient with continuous blood flow without pumping the blood (“Successful Implantation”). The patient, 55 year-old Craig Lewis, was able to live for five weeks with the total artificial heart. However, he was already suffering from other complications before receiving the heart. “By the time his family decided to turn off the device, Lewis needed liver, lung, kidney and bone marrow transplants” (Ballingall). Therefore, the heart did not fail. It is now possible for a human to live without a heartbeat or pulse.

Artificial limbs and organs have been used to help those who are disabled and sick. Jesse Sullivan’s bionic arms, Oscar Pistorius’s prosthetic legs, Virginia Bane’s microscopic-sized telescopic eye, and Craig Lewis’s beat-less heart are all examples of living cyborgs and how technology can help improve the human body. However, what happens when the technology advances and becomes accessible to those who are not disabled? What if those who are able-bodied simply want to become better, faster and stronger? If we can bring vision back to those who have lost it, how can we improve the vision we have now? One thing we can be certain about is that the technology we have today will only mature and advance. It is how we utilize and distribute that newfound technology that is unknown.

Sharina Fadul

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