

A Surgical Procedure, 2054

Some time had passed. There was some memory there, glimpses, but it was as if the events of the last something time were viewed behind a cloud from well above or by misshapen eyes not wearing glasses necessary for proper vision; almost nothing but a knowledge that there was something before now.

That was changing. Brian began to feel a tickle. It was as if some force were drawing the tip of their fingernail across his internal organs. Thousands of fingertips, more precisely, each with a pleasant caress, covering every millimeter.

He heard the first doctor say, "We have acquired the Neuro-shell. Proceed with the transfer process."

The gentle tickle quickly became a tug, as if all those tiny fingernails were now grouped fingers pulling on every cell. It was unpleasant, though Brian knew this would be a horrible time to have the Brain Sync stop the procedure. He'd never get the chance at eternal life if he had the Sync process "halt." He had to carry through.

"Normal." he thought, trying not to worry. He opened his eyes.

The two doctors were staring at instruments, performing the procedure. One of the doctors looked up from his display and turned to the other. He whispered, "He's awake." The first doctor turned towards Brain.

"The procedure seems to be going well. Are you in any discomfort?"

The Faux Speak said, "Pulling. Tugging."

"A number of patients have reported feeling the same thing. We think it's a reaction to the Neuro-transfer. If you need us to stop..."

"No. Ok. I'm ok." Brain, through the Brain Sync, made the room turn green.

"All right. If you're ready, we're going to start the transfer."

Brain had the monotone voice of the computer say, "Ready." The doctor began to lower a lever on his console.

The bunches of fingers pulling lightly on his being clenched fists. A great sensation of having something pulled from him began to manifest. The pain was nearly unbearable. "Just a few more seconds" thought Brian. That was a mistake.

Suddenly, Brain was aware that time had stopped, or slowed to such a state that it seemed not to move. The pain, which had come in waves before, became a steady note of anguish, a repeated high C of torment. The hands clenched seemingly around his psyche were starting to dislodge their mark. Somehow though, the pain focused his thoughts. There were things Brain saw now, about his life, about his family, that he had never realized before. He focused on the now, to determine what it was that was being removed. What about himself could be grasped and yanked and discarded like this?

A memory came to Brain of a day when he was young, seven perhaps. He was on a picnic with his father and Blanche, dad's second wife. He had wandered away, leaving the newlyweds to their flirtations. He was climbing a large hill, covered with daisies. As he came to the top, he felt something, he realized, in the present, for the first time. There was a fullness to everything, to the air, to the sun, to the dirt upon which he stood. The feeling, Brain of today realized, was a oneness to everything, like he was all that could have existed at that moment. He realized that on that day when he was seven, at the top of a daisy-covered hill, Brain had received his soul. He had been unaware at that time,

unaware that he possessed anything of the sort; unaware until right now when it was being pulled from him with greater gusto at every passing moment.

The symphony of true agony increased in frequency to a tone unintelligible to human ears. This was a greater torture than any human had ever experienced. "Except," thought Brain, "for the other patients of the procedure." This, he realized, was literally his humanity being ripped from him.

"It can never work. The Neuro-transfer procedure can never be successful. The soul cannot be backed up," he realized. "I have to warn them." He started to activate the Brain Sync, found it locked. The impending removal of his soul had blocked the interface. He began to maneuver through the metaphorical hands denying access. Finally, he found a spot within his mind with which he could send a message. He concentrated on the message to be sent, established a connection and processed the request, all seeming so very latent due to the speed, or lack thereof, with which he was currently operating. He felt the message leave.

Brian knew the ghastly hands were about to achieve their goal. For what must have been a millisecond, the pain disappeared, but it was a false respite. He suddenly felt a rip, a tear, then he was gone. Blink. That was that. His psyche had disappeared. Brain was no more. All that remained was a piece of meat lying in a chair, its vacant head covered in a Brain Sync.

The message Brian sent took a few seconds to defragment. The doctors had already begun Life Restore when the Faux-Speak finally came to. The room turned noxious blood red as the Faux Speech began to translate Brain's last mortal thought. "...can't backup the soul!", said the monotone voice, and then, "Brain Sync lost. Retrying... Retrying..."